PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SIXTH SERIES—VOLUME 98

HOUSE OF COMMONS

OFFICIAL REPORT

THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND NORTHERN IRELAND
THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF
HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SESSION 1985-86

COMPRISING PERIOD
19 MAY—5 JUNE 1986

ISBN 0 10 681098 7

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

(FORMED BY RIGHT HON. MARGARET THATCHER, MP, SEPTEMBER 1985)

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD CHANCELLOR—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER—The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP

LAW OFFICERS

ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
LORD ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

MINISTERS NOT IN THE CABINET

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE, (MINISTER FOR THE ARTS)—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, TREASURY—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, HOME OFFICE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF DEFENCE—
Minister of State for the Armed Forces—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
Minister of State for Defence Procurement—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
Minister of State for Defence Support—The Lord Trefgarne
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL SECURITY—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Barney Hayhoe, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE, MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD—
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
MINISTER OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT—David Mitchell, Esq, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT—
Minister of State—The Lord Elton, TD
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, SCOTTISH OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
MINISTERS OF STATE, DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY—
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Agriculture, Fisheries and Food—
MINISTER—The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. John Gummer, MP
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Belstead
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—Mrs. Peggy Fenner, MP

Arts and Libraries, Office of—
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—
The Rt. Hon. Norman Tebbit, MP

Defence—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. George Younger, TD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES—The Rt. Hon. John Stanley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—Norman Lamont, Esq, MP
MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE SUPPORT—The Lord Trefgarne
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT—John Lee, Esq, MP

Education and Science—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph, Bt, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Christopher Patten, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Robert Dunn, Esq, MP
George Walden, Esq, MP

Employment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Young of Graffham
PAYMASTER GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
David Trippier, Esq, MP
Ian Lang, Esq, MP

Energy—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Peter Walker, MBE, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Alick Buchanan-Smith, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Alastair Goodlad, Esq, MP
David Hunt, Esq, MP

Environment—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Baker, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister of State—The Lord Elton, TD
Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government—The Hon. William Waldegrave, MP
Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction—John Patten, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Sir George Young, Bt, MP
Mrs. Angela Rumbold, CBE, MP
Richard Tracey, Esq, MP

Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs—
SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
The Rt. Hon. The Baroness Young
Minister for Overseas Development—The Rt. Hon. Timothy Raison, MP
Mrs. Lynda Chalker, MP
Timothy Renton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Timothy Eggar, Esq, MP

Health and Social Security—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SOCIAL SERVICES—The Rt. Hon. Norman Fowler, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Health—The Rt. Hon. Barney Hayhoe, MP
Minister for Social Security—Antony Newton, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Ray Whitney, Esq, MP
The Baroness Trumpington
John Major, Esq, MP

Home Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt. Hon. Douglas Hurd, CBE, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
David Waddington, Esq, QC, MP
Giles Shaw Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE
David Mellor, Esq, MP
The Lord Glenarthur

Law Officers' Department—
ATTORNEY-GENERAL—The Rt. Hon. Sir Michael Havers, QC, MP
SOLICITOR-GENERAL—Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP

Lord Advocate's Department—
LORD-ADVOCATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Cameron of Lochbroom, QC
SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Peter Fraser, Esq, QC, MP

Lord Chancellor—
The Rt. Hon. The Lord Hailsham of St. Marylebone, CH

Management and Personnel Office—
PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
MINISTER OF STATE, PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Northern Ireland Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt. Hon. Tom King, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—Dr. Rhodes Boyson, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Nicholas Scott, Esq, MBE, MP
The Lord Lyell
Richard Needham, Esq, MP
Dr. Brian Mawhinney, MP

Paymaster General and Minister for Employment—The Rt. Hon. Kenneth Clarke, QC, MP

Privy Council Office—
LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Viscount Whitelaw, CH, MC
LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, MP

Scottish Office—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt. Hon. Malcolm Rifkind, QC, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Gray of Contin
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Allan Stewart, Esq, MP
John MacKay, Esq, MP
Michael Ancram, Esq, MP

Trade and Industry—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt. Hon. Paul Channon, MP
MINISTERS OF STATE—
Minister for Information Technology—Geoffrey Pattie, Esq, MP
Minister of State—The Hon. Peter Morrison, MP
Minister for Trade—The Hon. Alan Clark, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
John Butcher, Esq, MP
Lord Lucas of Chilworth
Michael Howard, Esq, QC, MP

Transport—
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Ridley, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—David Mitchell, Esq, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Peter Bottomley, Esq, MP
Michael Spicer, Esq, MP
The Earl of Caithness

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY AND MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE—
The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, MP
CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt. Hon. Nigel Lawson, MP
CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt. Hon. John MacGregor, OBE, MP
FINANCIAL SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Moore, MP
ECONOMIC SECRETARY—Ian Stewart, Esq, RD, MP
MINISTER OF STATE—The Hon. Peter Brooke, MP
PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY—The Rt. Hon. John Wakeham, MP
LORDS COMMISSIONERS—
Donald Thompson, Esq, MP
Tristan Garel-Jones, Esq, MP
The Hon. Archibald Hamilton, MP
The Hon. Timothy Sainsbury, MP
Michael Neubert, Esq, MP
ASSISTANT WHIPS—
Tony Durant, Esq, MP
Peter Lloyd, Esq, MP
The Hon. Mark Lennox-Boyd, MP
The Hon. Francis Maude, MP
Gerald Malone, Esq, MP

Welsh Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt. Hon. Nicholas Edwards, MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
Wyn Roberts, Esq, MP
Mark Robinson, Esq, MP

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie, GCVO
LORD STEWARD—The Rt. Hon. The Duke of Northumberland, KG, TD
MASTER OF THE HORSE—The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Westmorland, KCVO
TREASURER—John Cope, Esq, MP
COMPTROLLER—Carol Mather, Esq, MC, MP
VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—The Hon. Robert Boscawen, MC, MP
CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt. Hon. The Lord Denham
CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—The Earl of Swinton
LORDS IN WAITING— The Viscount Long, The Lord Skelmersdale, The Lord Brabazon of Tara, Viscount Davidson
BARONESS IN WAITING—The Baroness Hooper

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Sir William van Straubenzee, MBE, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

THE SPEAKER—Rt. Hon. Bernard Weatherill, MP
CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Harold Walker, MP
FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Rt. Hon. Ernest Armstrong, MP
SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—Sir Paul Dean, MP

CHAIRMEN'S PANEL—
Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Ian Campbell, Esq, MP, Donald Coleman, Esq, MP, Patrick Cormack, Esq, MP, David Crouch, Esq, MP, Stan Crowther, Esq, MP, Miss Janet Fookes, MP, John Forrester, Esq, MP, Harry Gourlay, Esq, MP, Sir Philip Holland, MP, John Hunt, Esq, MP, David Knox, Esq, MP, James Lamond, Esq, MP, Ted Leadbitter, Esq, MP, Hugh McCartney, Esq, MP, Sir Anthony Meyer, MP, Michael Morris, Esq, MP, Sir Michael Shaw, MP, Michael Shersby, Esq, MP, Sir John Wells, MP, Nicholas Winterton, Esq, MP

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—
Rt. Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Alan Beith, Esq, MP, Rt. Hon. John Biffen, MP, Miss Betty Boothroyd, MP, Sir Paul Bryan, DSO, MC, MP, Rt. Hon. Peter Shore, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—R. B. Sands

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

SPEAKER'S SECRETARY—W. A. Beaumont, OBE, AE
SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—G. E. Gammie, CB, H. Knorpel, CB
SPEAKER'S CHAPLAIN—Rev. Canon T. Beeson
TRAINBEARER (PARLIAMENTARY)—D. J. Lord
DEPUTY TRAINBEARER (ADMINISTRATION)—P. L. Warwick
ASSISTANT TO SPEAKER'S COUNSEL—T. D. Salmon

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS

SECRETARY TO THE CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—D. W. Robson

DEPARTMENT OF THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

CLERK OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—Sir Kenneth Bradshaw, KCB
CLERK ASSISTANT—C. J. Boulton, CB
CLERK OF COMMITTEES—D. A. M. Pring, CB, MC
PRINCIPAL CLERKS—
J. H. Willcox (Public Bills)
R. S. Lankester (Select Committees)
D. W. Limon (Table Office)
H. M. Barclay (Private Bills)
M. T. Ryle (Journal Office)
J. F. Sweetman, TD (Overseas Office)
W. R. McKay (Financial Committees)
A. A. Barrett (Standing Committees)
C. B. Winnifrith (Select Committees)

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL CLERKS—J. R. Rose, A. J. Hastings, R. J. Willoughby, S. A. L. Panton, R. B. Sands, G. Cubie, M. R. Jack, PhD, D. G. Millar, Mrs. J. Sharpe, Ms. A. Milner-Barry, R. W. G. Wilson, W. A. Proctor, F. A. Cranmer, R. J. Rogers, C. R. M. Ward, PhD, Ms. H. E. Irwin, D. W. N. Doig, A. Sandall, MLitt

SENIOR CLERKS—M. H. Cooper, PhD, D. L. Natzler, D. J. Cairncross, E. P. Silk, Mrs. S. A. de Ste. Croix, A. R. Kennon, D. W. Robson, L. C. Laurence Smyth, A. R. Gren, S. J. Patrick, D. J. Gerhold, C. J. Poyser, D. F. Harrison, S. J. Priestley, C. P. R. Bennett, A. H. Doherty, P. A. Evans, R. I. S. Phillips, P. D. Brittain (acting), C. A. Larsen (acting), J. Hallowell (acting), J. B. Ingram (acting), P. D. Austwick (acting)

ASSISTANT CLERKS—R. G. James, Miss E. J. Baker, C. M. H. Wookey, Miss P. A. Helme, D. R. Lloyd, R. A. Lambert, B. M. Hutton

SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—E. F. Riddles, K. J. Brown, G. E. Clayton, I. C. Bryan

HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—C. L. Watson, L. L. Kaye, Miss R. J. Challis, A. P. Hubner, Miss S. J. Fox, P. G. Moon, Mrs. P. Fisher, F. McShane, J. D. Whatley, S. D. Barrett, M. Clark, Miss A. M. Loader

SPECIALIST ASSISTANTS—I. S. Orton, Ms. H. C. Beaumont, Miss J. Ward, R. A. Wilkins, P. R. Daley

EDITORIAL SUPERVISOR OF THE VOTE—G. H. Bright DEPUTY—B. Tidball ASSISTANTS—Miss B. Balcomb, Miss L. Lewis, J. Puricelli, Mrs. L. M. Nugent, K. B. Wood

EXAMINERS OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS—H. M. Barclay, J. M. Davies

REGISTRAR OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS—R. S. Lankester

TAXING OFFICER—H. M. Barclay

CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—R. A. Broomfield, Miss S. M. Pritchard, Miss F. L. Allingham

DEPARTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major G. V. S. Le Fanu
DEPUTY SERJEANT AT ARMS—Major P. N. W. Jennings
ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—M. J. A. Cummins
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SERJEANT AT ARMS—P. A. J. Wright
CLERK IN CHARGE—Miss M. Frampton, MBE
ASSISTANT CLERK IN CHARGE—D. W. Snell
ADMISSION ORDER OFFICERS—E. D. Palfrey, A. Chipperfield, BEM, Mrs. S. J. Warren
PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—J. Blood
SECOND PRINCIPAL DOORKEEPER—G. H. Sargeant
SENIOR DOORKEEPERS—H. D. Bloxham, S. E. R. Skinner, R. T. Warboys, R. A. F. Chapman, J. D. Garnett, R. H. Usher
HEAD OFFICE KEEPER—W. H. Hazard, MBE
SENIOR OFFICE KEEPERS—M. Bryant, K. R. Kemp, W. J. Stokes
NURSING SISTER—Miss E. Needham

*DEPARTMENT OF THE LIBRARY

LIBRARIAN—D. Menhennet, DPhil
DEPUTY LIBRARIAN—D. J. T. Englefield
LIBRARY AND RESEARCH—
ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—H. J. Palmer, G. F. Lock
DEPUTY ASSISTANT LIBRARIANS—J. B. Poole, PhD, Miss F. J. B. Tanfield, S. Z. Young, Mrs. H. R. Coates, Miss P. J. Baines, BLitt, K. G. Cuninghame, Mrs. J. M. Wainwright, FI InfSc, C. C. Pond, Ph.D, Mrs. C. B. Andrews
SENIOR LIBRARY CLERKS—Mrs. B. L. Miller, Mrs. J. M. Lourie, Ms. F. Poole, Mrs. J. M. Fiddick, C. R. Barclay, Mrs. C. M. Gillié, Miss C. E. Nield, R. C. Clements, R. J. Ware, DPhil, Ms. D. Gore, PhD, R. J. Twigger, B. K. Winetrobe, T. N. Edmonds, R. J. Cracknell, Miss O. M. Gay, Miss E. M. McInnes, Mrs. G. Allen (Temp.)
ASSISTANT LIBRARY CLERKS—Miss C. J. Gilmour, PhD, Miss M. Baber, C. M. Bowlby, Mrs. P. Carling (Temp.), A. J. Maher (Temp.)
SENIOR LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Miss R. Wheatman, ALA, Mrs. S. M. Withers, ALA, Mrs. H. V. Holden, ALA, Miss J. Seaton, FLA, K. N. H. Parry, ALA
EDUCATION OFFICER—Mrs. E. R. Stones.
SENIOR INFORMATION CLERK—Miss E. Osborn
HIGHER LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—J. A. Prince, MLS, ALA, Mrs. P. V. Wiles, ALA, Mrs. D. W. Clark, ALA, M. Southgate, Miss C. E. Fretten, ALA, Miss M. H. Fletcher, ALA, Miss G. C. Howarth, ALA, Miss A. Siswell, Mrs. E. A. Houghton, ALA, Ms. V. R. Cattell, Mrs. S. M. Hingley, ALA, Ms. A. Muir, Mrs. P. E. Cook, ALA, Mrs. I. O. Stockton, ALA
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—J. R. Hutson
LIBRARY EXECUTIVES—Mrs. M. A. Azim, ALA, Miss E. J. Jones, ALA, G. Haig, Ms. H. Armstrong, ALA, Mrs. J. A. P. Skipworth, Miss B. Mee, Miss G. L. Cooper, Miss S. Holland, LLA, Mrs. F. M. Ward
CHIEF OFFICE CLERK—D. J. Plowright, Miss N. Harland
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—J. F. Youle, P. R. Davis, J. S. Came, S. A. Wise, Mrs. P. A. Bozdan, Miss B. A. Rowlands, ALA

VOTE OFFICE—
DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—G. R. Russell
DEPUTY DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—H. C. Foster
ASSISTANT DELIVERER OF THE VOTE—O. B. T. Sweeney
SUPERINTENDING CLERKS—C. J. Montgomery, C. D. Lister
VOTE OFFICE ASSISTANTS—T. E. Aves, T. S. Wilson, Mrs. S. Fuzio, B. G. Underwood

SALE OFFICE—SUPERINTENDING CLERK—C. C. Clarke, MBE

ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT—A. C. J. Poole
FEES OFFICE—
ACCOUNTANT—J. L. G. Dobson
DEPUTY ACCOUNTANT—A. J. Lewis
SENIOR ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—G. P. Brown (Temp.)
ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANTS—F. W. Brewer, A. R. Marskell, M. J. Barram, A. C. Langford, MBE (Temp.) Miss M. M. McColl (Temp.)
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ACCOUNTANT—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—K. E. Johnson, R. Gunn, M. J. H. Caswell, Mrs. P. D. Page, Mrs. J. Yexley, R. S. Young (Temp.), Mrs. N. Norman (Temp.), Mrs. G. Crowther (Temp.), D. A. Tucker (Temp.)
CHIEF OFFICE CLERKS—Miss D. E. Johnson, Miss T. D. Ruewell (Temp.), Mrs. D. K. P. Simons (Temp.), Mrs. D. Hill, Miss P. Hurford (Temp.), Mrs. J. C. Ponting (Temp.), B. W. Palmer (Temp.), Miss J. Bell (Temp.)

ESTABLISHMENTS OFFICE—
HEAD OF OFFICE—G. A. Roberts
DEPUTY HEAD OF OFFICE—J. A. Robb
ASSISTANT HEAD OF OFFICE—
SENIOR EXECUTIVE OFFICER—Miss R. A. Cole
HIGHER EXECUTIVE OFFICER—N.P. Crawley
SUPERINTENDING CLERK—P. C. Kingsley
EXECUTIVE OFFICERS—R. S. Harrison, Miss J. Bremner, Mrs. D. Eltringham (Temp.), M. Page (Temp.)

COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—R. S. Morgan, FBCS, FIInfSc
ASSISTANT COMPUTER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER—Mrs. G. S. P. Smith

INTERNAL AUDITOR—Miss C. D. Stone, FCCA

DEPARTMENT OF THE OFFICIAL REPORT

EDITOR—K. S. Morgan
DEPUTY EDITOR—L. R. Johns
PRINCIPAL ASSISTANT EDITORS—R. V. Hadlow, J. Gourley, F. G. Brotherston, C. R. G. Watson, OBE
ASSISTANT EDITORS—P. Walker, E. Holland, I. D. Church, J. Withers
COMMITTEE SUB-EDITORS—W. G. Garland, Miss V. Grainger, J. Ledgerwood, D. Crosswell, Miss C. Ritchie, Miss V. A. A. Clarke, Mrs. A. Roberts, Miss H. A. Hales, Miss L. Sutherland, Mrs. E. J. Gregory, S. M. Hutchinson, Miss V. A. Widgery, Miss C. Fogarty
REPORTERS—Miss H. Thompson, Miss M. Babington, Miss A. Harris, Mrs. A. Bealham, P. Oglethorpe, Miss C. Hanly, Miss J. K. Belcher, Miss J. A. Bradshaw, Miss E. Morris, Miss K. Stewart, Miss J. Beck, M. Watson, Miss J. Brown, Miss J. Goodman, Miss I. McCarthy, Miss L. Sinclair, Miss E. Watt
PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBER—D. N. Harrington
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL TRANSCRIBERS—Mrs. E. M. Bangay, Mrs. H. Stollery
PRINCIPAL HANSARD ASSISTANT—D. J. Lawler
SENIOR HANSARD ASSISTANT—Miss R. Washington
ANNUNCIATOR SUPERINTENDENT—H. J. Wellings

REFRESHMENT DEPARTMENT

GENERAL MANAGER—W. J. J. Smillie, FHCIMA, FCFA, ACF
DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER—E. J. Nash, MCFA
PERSONNEL OFFICER—
PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO GENERAL MANAGER—Mrs. A. G. Lunn
BANQUETING SUPERVISOR—C. J. Griffiths
CATERING ACCOUNTANT—D. R. W. Wood, FCA
ASSISTANT CATERING ACCOUNTANT—Mrs. B. A. Langley
EXECUTIVE CHEF—I. Gabay
HEAD CELLARMAN—D. Balcombe
HEAD STOREMAN—A. E. Edmond

SHORTHAND WRITER TO THE HOUSE—Mrs. E. M. C. Holland
PARLIAMENTARY WORKS OFFICER (PSA)—W. H. Lewis, OBE
HEAD OF SECURITY—Chief Superintendent I. K. Slessor
COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER—Mrs. J. Garbutt
POSTMASTER—C. E. Tomkins
TRANSPORT MANAGER—Mrs. M. Hannant

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE THIRD SESSION OF THE FORTY-NINTH PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES **VOLUME 98**

THIRTEENTH VOLUME OF SESSION 1985-86

House of Commons

Monday 19 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

ISLE OF WIGHT BILL

Lords amendments agreed to.

Oral Answers to Questions

TRANSPORT

Road Price Index

1. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how the road price index has changed in relation to the retail prices index in each of the last five years.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): Road prices have fallen relative to the retail prices index by about 25 per cent. since 1980. This means that we are getting more road for our money. The supporting yearly figures have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Watts: I thank my right hon. Friend for his encouraging reply. Is he aware that the director-general of the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors recently commented that he viewed the health of the industry with some rapture? Does my right hon. Friend agree with that assessment, and to what extent is his Department responsible for it?

Mr. Ridley: I am delighted to hear that our policies are causing rapture. I confirm that he have increased spending on roads by 25 per cent., and that there has been a 30 per cent. increase in value for money. That is why we have such a massive roads programme, whose benefits can be seen in all parts of the country.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Does that mean that more money has been spent on roads and that the programme for building new roads has been substantially increased and improved since 1951? Will funds be made available to widen the M25 between junctions 8 and 10?

Mr. Ridley: I should point out that the relevant date is not 1951 but 1980. The road output price index has hardly increased during the past six years. That means that we are getting the same cash prices, despite inflation over six years. I am studying the south-west quadrant of the M25 to discover the cause of the congestion, but I was not aware of any problems between junctions 8 and 10.

Mr. Flannery: Does not the immense transfer of traffic from rail to road mean more pollution, more policing and more blockages all over the country? Are not the Government following a quite reactionary policy, given that, for example, the railways cause no pollution?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should know that we are coping well with the increased traffic on our roads. Indeed, the programme that I have just set out explains just how well we have coped with it. I believe that people want roads, because motorists want to travel in their cars. It is up to shippers to decide on the cheapest and most convenient form of carriage for their goods. A little freedom in this area, as in others, is well worth while.

M3-M27 Link

2. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the M3-M27 motorway link to be completed.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): We await the inspector's report on the final section of the M3. This section of the route from Bar End to Bassett may be completed by 1989.

Mr. Atkinson: Business commuters and tourists to Dorset will welcome that day, but in the meantime is my hon. Friend satisfied with the safety of the existing link, the A33 Eastleigh bypass which *The Economist* recently described as a "death trap"?

Mr. Bottomley: People rightly draw attention to dangers on our roads. We recognise the concern that exists, and have agreed to extend the central reserve crash barrier near Ironbridge at Crompton. Barriers on the rest of the Otterbourne to Chandlers Ford bypass would probably not be justified for the short period of use involved before the M3 extension is completed.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that the completion of that stretch of motorway has serious implications for the noble and ancient city of Winchester? Will he ask the Secretary of State to warn his Cabinet colleagues that there must be an unusual degree of expenditure in order to protect the environment and to prevent irreparable damage being done to the city? I am thinking, for example, of the construction of a tunnel to the south and south-east of St. Catherine's hill in order to protect this beautiful city, which is important and historic both nationally and internationally?

Mr. Bottomley: My hon. Friend has made his local anxieties plain and I am sure that his message will have been heard.

National Bus Company

3. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent representations he has received regarding the privatisation of the National Bus Company.

Mr. Ridley: I have received a number of representations, mostly on behalf of groups of local managers and employees who welcome the forthcoming privatisation of NBC's subsidiaries and wish to gain controlling interests in their local companies.

Mr. Pike: Does the Secretary of State accept that if the NBC must be privatised the services would be better protected if it were privatised as a whole and not split up? Would that not protect both services and jobs?

Mr. Ridley: I do not agree with the hon. Gentleman. We discussed the issue often enough in Committee. Already over 50 management teams have expressed interest in buying the subsidiaries, out of the 65 companies involved. Having that number of different companies, together with other private operators, such as the municipal and passenger transport executive operators, will provide that element of competition which has been lacking in bus services and will give a much better deal to the passengers. After all, that is what it is all about.

Mr. Stephen Ross: When does the Secretary of State expect to announce the acceptance of a bid for one of the companies by a management-work force buyer?

Mr. Ridley: Currently four bids are at an advanced stage of negotiation with the NBC. I cannot say when the negotiations will be complete, but so far as I am aware no bus company management is being held up by NBC in its efforts to purchase the company. I shall announce to the House the details of sales as and when they take place.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of us think that privatising any service is good so long as it not only puts money into the Exchequer but helps the service? Does he understand, as I do, that one of the great ideas behind privatisation was that the difficult services would be improved? Does he agree that the scheme would fail if some services turned out to be worse than they are now? Will my right hon. Friend guarantee that services will improve?

Mr. Ridley: Well in advance of the deregulation and the tendering for routes, which has not yet happened, in many cities services have already improved. Mini-buses are being introduced on a large scale. We can do all that without the Act being in force, so how much more will we be able to do when it is in force?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Will not deregulation and privatisation result in the loss of thousands of routes?

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: No.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Well, the people of Ryedale believed that. Do the Government now intend to change course? Do they accept that the people of Ryedale said no and that they want the restoration of proper policies?

Mr. Ridley: I accept that the hon. Gentleman and his hon. Friends, along with members of the alliance, succeeded to some extent in awakening people's fears that only the registered mileage would be run, but everyone concerned knows that that is not the full truth. The whole of the tendered services are involved. Local councils have 10 per cent. more cash provision to subsidise those tendered services than they had last year, and they have to subsidise only 25 per cent. of routes instead of the 100 per cent. that they did before.

Mr. Gow: Does not the privatisation of individual companies give employees and passengers an opportunity to become shareholders? What steps will my right hon. Friend take to encourage them to take that opportunity?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. As is the case in the Isle of Wight, there is considerable enthusiasm for buying a local bus company. I have made it clear throughout the passage of the legislation that we would give some preference to employees and managers if they sought to buy their company. That is being translated into effect as the sales take place. I believe that the measure will spread ownership widely as well as improve passenger services.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Why does the Secretary of State not face the facts concerning both the National Bus Company and other bus company services? Does he realise that the early morning mileage of NBC services is down by 37 per cent., that evening mileage is down by 48 per cent., and that Sunday mileage is down by 53 per cent.? National Welsh intends to withdraw completely its children's concessionary fare. Is that not the clearest indication possible that the right hon. Gentleman's policy is failing? It is no excuse to say, "Wait until October, when everything will be confirmed."

Mr. Ridley: When will the hon. Gentleman wake up to the fact that he is telling only half the story? He knows perfectly well that to get half the Sunday services on 75 per cent. of all routes for no subsidy leaves more subsidy to provide the other half.

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

4. **Mr. Martin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last discussed with the management of British Rail the effects of British Railways Board procurement policy on BREL.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend has discussed this with the chairman, but the BR Board's procurement policy and its specific effect on British Rail Engineering Ltd. remain matters for management decision.

Mr. Martin: I have met the Minister, the deputy director of BR and of BREL, all of whom have stated that there will always be a presence in the Springburn railway engineering workshops, small though they are. Will the Minister help to dampen the rumours recorded in newspapers since Friday that there will be complete closure of the Springburn workshops, which, if true, means that people have been telling me lies for the past 18 months?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman agrees that proposals which affect employment should be discussed first with the unions. There is to be a meeting tomorrow between British Rail and its unions to discuss its proposals as they affect BREL.

Mr. Coombs: Will my hon. Friend give an estimate of the number of new jobs that have been created as a result of the Government's major investment programme in British Rail? Will he also say whether any jobs have gone overseas as a result of the programme?

Mr. Mitchell: I do not know the precise number of jobs, but I can tell the House that £2·5 billion has been invested by British Rail since the Conservative party came to office. Virtually all that money has been spent in the United Kingdom, thus creating a large number of jobs. I do not have the specific number. I shall write to my hon. Friend.

Mr. Bagier: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that Ministers know nothing about the contents of the statement to be made tomorrow? Is the hon. Gentleman prepared to admit that the weakend's rumours are based on facts and that there are to be massive cuts in BREL? How much of that has been brought about by pressure from Ministers in order to get rid of the part of the industry that is not paying, and to get the other half ready for privatisation?

Mr. Mitchell: The changes that British Rail proposes to make about BREL are matters for discussion between the management and the unions. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, as a good trade unionist, recognises that it is right that the proposals should first be disclosed to the unions that represent the men involved. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State hopes to make a statement in the House tomorrow.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Is the Minister aware that the Springburn works have a reputation not only in Scotland and the United Kingdom generally, but world wide? Is he further aware that, quite apart from the hundreds of jobs that might go, its closure would be a black mark against engineering in the United Kingdom throughout the world? Will he come clean with the House and say what the Government intend to do about the works?

Mr. Mitchell: The distribution of work between one rail works and another is entirely a matter for the BREL management. As BR announced earlier this year, it intends to change the pattern of its maintainance work so that works, including Springburn, will be associated directly with the maintainance work of the areas and regions in which they operate.

Mr. Sackville: Is my hon. Friend aware of the recent announcement of substantial and unexpected losses at the BREL foundry at Horwich? Will he confirm that he is aware of the foundry's importance to employment in the town and that he is keeping the situation under review?

Mr. Mitchell: I can assure my hon. Friend. I have been to Horwich and seen what has been happening there. I have also been involved in the increasing effort to provide employment there and at Shildon, where a major part of the rail works has been closed. I shall of course keep what my hon. Friend said in mind.

Mrs. Dunwoody: Will the Minister have the honesty to admit that it is his policy that is causing BREL to retract at this speed? Can he give the House any idea how many of the BREL workshops have to close before he will lift a finger to protect the thousands of jobs involved in this engineering industry?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Lady is quite wrong to say that that is my policy or the Government's policy. Let me make the cause absolutely clear. It is the result of massive investment in new rolling stock that we have acceded to BR's request to make. If there is investment in new rolling stock, less maintainance is required. There is no point in keeping maintainance capacity when there is no demand for it.

Mr. Adley: Although I acknowledge the investment that the Government have authorised in BR, will my hon. Friend nevertheless look at the legislation was passed as long ago as 1929 under which the Government authorised expenditure to alleviate unemployment by the acquisition, by Britain's then private railways, of locomotives and rolling stock and by vast numbers of schemes to improve the permanent way and safety? Is my hon. Friend convinced that social circumstances today are any different from social circumstances then with regard to these jobs?

Mr. Mitchell: The resources that BR devotes to rolling stock and track maintenance are a matter for BR. It wants to achieve the most cost-effective service possible to persuade passengers to use the railways rather than the roads. It can attract passengers only if it runs an efficient and cost-effective service. That must be a management decision.

Mr. Snape: Does the Minister agree that the Department of Transport's policy of minimum resources for BR means that the existing intercity fleet is not big enough to meet demand, that the excessive demands on BR rolling stock are leading to the bad punctuality figures that are filling our newspapers, that in Wolverton, Eastleigh, Doncaster and Glasgow up to 4,000 people will lose their jobs as a result of an announcement that is to be made tomorrow, and that tomorrow we expect to see the organ grinder at the Dispatch Box accounting for his bankrupt philosophies rather than hiding, as he usually does, behind the jacket, if not the skirts, of the Minister of State?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman has rather overrun himself. I have never worn a skirt in my life. What the hon. Gentleman said about minimum resources for BR is arrant nonsense. The maintenance requirements are down because of the massive investment in new rolling stock.

Mr. Martin: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the unsatisfactory nature of that reply, I beg to give notice that I shall seek to raise the matter on the Adjournment.

Freight (Grants)

5. **Mr. Leadbitter** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what was the cash limit for grants under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 for the years 1979 to 1986, inclusive; and what was the total sum authorised for section 8 expenditure in those years.

Mr. David Mitchell: The total cash limit for all freight facilities grants in the period 1979-80 to 1985-86 inclusive was £65·5 million. In the same period total expenditure was £43·8 million, which includes £1·4 million for waterway grants. All figures relate to England, Scotland and Wales.

Mr. Leadbitter: Will the Minister give some precise information about this year? It is suggested that the authorisation limits have now been reached and that any further applications under section 8 will not be accepted. Is that the position? Will the Minister clarify what the position is this year so that the industry may know what response to expect from its applications?

Mr. Mitchell: The cash limit for this year is £7·3 million. I shall be surprised if we have claims that equal that amount.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister categorically state that the applications in the pipeline will be processed and that any new applications that might be forthcoming to his Department in the next three or four weeks will not be held up or grant refused because of a lack of money?

Mr. Mitchell: I have no reason to believe that there will be rationing through lack of money. Throughout the period to which I referred the claims have never equalled the amount of money that has been available. In both the past two years I have approved record numbers of grants.

Channel Tunnel

6. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his latest discussions with interested parties concerning the Channel tunnel project.

Mr. Ridley: We hold frequent discussions with the concessionaires, the French Government, local authorities and other interested groups, particularly in Kent.

Mr. Adley: I understand the opposition of certain hon. Members from Kent and of the Transport and General Workers Union, which is perfectly respectable. However, does my right hon. Friend agree that it is altogether different to find commercial interests such as Sealink deliberately trying to thwart the will of the House in this matter? As the project has, I believe, received the support of all the Opposition parties, will my right hon. Friend ensure that they are kept fully informed and that he takes them along with him in all the steps he needs to take to get the Bill through the House?

Mr. Ridley: It is for hon. Members to decide what they do and say in Committees and in the House. In response to my hon. Friend, I must point out that there are about £800 million worth of railway orders involved in the Channel tunnel project, and every week that the Bill does not get through the House is a week in which those orders cannot find their way into the workshops of the country to remedy such problems as we were discussing earlier.

Incidentally, I welcome my hon. Friend back to the House. I hear that he has not been well, and we are all glad to see him back.

Mr. Boyes: Will the Secretary of State inform interested parties that on 1 May, during business questions the Leader of the House told me that he was considering setting up a Committee to look at the opposed private Bill procedure? Will the Secretary of State say that he will take into consideration any recommendations by that Committee, thereby encouraging a more open and democratic decision-making process on thiss unnecessary, unacceptable and unwanted project?

Mr. Ridley: Although that question is not remotely a matter for me in my responsibilities, I must make it clear that I would welcome the setting up of the inquiry referred to by the hon. Gentleman. I believe that there is a great deal that we can do to improve procedures in that area. I only hope that it will be possible for the Channel tunnel and other such schemes to get through the House in reasonably good order so that we can contribute to creating jobs throughout the country.

Mr. Soames: When my right hon. Friend is considering the Channel tunnel project, will he bear in mind the shambles that has been caused on the M25 by the inaccuracy of the planning of officials in his Department? What confidence can my right hon. Friend have in the forecast traffic levels for the Channel tunnel project?

Mr. Ridley: Forecasting is always a hazardous business. It may be that 12 years ago those who forecast and planned parts of the M25 underestimated it. However, I am not sure that it is right to prejudge the nature of the cause of the congestion on the M25. It may be due to traffic signing or badly designed junctions. That is not quite the same thing as a shortage of capacity.

Mr. Dalyell: What estimate has been made of the effect of delay on jobs, which are likely to be lost? What have the French had to say about what is going on in the House of Commons?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman will know that about 65,000 man-years of employment are involved in the project, and every week that it is delayed is a week when that employment does not find its way to the factories and workshops of Britain.

In response to his second question, I think that it would be difficult to explain to a Frenchman, in my appallingly bad French, the processes that cause us to take so long to do what the French say they can do in three months.

Mr. Baldry: Does my right hon. Friend not think it strange that those who constantly urge and exhort us to spend more on infrastructure are always in the vanguard of those who oppose any specific infrastructure project, whether it be the Channel tunnel or the building of a new motorway?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I have had three experience of that — Stansted airport, the

Okehampton bypass and the London docklands light railway. Now there is the Channel tunnel. They are all major infrastructure projects involving thousands of jobs, and on every occasion Opposition Members have voted against them.

Mr. Robert Hughes: Will the Secretary of State be a bit more forthcoming? He constantly repeats at the Dispatch Box the number of jobs involved, yet when he is asked specifically to provide Government machinery to make sure that the jobs come to England, Scotland and Wales, he says that it is nothing to do with him. If he wants his bread buttered on both sides, and jam as well, the fact is that he has the responsibility for ensuring that, and he must take it. Otherwise, people will listen with some scepticism to his protestations about wanting the jobs.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows full well that I do not have the power to direct a private organisation, such as Eurotunnel, as to where it should place its contracts. Indeed, it would be against the European Community rules if I were to seek to do so. On the other hand, the hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that massive opportunities exist for British firms, and I have no doubt that with their keenness and effectiveness they will secure more than their fair share.

Mr. Meadowcroft: What is the Secretary of State's current estimate of when work is likely to commence on the Channel tunnel? Will there be genuine new through routes across London when the tunnel is open, which will be essential if I am to convince my constituents that the tunnel is not just for the south-east of England?

Mr. Ridley: I cannot answer the hon. Gentleman's first question about when work will start on the tunnel, because that would be to prejudge the time that Parliament will take to consider the legislation, but I can assure him that the Channel Tunnel Group wishes to start as soon as Royal Assent is given. The hon. Gentleman will know that, on the best estimate, the tunnel might not be operative until 1993. British Rail is actively pursuing ways of opening up the tunnel not only to all points east of Calais but to all points north and west of Dover. It will put forward its plans in due course.

Mr. Thurnham: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the project should provide many thousands of jobs among suppliers of equipment and materials, particularly in the north of England, and that any delay is to be deplored?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. It is a massive infrastructure programme, involving large numbers of jobs, which will be distributed equally all over the country. All regions will benefit.

Bus Lanes

7. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will investigate the effectiveness of bus lanes in London on roads for which he is responsible.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Dubs: Does the Minister agree that buses in London benefit a great deal from having clear bus lanes? May I ask him, yet again, to look at the bus lane in Park lane? If the Minister were to go down there on a Monday to Friday at any time when the bus lane is in operation, he would find it filled with vehicles that use it as a parking lane.

Mr. Bottomley: I have to report to the House that I have been down Park lane on a bus. I took a sandwich with me, and it was unfinished when I reached the other end. Unlike frogs, which eat with their eyes closed, I had mine open. Neither the bus nor the other traffic was held up.

Mr. Higgins: Will my hon. Friend take overall responsibility for all roads with bus lanes and other unnecessary obstructions — for example, those at the Aldwych and on Westminster bridge? Why do we have what looks like a new parking lot for buses on Westminster bridge, because of the curious obstruction at its far end?

Mr. Bottomley: As the suggestion comes from my right hon. Friend, I must take it seriously. Like the first inhabitants of Burkina Faso, the land of the wise men, otherwise known as Upper Volta, I might wonder whether it is right to take all those powers into my Department's hands. I have to report that I have been across Westminster bridge and down Aldwych and the Strand and I was not held up by the traffic.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Minister aware that London Regional Transport estimates that bus lanes in London saved £9·9 million last year? Is that not a good reason for extending the bus lane network across London, because it would speed the flow of traffic through London? Is he further aware that a recent reply from the Secretary of State for the Environment revealed that the Department issued 429 parking tickets last year to civil servants who ignored bus lanes and double yellow lines? Will he encourage civil servants to park properly, so that buses and other traffic can be speeded up?

Mr. Bottomley: We can do many things with statistics. We can say that Anne Boleyn had six fingers or that 18 per cent. of people share their baths. However, it is more important to consider each bus lane to see whether it is worth while.

Heavy Goods Vehicles (Driver Tests)

8. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what changes he proposes to make to the fees charged for the heavy goods vehicle driver tests.

Mr. Ridley: I have been consulting industry about proposals to unify the time allotted and fees charged for heavy goods vehicle and public service vehicle driving tests. The effect would be a common test time of 90 minutes and a common fee of £40. For heavy goods vehicle tests, this is a reduction of £25. I shall shortly be inviting the House to approve regulations to make the new lower fee effective from 1 July 1986.

Mr. Evennett: I thank my right hon. Friend for his reply. How much does he envisage the reduced fees will save the freight industry per annum?

Mr. Ridley: The figure is about £1 million. I shall be interested to know whether the major reduction in the fee will receive as much publicity as it would have done if it had been an increase.

M25 (Epping Forest)

9. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will pay an official visit to those parts of the Epping Forest constituency where residents suffer from noise and lighting from the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has already done so by opening it. I shall visit it too.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my hon. Friend aware that my constituents will be grateful for the fact that he will be seeing for himself how far his Department's undertaking on landscaping, tree planting and lighting have been carried out? Will he take the opportunity to meet some of the sufferers in places such as Theydon Garnon, Roundhills and Woodbine Close?

Mr. Bottomley: Yes, Sir.

Pedestrian Crossings

10. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received from highway authority associations about the criteria for the provision of pedestrian crossings.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We are considering suggestions that greater allowance should be made for the needs and safety of school children.

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend's answer will be welcomed. Will he encourage local highway authorities not to stick rigidly to criteria based on numbers of traffic or pedestrians, but to be more flexible in their approach, taking into account the speed of traffic as well as numbers and especially the needs of the community and the need to get the two halves of the community together?

Mr. Bottomley: The key point which my hon. Friend makes and which I support, is that guidelines should be correct, and local authorities should use them appropriately.

Tolled Crossings

11. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will now respond to the report of the Transport Committee on tolled crossings, H.C. 250-1, published on 19 February.

Mr. Ridley: I am considering the report, which was published on 12 March. I shall respond as soon as possible.

Mr. Hughes: Before going ahead with his proposal in October this year to appeal against the High Court decision to reject his decision to increase tolls on the Severn bridge by 150 per cent., will the right hon. Gentleman consider the horrific unemployment in Wales? If he does, he will be more likely to respond positively to the recommendations of the Select Committee.

Mr. Ridley: It would be wrong to prejudge my response to the Select Committee report and to comment on matters before the Appeal Court in relation to the Severn bridge tolls. I fear that the hon. Gentleman must be disappointed in his desire to know my views on those matters.

Mr. Hickmet: What did my right hon. Friend mean when he told the Select Committee that the Humber bridge was an exceptional problem? Does he concur with the report of the Select Committee that the Humber bridge is in an impossible financial situation and is losing more than £20 million a year, which is the deficit over income? Does he agree that the time has come to abolish the toll on this bridge, which is increasingly used by fewer and fewer people?

Mr. Ridley: I agree that the circumstances in which the Humber bridge was built were indeed exceptional. It is the only example of the cost of winning a by-election that is known to this House. I fear that it falls to the Conservative Government to sort out this problem, and for some time I have asked the Humber Bridge Board to put forward proposals for discussion. It has just asked for a meeting, and that will be held as soon as possible to determine the best way forward.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Derry Mainwairing Knight

48. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Attorney-General on what date it was decided to prosecute Mr. Derry Mainwairing Knight; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General (Sir Michael Havers): The Director of Public Prosecutions decided to prosecute Mr. Derry Mainwairing Knight on 20 May 1985.

Mr. Greenway: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of estimates that the "Satan trial", which lasted 36 days, cost up to £500,000 and that some lawyers were paid as much as £30,000 in fees? Does he share my concern that for some people the cost of justice looks too high?

The Attorney-General: The figure of £500,000 is a gross exaggeration. I have made preliminary inquiries, but I do not yet have the full figures. A number of lawyers, both solicitors and barristers, would not agree with my hon. Friend's second point.

Legal Aid

49. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's present review of legal aid funding.

51. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Attorney-General if he will publish the results of the legal aid efficiency scrutiny.

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): The report is expected in about a month's time. It will be published as soon as this can conveniently be arranged.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to the Solicitor-General for that promise to publish the report of the Treasury efficiency unit. Will he give an assurance that in their search for savings and extra money for the profession the Government will protect the interests of the consumers of legal services under the legal aid system? Does he acknowledge the now widespread fear that we are getting a second-class service for the most vulnerable sectors of the community?

The Solicitor-General: I do not acknowledge the latter part of the question, nor would the Lord Chancellor. The scrutiny was set up with no preconceived ideas, but it is of concern to everyone, especially taxpayers, that the cost of legal aid in real terms has doubled since 1979.

Mr. Dubs: I welcome the decision to publish the report. Does the Solicitor-General agree that efficiency is only one of several matters of concern about the legal aid system, and that many people believe that a wider ranging review of the scheme would have been of benefit both to the legal profession and to people who depend upon legal aid?

The Solicitor-General: I agree that efficiency is very important, but it is not the whole story.

Mr. Hickmet: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the great deficiencies of the legal aid system is the fact that if the litigant has an income below a certain level legal aid is forthcoming but that consequently a vast section of the public come into an income category which means that they are not able to obtain legal aid, even though at the same time, because of legal costs, they are unable to prosecute or defend cases?

The Solicitor-General: I think that litigation should generally be avoided. The fact remains that very nearly 80 per cent. of our fellow countrymen who receive legal aid do so free of contribution. That is a substantial preponderance.

Mr. Janner: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that the question he was asked was absolutely right, because there is no justice in this country for the vast majority of people who do not qualify for legal aid and cannot afford to go to court without it? What will he do to increase legal aid so that ordinary people with ordinary incomes can get ordinary justice from our courts, so that they do not remain like the Waldorf hotel – open to all?

The Solicitor-General: In legal aid, as elsewhere, the more one does, the more one may do. The Lord Chancellor has a very good record in the extension of the availability of legal aid. For example, legal aid has been extended to patients appearing before mental health review tribunals, and there is now the 24-hour duty solicitor scheme for all suspects held at police stations. People have had to wait for a Conservative Government before that has been achieved. Therefore, I do not feel that the implicit criticism of the Lord Chancellor is justified.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Does the Solicitor-General accept that some of those denied access to legal aid are bitter at their inability to go to court and defend themselves? Has he ever considered linking legal aid to the law centre provision so that there is some balance between the two which would enable more people to take part in the legal process?

The Solicitor-General: I expect that it is my fault, but I have not followed the later part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Apart from a few exceptions, law centres are not funded from Government funds, and it is right that they should not be. I quite understand that somebody outside the financial limits for legal aid may wish that he were within them. However, there must be a limit to the amount spent on legal aid. I repeat that twice the sum in real terms is being spent this year than was spent in 1979.

Mr. Ryman: Can the Government do something to protect people who are sued by a legally-aided plaintiff, spend a great deal of time and money defending the case and cannot recover their costs? I have always thought that the provision is unfair. I believe that many people in the legal profession think it is wrong that a non-legally aided person who defends a case and wins can never recover the costs against the legal aid fund. Are the Government looking into that?

The Solicitor-General: I acknowledge the sense of injustice that is apparent, but I cannot hold out any prospect of a change in the rules. Legal aid committees should pay careful attention, as I believe they do, to the merits of a proposed case before granting legal aid certificates.

Terrorism (Treason Charges)

50 **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Attorney-General why no charges of treason have been brought against alleged terrorists; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: While treason remains available for an appropriate case, there are substantial problems in bringing a prosecution based on the language of a statute designed for the different circumstances of more than six centuries ago. The common law remedy of murder, coupled with legislation on explosives and firearms, has proved both appropriate and effective for all recent cases.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that I do not find his answer wholly convincing, having regard to the recent announcement on this matter by the Lord Chancellor?

The Attorney-General: I know of my hon. Friend's great interest in this matter. I think that there was an early day motion in his name on the subject some 12 years ago. One must realise that the 600-year-old statute is couched in such archaic language that it would be difficult to prove all the necessary ingredients of the crime and for a modern jury to come to grips with the terminology. It should be remembered that the Act was originally intended to deal with rival claimants to the throne in the 14th century, or where the country was at war with a foreign power. Fortunately, those conditions do not prevail today.

Mr. Merlyn Rees: In view of that answer, why does the head of the judiciary, the Lord Chancellor, keep suggesting the use of the Act?

The Attorney-General: The Lord Chancellor was speaking in his personal capacity. As the House will know, the only people who have ministerial responsibility to this House for prosecutions are my hon. and learned Friend and myself.

Mr. Stokes: As there is a capital penalty for crimes of treason, arson of the royal dockyards and certain other crimes, which I shall not specify, would it not be convenient to add terrorism to the list? Regarding history, surely the dangers now are greater, but the penalties seem weaker.

The Attorney-General: The penalties would be the same under the Treason (Felony) Act 1848, for example, but, as I said in my initial answer, the Treason Act 1351 remains available in appropriate circumstances.

Mr. John Morris: Will the Attorney-General confirm that there have been no cases of peacetime treason this century? Was he confirming a moment ago that constitutionally responsibility for prosecution is his and that the Lord Chancellor, while head of the judiciary, has no role in it? If the Lord Chancellor's recent speech at Grantham was a criticism that no treason charges were preferred in the Knightsbridge bomb case, which he gave as an example, will the Attorney-General remind the Lord Chancellor that, while we would all condemn any act of terrorism, the House, on a free vote, rejected the restoration of capital punishment for terrorist murder?

The Attorney-General: The right hon. and learned Gentleman is right. The constitutional position remains the same.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Aid Levels

53. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the total levels of aid planned for the current financial year for *(a)* countries of the Commonwealth and *(b)* other countries.

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): From bilateral country programmes, about £440 million and £110 million, respectively.

Mr. Janner: In the light of the proposed financial aid to Commonwealth countries during the coming financial year, why are the Government proposing to reduce, however slightly, aid to India, when the need is growing? Why, when considering the implementation of the retrospective terms of adjustment, are other countries to be freed from the responsibility of repaying loans incurred before 1975, when Her Majesty's Government are to insist upon India meeting its loans, thereby making our aid worth about half its paper value?

Mr. Raison: We have a special arrangement over retrospective terms adjustment with India, which includes our extremely valuable poverty focus element. We shall continue to provide India with far and away the largest of our bilateral programmes.

Sir Anthony Kershaw: Does not India get the best deal from us of any country? Are not the needs of all countries equally claimant and difficult to decide against?

Mr. Raison: I have a difficult job in allocating aid. My hon. Friend is right. Our programme to India is of great importance, and it is highly regarded by the Indians themselves.

Mr. Ashby: Does my right hon. Friend welcome Mr. Geldof's efforts through Sport Aid, and what are the Government doing to help Sport Aid?

Mr. Raison: Like everybody, I greatly welcome and admire what is happening through Sport Aid, as I did the efforts of Live Aid and Band Aid. The money provided by the latter two, £26 million, to help with the emergency in Africa was a valuable addition to the £190 million provided by the British Government over the past two years. We are funding the offices from which Sport Aid is organised.

International Fund for Agricultural Development

54. **Mr. Tom Clarke** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will estimate the share of contracts granted to United Kingdom countries by the International Fund for Agricultural Development as a percentage of the total number of external contracts offered by the organisation since its inception.

Mr. Raison: By the end of 1984, 5·6 per cent. by value of IFAD's total spending was on British goods and services. We won 21 per cent. of procurement placed outside the benefiting countries.

Mr. Clarke: How does the Minister defend the Government's astonishing attitude to the special fund for sub-Saharan Africa, in view of the fact that this country obtained 47 per cent. of non-local contracts, in spite of competition from Germany, the United States, Japan and other countries? Why are the Government being so insensitive to the agricultural needs of the area, as well as throwing away jobs?

Mr. Raison: We are playing our full part in the replenishment of IFAD. I see the merits of the special fund, but the more we provide to multilateral agencies, the less we can provide for bilateral aid. Our billateral aid is largely a tied programme, and it is highly effective. I am not anxious to see it whittled away.

Mr. Beith: Will we not lose contracts for British firms if we do not contribute to the special programme? Is not the record of the IFAD programme in giving aid directly to agricultural production good, and does it not compare favourably with much of our direct aid?

Mr. Raison: That programme does not yet have a record, because it has not yet come into being. Only a limited number of countries are subscribing to it. If we switch money from the bilateral to the multilateral programme, we shall lose the return on the bilateral programme, even though we make it up on the multilateral spending.

Sub-Saharan Countries

55. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will report progress on co-ordination with other countries to ensure a concerted programme to help sub-Saharan African countries with their agricultural development programmes.

Mr. Raison: There is widespread acceptance among bilateral and multilateral donors that their efforts in agricultural development and in other sectors should be co-ordinated, in support of policies agreed with recipient countries. I expect that the United Nations Special Session on Africa later this month will also focus attention on this subject.

Mr. Chapman: I accept that there are good and logical reasons why this country should not contribute to the special IFAD fund, for the reasons that my right hon. Friend has given. Nevertheless, does he agree that co-ordination between donor countries is vital if we are to remove the scourge of famine from sub-Saharan countries? Can my right hon. Friend provide examples of co-ordination, and will he assure the House that the United Kingdom Government will play a leading part in the United Nations Special Session to deal with agricultural development in Africa?

Mr. Raison: I assure my hon. Friend that we shall be very active in the United Nations Special Session. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs plans to attend, and so do I. As for co-ordination, we have already played a very prominent part in backing the efforts of the World Bank consultative groups, the United Nations development programme round tables, other World Bank activities and a variety of donor co-ordinating efforts, particularly those which are carried on in recipient countries.

Mr. Deakins: What prevents Britain from spending a greater proportion of its aid to sub-Saharan Africa on rural and agricultural development? Is there a policy block, or is it just that that is the way things have been done in the past and it is very difficult to change them?

Mr. Raison: I am ready to consider proposals for increased and further agricultural aid, because I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is very important. However, one has to remember that it is a question not only of this country accepting proposals but of the recipient Governments making a commitment to agricultural proposals as opposed to others.

Voluntary Agencies

56. **Mr. Stuart Holland** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he intends to make increased provision to the voluntary agencies concerned with development over the next three years.

Mr. Raison: The voluntary agencies provide very cost-effective aid to some of the poorest communities in the developing world. Our support for the agencies has increased considerably in recent years, and I expect to continue to offer them substantial financial support in the future.

Mr. Holland: Will the Minister come clean about how much he will contribute, because he did not in his reply say how much that might be? Does he intend at least to keep the increase in contributions in line with inflation? If not, in effect there will be a real cut. Despite all that he has said about his support for such excellent intitiatives as Sport Aid, if the Government's contributions to voluntary agencies cannot be increased in real terms, Sport Aid is the privatisation of what should be the Government's support policy.

Mr. Raison: It is not the Government's practice to publish detailed figures for three years ahead. If the hon. Gentleman looks at our record in the voluntary sector since 1979, he will find that our support for the British volunteer programme has increased by no less than 101 per cent. in real terms and that our support for the joint funding scheme has increased, again in real terms, by 41 per cent. That represents a major increase in support to the voluntary sector.

Mr. Forman: Does my right hon. Friend accept that many of his right hon. and hon. Friends think that to increase the provision for the voluntary agencies is a most cost-effective way of using the funds that are available for the aid programme? Does he take heart from the paragraph in the Tokyo summit declaration that makes it clear that the Prime Minister and all the other Heads of Government are committed to maintaining and, where appropriate, increasing official aid from this country and from the other countries involved?

Mr. Raison: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the Government's support for the voluntary sector. I have already said that our support has been outstanding. I, too, was heartened by the Tokyo summit communiqué.

Equatorial and Tropical Forests

57. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is his policy towards aid projects which affect the conservation of equatorial and tropical forests.

Mr. Raison: Our policy is to support the wise use and replenishment of the forests. In doing so we have accepted the Food and Agriculture Organisation's tropical forest action plan as a valuable framework for our actions.

Mr. Spearing: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he assure the House that special attention will be given where there is objection to any aid project for which he is responsible which does not comply with the criteria that he has laid down? What action are Her Majesty's Government taking in respect of aid projects from other countries which do not meet the criteria which he outlined?

Mr. Raison: I accept that it is important that our aid projects should have full regard to environmental and human factors. As I have told the House, I have made representations to the president of the World Bank stressing our belief in the importance of giving proper regard to the environmental factors in respect of other aid programmes; and, of course, we are happy to discuss that with our fellow donors through the various means of donor co-ordination.

Public Expenditure (Aid)

58. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proportion of total public expenditure was spent on overseas aid in 1985.

Mr. Raison: For the financial year 1985-86 provisional figures indicate that overseas aid accounted for 0·84 per cent. of total public expenditure.

Mr. Alton: I thank the Minister for that reply. Will he confirm that as a percentage of GDP that is a lower precentage than in the late 1970s, and, despite Live Aid, Band Aid and the famine in africa, we are spending less now in real terms than we were then? Do the Government have any plans for increasing the amount of money spent on overseas aid?

Mr. Raison: There has been a fall in percentage terms since 1979. On the other hand, the aid programme is now broadly stable as a proportion of planned public expenditure, and we have had an increase in real terms this year over last year.

South Africa

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Sir Geoffrey Howe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on South African incursions into Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

As the House knows, a number of locations in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe were attacked early this morning. The South African defence forces have acknowledged that they were responsible for these attacks, full details of which are not yet available.

My hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker) has already summoned the South African chargé to ask for an urgent explanation. She expressed to him our grave concern. Our ambassador in South Africa has been instructed to seek an early call on the South African Foreign Minister.

Our high commissioners in Gabarone, Lusaka and Harare have been instructed to convey to their host Governments the British Government's concern at these attacks and to seek further details about them, including any indication of casualties.

We have always made plain our opposition to cross-border violence and have consistently condemned the resort to force by South Africa against her neighbours. Today's attacks by the South African defence forces represent a plain violation of the sovereignty of three fellow Commonwealth countries It is particularly deplorable that they should have taken place while the Commonwealth Group of Eminent Persons were in South Africa, seeking to promote a process of dialogue which would lead to the ending of apartheid, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. Today's events underline the urgent need for just such a suspension of violence.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Yet again the South African Government have committed acts of aggression against front-line states. Yet again the sovereignty of independent Commonwealth Governments has been infringed by acts of state terrorism by the South African Government. Following President Botha's speech last Thursday, when he spoke against meddling foreigners, does that not show that South Africa is rejecting possibly its last chance of proceeding to a relatively bloodless evolution to majority rule via the mediation of the Eminent Persons Group, which, after all, our Prime Minister put forward at Nassau last October as a means, in her isolation, of preventing effective sanctions against South Africa?

President Botha, by this raid, has sent us a clear message. What a limp message the Foreign Secretary has sent in reply. Is the Foreign Secretary aware that Bishop Tutu has just said that the world awaits what the Prime Minister and President Reagan will do now, as always in the past the Prime Minister and President Reagan have vetoed mandatory sanctions against South Africa?

Does the Foreign Secretary not recognise that because of what happened at the Tokyo summit, and because of our isolated stance at the Luxembourg meeting last September with EEC Foreign Ministers and our isolated stance at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Nassau last October, we are perceived in the world as South Africa's best friend? The Foreign Secretary proposes to show our disapproval of this incursion by asking the Minister of State to wag her finger at the South African chargé d'affaires. This is an absurdly weak response, but how typical of the Government.

Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman now take the lead in seeking the full implementation of the range of measures agreed at Luxembourg in September and at Nassau in October? In the letter and spirit of Luxembourg, how can he justify the South African military attachés accredited to Britain remaining en poste in London? In the light of the decision at Nassau last October, how can we still allow the importation of Krugerrands? Will he now send to President Botha a message that he will understand? What better reason than this aggression is there for immediately proceeding with selective sanctions against South Africa?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand the indignation that the hon. Member for Swansea, East (Mr. Anderson) seeks to express in his questions. I deny absolutely the suggestion that the Government have adopted an isolated stance. We have condemned apartheid, and shall continue to condemn it, without reservation, and we wish it to be abolished as soon as possible. We wish that abolition to be achieved without the condemnation of all the peoples of South Africa to a bloodbath of violence. For that reason, the Prime Minister and the Government were able to take the lead at Nassau and in the European Community in promoting an effective opportunity for a peaceful solution through the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. When it has suited them, Opposition Members have been only too willing to endorse the legitimacy and effectiveness of that group. Let us start from the common ground.

We wish to bring about an early end to apartheid in South Africa. We wish that to be brought about by peaceful means, and the Eminent Persons Group is the most effective instrument devised so far for achieving that. As I said in my statement, it is for that reason that we regret this series of attacks. I have described as particularly deplorable the fact that they are taking place at this time. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members wished to address themselves seriously to trying to bring about what is necessary, they should stop shouting about it in their present absurd fashion. We have made our condemnation clear and will consider with our partners what further action may be necessary. Our objective will be to bring about a suspension of violence and a cessation of apartheid as soon as possible.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): Should not our judgment of these matters be based, not on the merits or demerits of African Governments, but on international law? What is the international law on these matters? Was the air strike against terrorists in Tunisia consistent with international law?

Mr. Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend raises the matter of the air strike against Tunisia. He will recollect that we condemned that air strike without hesitation as having no foundation in international law.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend said Tunisia.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I apologise, I meant Libya.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Libya was quite different. There we had the plainest possible conclusion that state-directed terrorism was promoted, organised, sustained and directed by the Libyan Government, and it was universally recognised and condemned as such. That must be distinguished from what is happening in this case. One cannot conclude that any of the three Governments concerned have been promoting or inspiring, still less directing, terrorism in South Africa. In addition, we know that the Government of Botswana are at this moment considering with the South African Government means of curtailing terrorism. The circumstances could not be more different.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): The whole House will join the Foreign Secretary in condemning this attack — [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] — this outrageous attack, particularly as it is not justifiable in international law. I am glad, at least, that the Foreign Secretary has not given us a justification in terms of article 51. Will he recognise that he will have to come before the House and the Security Council and agree now to a package of sanctions against South Africa? That is the logic of the present position. The South Africans deliberately undermined the Commonwealth peace initiative. That must now be met with sanctions, which must involve a banning of air flights to and from South Africa and a banning of new investment in South Africa.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the point of view expressed by the right hon. Gentleman, but I do not depart from what I have said about the deplorable nature and timing of what has taken place, particularly because of the powerful efforts that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and others have made in trying to promote the work of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. However, it is too early to come to a judgment on what action should be taken. Certainly the situation is very serious.

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): What representations has my right hon. and learned Friend made to the Governments of the three Commonwealth countries concerned against the quite open and flagrant harbouring of Communist-assisted terrorists?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have made plain our position over a very long period of time. We are opposed to cross-frontier violence of any kind, from whatever country, in southern Africa. Equally I must make it plain to my hon Friend that there is no evidence comparable to that cited in other cases that the front-line Commonwealth Governments concerned have been involved in the promotion, direction or inspiration of terrorism. Certainly there is nothing whatever to justify unprovoked attacks of this kind from South Africa.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): May we come back to the point about international law? Is the Foreign Secretary saying on behalf of the Government that these violations of sovereignty are wrong and that the violation of the sovereignty of Libya, using aircraft from this country, was right?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said in my statement that the attacks by the South African defence forces represent a plain violation of the sovereignty of three fellow Commonwealth countries, and they are to be deplored. I have made it plain to the House on other occasions, and do so again, that in the case of Libya—a totally different case from this—there was the plainest possible evidence of a Government directing and promoting state-sponsored terrorism and attacks on innocent targets. In the case of Libya there is plain evidence of state-sponsored terrorism, but there is no evidence of that kind in this case.

Mr. Tim Rathbone (Lewes): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that there might be a more balanced view on this matter if the Government were in touch with the ANC and were able to talk to it and find out the reactions, not only from the terrorist parts of that organisation, but from the nationalist parts?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: It was for that reason that we took steps to authorise contacts with the ANC at the time of my visit to Lusaka earlier this year and subsequently.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): Will the Foreign Secretary accept that those of us, including my hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody), who visited Gabarone last summer, after that infamous raid, and who saw rooms where young children had been shot in their own beds, regard South Africa as the focus of evil in the international society? Does not what has happened call for more than mere words and platitudes? Will the Foreign Secretary join the three Commonwealth countries concerned in demanding sanctions as the only real response to this outrage?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I entirely sympathise with the point expressed by the hon. Gentleman and by his hon. Friend the Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) about the way in which the incident is bound to be seen in Botswana. I have discussed the earlier incident there on more than one occasion with my opposite number, the Botswanan Foreign Minister, and I know that throughout the earlier part of this year Botswana was engaged in discussions with the South African Government, through a joint commission and other means, about methods of preventing the risk of terrorist action across their frontier. In those circumstances, with a meeting of the joint commission due to take place at the end of this week, I have already deplored this action, particularly with reference to Botswana.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. and learned Friend will recall that our American friends and allies persuaded us that Libya had mounted terrorist attacks from its territory, which justified an attack in turn on Libya. What opportunity has he given our South African friends to tell us of their evidence of terrorist attacks mounted on them from the three countries concerned?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: We have, of course, been in touch with the South African Government on earlier occasions

---

Mr. Forth: This time.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Today, my hon. Friend the Minister of State has been in touch with the South African chargé in London. I cannot emphasise too strongly the lack of similarity between the two events. There is almost universal recognition of sustained, direct, proclaimed Libyan state-sponsored terrorist attacks on innocent people outside that country. The two cases are as different as chalk from cheese.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Leaving aside the fellow travellers of the South African regime who are sitting on the Tory Benches, do not the raids once again demonstrate that the South Africans have no more intention of observing international law than of respecting human and political rights in South Africa? When will the Foreign Secretary realise that a gentle rebuke now and again of the South African authorities is not sufficient? Much stronger action is required. When will the British Government face their responsibilities and recognise that far more effective measures including economic sanctions, are required against that apartheid regime?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If the matter were only one tenth as simple as the hon. Gentleman implies! The Prime Minister and I have made it plain to the South African Government on many occasions that there is an urgent need for them to take the necessary steps to bring apartheid to an end. To that end, with the support of Commonwealth and European Governments, we have promoted the energetic work of the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group. We have invested a lot of effort in that exercise, and that is why we join the whole House in deploring the attacks that have taken place today.

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): If terrorist raids had taken place from those three Commonwealth countries against South Africa's sovereign territory, it would surely have been with the connivance, at the very least, of their Governments.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already said that there is no evidence that any violence by the ANC or anybody else in South Arica is sanctioned, still less directed, by the authorities in Botswana, Zambia and Zimbabwe. At the very time when the attack took place, contacts were made between the Governments of Botswana and South Africa with a view to a further meeting of the joint commission directed towards joint action against such activity.

Mr. Guy Barnett (Greenwich): Did the Foreign Secretary notice that when President Masire of Botswana surveyed the damage done by the brutality of South African troops he described the action as being "completely unprovoked and unwarranted"? He asked:

"What have we done to deserve this?"

Does that not sound like a cry for help to fellow Commonwealth countries? What practical contribution will the Government make to the Government of Botswana in order to repair some of the damage done by South African troops?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have not yet seen the President's observation, but I can well understand why he made it. We shall have to consider that question, and several other matters arising out of it.

Mr. Hugh Dykes (Harrow, East): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the fact that he has made a statement is appreciated in all parts of the House, especially as the United Kingdom Government is in a difficult position, which deserves some sympathy, but do not the raids conclusively show that the regime in Pretoria is not only extremely dislikable, but stupid? After all, it has perpetrated an act that will make it far more difficult for the Eminent Persons Group to reach a successful conclusion. Is there any prospect of this Government, as a leading Government in the Commonwealth, and as they are taking over the EEC presidency on 1 July, making sure that there are renewed initiatives? Is my right hon. and learned Friend still hopeful that the Eminent Persons Group will be successful? Has not the day been brought inevitably closer when full sanctions will be imposed against Pretoria?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the Governments concerned, and others, are bound now to consider how far, and in what way—if at all—the group can continue to play a part. We believe that it should be possible for it to play an important role in the search for a settlement, but obviously this series of raids underlines the urgency of its work. We have made absolutely plain to the South African Government our view of the gravity of the action that they have taken.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not likely that the raids will make it impossible for the CEPG to continue its work, and that the raids might have been designed for that purpose? If that work comes to an end, will that not represent a decisive change in the circumstances under which the Prime Minister said in Bermuda that she was not prepared to contemplate sanctions? Does the Foreign Secretary accept that the British Government's attitude must be completely reassessed if those circumstances arise?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I shall not undertake a reassessment of the Government's attitude in the House of Commons this afternoon. It is plain from what I have said already that the attacks, when the Commonwealth group is in South Africa, are to be particularly deplored. Plainly, they make a substantial difference to the atmosphere in which the group has been trying to do its work. We still believe that it is important to try, if it is humanly possible, to promote a peaceful solution to the troubles of southern Africa.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take into account subsequent business being under the guillotine. I shall allow questions to continue until 4 o'clock, and then we must move on.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's decision to make a statement today, and I welcome what he said. Will he please note that his description of state terrorism as perpetrated by the South Africans seems to be a more accurate use of such a phrase than on other occasions on which it has been used recently by Her Majesty's Government? Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the South Africans have put themselves in exactly the same position as the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the Vietnamese in Kampuchia and the Israelis in the Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Syria, in that they have deliberately invaded and occupied a neighbouring country because they do not like the nature of the regime there?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have made plain our condemnation of the action. I urge my hon. Friend not to press his analogies too far, because what is plainly different is that incursions have taken place into three countries, but no attempt at occupation has been made. That is totally different from my hon. Friend's examples.

Mr. Ted Leadbitter (Hartlepool): The Secretary of State has said several times that he has condemned the action. The interesting question to put to him now is

simply this: if that is all that he is to do, what impact will that condemnation have on President Botha, and what impression will that condemnation, without any other action, have upon the Commonwealth countries affected?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: If that were all that happened, the hon. Gentleman's question might have some sense in it. We are speaking less than 12 hours after the incident took place. I have already made it plain that we shall have to assess the situation carefully—not only on our own—with a view to deciding whether any further action is appropriate.

Mr. John Stokes (Halesowen and Stourbridge): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that Government Members understand the difficulties, particularly in view of our membership of the Commonwealth, but how long are this Government and country planning to behave towards South Africa as if we were a sort of nanny? Surely that independent nation should pursue its own salvation in its own way? Pious protests from us might be counter-productive.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: There is no question of our proceeding as a "sort of nanny". We have important political and economic relations with South Africa, and a large number of British citizens are resident there. We have had historic connections over many years and a profound interest in the prospects of peace in southern Africa. For those reasons, we rightly interest ourselves in the future of that country.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Foreign Secretary not aware that this violent and brutal attack when the Commonwealth group of personages are in South Africa is no accident but is a deliberate policy of destabilisation? Those of us who saw the brutal attacks on people who had nothing to do with politics and the murder of a six-year-old in the street know exactly the degree of savagery of which the South Africans are capable. The right hon. and learned Gentleman must do more than talk.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I understand the hon. Lady's concern. We are all totally affronted and shocked by violence and savagery, in whatever form. For that reason, we have consistently called for a way forward in South Africa in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides. For that reason also, I have already made plain the extent to which we deplore the fact that the action took place while the Commonwealth group was in South Africa.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the ANC is heavily infiltrated by Soviet Marxist forces, which are anti-democratic, and are fulfilling a role of world terror? The raids emphasise only too clearly that the chances of a peaceful solution in South Africa are fast running out. Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the chances of a peaceful solution are based on power sharing that will protect minorities, and that such a solution has been adopted in the past by Switzerland, where the power is based on cantons? Does he believe that such a solution is applicable to South Africa? If so, will he agree to push for one?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Despite our close interest in the future of South Africa, we have, I think rightly, refrained from seeking to offer detailed prescriptions for the constitutional future of that country.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): The right hon. and learned Gentleman has obviously heard of Libya, because he agreed to this country's bases being used in an attack on that country. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman realise that had the British Government attempted to say no, Reagan would have gone ahead in any case?

When will he stop trying to differentiate between state terrorism, whether launched by South Africa, Israel or America, in countries such as Libya and against a possible foe such as Nicaragua?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand how anyone might be tempted to draw parallels and comparisons within the wide number of examples cited by the hon. Gentleman. It is not possible to lump them together in one general categorisation.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend draw the attention of advocates of sanctions to the experience of the Wilson Government in the late 1960s, when they tried to impose sanctions against Rhodesia and failed completely, especially in respect of oil?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: That is one of the reasons why our view of sanctions has always been as we have expressed it many times.

Mr. David Young (Bolton, South-East): Will the Secretary of State take on board the fact that, in the eyes of the world, we are on trial? The Commonwealth is looking at us to see to what degree we put words in place of action. The terrorists in South Africa, who are nothing but a lot of terrorist wolves, recognise a dead sheep when they see one.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I cannot accept the absurd proposition with which the hon. Gentleman started his question.

Mr. Tom Sackville (Bolton, West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the South Africans would be better advised to try to learn something from the remarkable reconciliation and co-existence between blacks and whites in Zimbabwe than to try to disrupt the whole region through such an attack?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: My hon. Friend has made an entirely valid point.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): As the Government in Harare have made it clear that Zimbabwe is not being used for attacks on South Africa, is the Secretary of State prepared to accept any requests from the Government of Zimbabwe, or of any Commonwealth country to erect British anti-aircraft missile systems around the capital cities? Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman prepared to send British military advisers to those countries to safeguard territorial integrity?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: The points raised by the hon. Gentleman went a good deal further than the conclusions that we have drawn from our discussions.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will my right hon. and learned Friend expand on his answer to our hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) concerning the fact that the operation today is a lesser evil than the Israeli incursion into Lebanon? When my right hon. and learned Friend considers what action to take—

[Mr. Tony Marlow]

if he considers taking action—will he bear in mind the action that was taken in respect of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I can understand why my hon. Friend attempted to draw every kind of parallel. It is not easy to deal with the matter in any sensible fashion at this length. The fact is that the Israeli invasion of Lebanon involved both an invasion and an occupation of Lebanon. That is to be distinguished from the incidents taking place today, however deplorable they may be.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, to defend an indefensible regime, the South African Government are now thrashing round wildly in a way which is utterly unaceptable to the civilised world and which, I hope, is unacceptable to us, although it has massive backing on the Conservative Benches, as has been shown clearly today? Will he realise that platitudes give aid and comfort to the Pretoria Government, and that only when some action such as sanctions is taken, and only when the right hon. and learned Gentleman gets President Reagan to do something rather than helping UNITA, will South Africa be stopped from bombing places around them, bombing Angola and occupying Namibia, contrary to the wishes of the United Nations?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I have already made clear our view that these actions are a plain violation of the sovereignty of neighbouring countries and that they are especially deplorable in these circumstances. We shall have to consider what further action may be necessary. I am not prepared, however, to endorse the proposition offered by the hon. Gentleman and to align any of my hon. Friends with support for the apartheid regime, which is condemned and deplored on both sides of the House.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Assuming that the attacks had not been against these military camps, but from them and against South Africa, would my right hon. and learned Friend have made a statement, and, if so, what would it have been?

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I am not able to follow my hon. and learned Friend's reference to attacks from and against South Africa. It seems to me to be a confusion of thought.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Will the Foreign Secretary reconsider his answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South (Mr. Rees)? He said that Libya was as different from South Africa as chalk is from cheese. Is it not a fact that the Federal police in Germany—the Bundeskriminalamt—has said that it has found no connection whatever between the pretext for the bomb in Berlin and the Libyan connection and that Herr Lochte in Hamburg, the head of the Verfassungschutz who is in a position to know, has said that he——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman's question must be related to South Africa.

Mr. Dalyell: It is related to a statement by the Foreign Secretary which is just not true. He said——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have given the hon. Gentleman a good chance. He must get his question in order.

Mr. Dalyell: The Foreign Secretary should not be allowed to get away with things that are factually inaccurate when answering my right hon. Friend the Member for Morley and Leeds, South. The fact is that a man who is in a position to know in the Verfassungschutz has said that he excludes any connection. It is intolerable that the Foreign Secretary should come to the House and by sleight of hand make statements for which there is no factual backing.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we have heard enough for the Foreign Secretary to make a brief reply if he wishes.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: I do not.

Social Security Bill (Allocation of Time)

Ordered,

That the Reports [6th and 15th May] of the Business Committee be now considered.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Report considered accordingly.

Question, That this House doth agree with the Committee in its resolutions, *put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 45 (Business Committee) and agreed to.*

Following are the reports of the Business Committee:

That—

(1) The order in which proceedings on consideration are taken shall be New Clauses, amendments to Clauses Nos. 1 and 2, Schedule No. 1, Clauses Nos 3 to 6, Schedule No. 2, Clauses Nos. 7 to 36, Schedule No. 3, Clauses Nos. 37 to 46, Schedule No. 4, Clauses Nos. 47 to 49, Schedule No. 5, Clauses Nos. 50 to 63, Schedule No. 6, Clauses Nos. 64 to 68, Schedule No. 7, Clauses Nos. 69 to 73, Schedule No. 8, Clauses Nos. 74 to 77, Schedules Nos. 9 and 10, Clauses Nos. 78 to 81 and New Schedules.

(2) The allotted days which under the Order [15th April] are given to the proceedings on consideration and Third Reading shall be allotted in the manner shown in the Table set out below and, subject to the provisions of that Order, each part of the proceedings shall be brought to a conclusion at the time specified in the third column of that Table.

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	Consideration	Midnight
Second day	Consideration	8 pm
	Third Reading	10 pm

That the Resolution of the Committee reported to the House on 6th May be varied by substituting the following provisions for those in the Table at the end of that Resolution:—

TABLE

Allotted day	*Proceedings*	*Time for conclusion of proceedings*
First day	New Clauses	7 pm
	Amendment up to the end of Clause 18	9 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 21	10.30 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 27	Midnight
Second Day	Amendments up to the end of Clause 33	6 pm
	Amendments up to the end of Clause 42	7 pm
	Remaining proceedings on consideration	8 pm
	Third Reading	10 pm

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

[1ST ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

4.5 pm

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether this is the right time to raise this matter, but I am sure that you will tell me if it is not.

Since the Business Committee met to consider the order in which the Bill would be debated and the way in which it would be taken, there have been two important developments. First, the Government have tabled a new clause which reschedules a debate which would have come tomorrow. Secondly, the Government have made an important announcement, of which we had no warning, which makes a difference to the length of a debate which might otherwise have been proposed and possibly accepted. I wonder whether there is any possibility of the Business Committee reconvening to consider the order — I refer to its doing so much later tonight, not immediately.

Mr. Speaker: It might have been a little easier for me if the hon. Lady had raised her point of order before I had put the Question on the motion. I shall look carefully at my selection tomorrow, hopefully to meet the hon. Lady's point. Will that help?

Mrs. Beckett: I am not sure that it will unless starred amendments are taken. I apologise. I had intended to raise the matter earlier, but we were discussing at what point to raise the matter when you put the Question on the motion. I apologise. That was my fault.

Mr. Speaker: I shall look carefully at any starred amendments tomorrow and I hope that that will help the House.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Clerks have laboured hard and honourably, but my name has slipped to the tail of amendment No. 60 and I wonder whether, for the avoidance of doubt, it could be removed in due course.

Mr. Speaker: I shall ensure that it is.

New Clause 20

ACTUARIAL TABLES

'(1) Regulations prescribing actuarial tables for the purposes of any of the provisions to which this section applies—

(a) shall be made only after consultation with the Government Actuary; and

(b) shall not be made unless a draft of them has been laid before Parliament and approved by a resolution of each House.

(2) This section applies—

(a) to sections 44, 44ZA, 44A and 45 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975; and

(b) to section 5 above.

(3) The tables—

(a) shall embody whatever appears to the Secretary of State to be the best practical estimate of the average cost, expressed in actuarial terms and relative to a

[Mr. Speaker]

given period, of making such provision as is mentioned in section 44(5)*(a)* or *(b)*, 44ZA(11)*(b)*, 44A(3) or 45(2) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 or in section 5(12)*(b)* above, as the case may be; and

(b) shall assume for any period an average yield on investments which is not less than the average increase during that period in the general level of earnings obtaining in Great Britain,

but the regulations may provide for them to be adjusted according to whatever is from time to time the actual yield on prescribed investments or the average yield, as shown in prescribed published indices, on prescribed classes of investments.

(4) The Secretary of State may from time to time, and shall when required by subsection (6) below, lay before each House of Parliament—

(a) a report by the Government Actuary on any changes in the factors affecting any of the actuarial tables prescribed for the purposes of any of the provisions to which this section applies; and

(b) a report by the Secretary of State stating whether he considers that the regulations ought to be altered in view of the Government Actuary's report and, if so, what alterations he proposes.

(5) The changes referred to in subsection (4)*(a)* above are, in the case of the first report under that paragraph, changes since the last report under section 46(3)*(a)* of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 and, in the case of a subsequent report under this section, changes since the preparation of the last such report.

(6) The Secretary of State shall lay the first report under this section not later than 6th April 1987 and subsequent reports at intervals of not more than five years.

(7) If in a report under this section the Secretary of State proposes alterations in the regulations, he shall prepare and lay before each House of Parliament with the report draft regulations giving effect to the regulations and to be in force—

(a) from the beginning of such tax year as may be specified in the regulations not earlier than the second tax year after that in which the regulations are made; or

(b) where it appears to him to be expedient for reasons of urgency, an earlier date not earlier than the date on which the regulations are made.

(8) If the draft regulations are approved by resolution of each House, the Secretary of State shall make the regulations in the form of the draft.'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 18, 34, 117 and 133.

Mr. Major: I hope and believe that we can commence the Report stage on a non-contentious note in regard to policy.

There are circumstances in which it is desirable for premiums to be paid to the state effectively to buy people back into the state earnings-related pension scheme as if they had never been contracted out. That would happen, for example, when schemes ended, and the provision is wholly beneficial.

The cost of the premium is calculated by using actuarial tables that are prescribed under section 46 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975. The new clause replaces section 46. All the provisions concerned refer to the cost of providing a guaranteed minimum pension. The actuarial tables include adjustments that are aimed at ensuring that schemes make neither a profit nor a loss as a result of changes in market yields on investments over the period of employment. The new clause reflects that more explicitly, as set out in subsection (3). It also eliminates the need to produce two sets of tables for each type of premium, which was required by the previous wording. It also allows the regulations to be made at a time other than the quinquennial review of the contracted out rebate, although I reassure the House that the quinquennial review will continue.

The new clause deals with existing premiums and those proposed in clause 5 and schedule 2 for protected rights premiums. The amendments in this group are consequential repeals and deletions and lead to what should be a simplification and improvement of present provisions.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his explanation of the new clause.

The actuarial profession has featured increasingly frequently in debates on social security legislation, and it has been put to me by a few members of that profession that they are beginning to feel somewhat over-regulated.

I wonder whether my hon. Friend would care at some stage to bring together all the provisions in the Social Security Act 1985 and its accompanying regulations, and what will be the Social Security Act 1986 and its accompanying regulations, which will be published in the next few years, to show the extent to which he is attempting to vary standard practice in the profession.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend has raised a detailed, technical and interesting point. I understand the observations that he has made on behalf of the actuarial profession. I cannot give him a commitment to respond as he requests, but we will consider the matter carefully.

Mrs. Beckett: We appreciate the Government's deciding to pursue this course, and especially the proposal that the draft order should be laid before the House. That will give us more of an opportunity to scrutinise what is proposed.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 21

Crown Employment

'(1) A person who is employed by or under the Crown shall be treated as an employed earner for the purposes of sections 1 to 15 above.

(2) A person who is serving as a member of Her Majesty's forces shall, while he is so serving, be treated for the purposes of sections 1 to 15 above as an employed earner in respect of his membership of those forces.

(3) The provisions of this Act relating to family credit apply in relation to persons employed by or under the Crown as they apply in relation to persons employed otherwise than by or under the Crown.

(4) Subject to subsection (5) below, the provisions of Part V of this Act apply in relation to persons employed by or under the Crown as they apply in relation to persons employed otherwise than by or under the Crown.

(5) The provisions of that Part of this Act do not apply in relation to persons serving as members of Her Majesty's forces, in their capacity as such.

(6) For the purposes of this section Her Majesty's forces shall be taken to consist of such establishments and organisations as may be prescribed, being establishments and organisations in which persons serve under the control of the Defence Council.'. *[Mr. Major.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following:

Government new clause 22—*Application of Parts I and V to special cases.*

Government amendment No. 56.

Mr. Major: Amendment No. 56 deletes the present clause 16 and enables it to be replaced by clauses 21 and 22 respectively. Clause 16 dealt with Crown employment and requires replacement following changes to the Bill made in Committee. In particular the introduction of statutory maternity pay in part V of the Bill meant that we were faced with either having a second clause dealing with Crown employment or, alternatively, removing the existing provision in clause 16 and introducing a new provision. We have chosen to do the latter as the neater way of achieving our aim. That is the substance of this grouping.

As the House will know, it is normal in social security legislation to apply to Crown employees and members of Her Majesty's forces only those provisions that affect them through their contracts of service where that would be in their best interests. Where it is more advantageous for them to be excluded from the general arrangements that is also generally and traditionally done. For this Bill we are sure that it is right that these groups should be able to participate in the new personal pension scheme arrangements and also in family credit. Consequently, subsections 1 to 3 of the new clause will make that possible.

I should say, in order to eliminate questions, that income support in this regard is not relevant since members of the forces are in full-time employment and special arrangements will exist for rental assistance for service men and women in Crown property. Therefore, housing benefit is also excluded. The special assistance is broadly similar to rent allowances.

Statutory maternity pay is also excluded. For many years it has been the arrangement that members of Her Majesty's forces are excluded from sickness benefit and, in more recent years, from statutory sick pay as well as maternity allowance. There is nothing malign or difficult about this proposition. It is because there are alternative arrangements made for them which are far more convenient for all concerned. It is for that reason only that we have decide to excluded members of Her Majesty's forces from statutory maternity pay and to continue their exclusion from maternity allowance. Subsections (4) and (5) of new clause 21 effectively include Crown employees for these benefits but excludes members of Her Majesty's forces.

New clause 22 gives the Secretary of State powers to make regulations to modify the pension provisions of part I and statutory mate...ty pay so as to make them suitable for mariners, airmen, people outside Great Britain and workers on oil rigs. In seeking the powers, the Government are simply ensuring that regulations can be made, if necessary, to iron out any awkwardness that might arise in adapting the personal pensions and maternity pay proposals for those people who are not employed in conventional jobs on mainland Britain. It repeats the provision which was formerly in clause 16 of the Bill for pensions purposes and it follows the wording of section 22 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982, which made the same provision for statutory sick pay.

I should emphasise again that there is no special reference to income-related benefits in new clause 22 since, whatever special protection may be necessary, can be made under other powers in the Bill. The new clauses do not enter any fresh note of contention into our proceedings and I commend them to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 22

APPLICATION OF PARTS I AND V TO SPECIAL CASES

"(1) Regulations may modify Parts I and V of this Act, in such manner as the Secretary of State thinks proper, in application to any person who is, has been, or is to be—

(*a*) employed on board any ship, vessel, hovercraft or aircraft;

(*b*) outside Great Britain at any prescribed time or in any prescribed circumstances; or

(*c*) in prescribed employment in connection with continental shelf operations.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) above may in particular provide—

(*a*) for any provision of either of those Parts of this Act to apply to any such person, notwithstanding that it would not otherwise apply;

(*b*) for any such provision not to apply to any such person, notwithstanding that it would otherwise apply;

(*c*) for excepting any such person from the application of any such provision where he neither is domiciled nor has a place of residence in any part of Great Britain;

(*d*) for the taking of evidence, for the purposes of the determination of any question arising under any such provision, in a country or territory outside Great Britain, by a British consular official or such other person as may be determined.

(3) In this section "continental shelf operations" means any activities which, if paragraphs (*a*) and (*d*) of subsection (6) of section 23 of the Oil and Gas (Enterprise) Act 1982 (application of civil law to certain off-shore activities) were omitted would nevertheless fall within subsection (2) of that section."—*[Mr. Major.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 29

EARNINGS FACTORS

"The Social Security Act 1975 and the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1977 shall be amended in accordance with Schedule (Earnings factors) to this Act in relation to earnings factors."—*[Mr. Major.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.15 pm

Mr. Major: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 144 to 148 and Government amendment 143.

Mr. Major: New clause 29 is a fiendishly complex provision for which the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) can take part of the blame or credit, according to her own inclination. The hon. Lady teased my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security in Committee with the complexity of the provisions that had to be introduced last year following the 1985 Budget changes in national insurance contributions. I could understand why she did so and, I recall, she did so rather effectively. She will be glad to know that we are now introducing new clause 29 and its accompanying schedule,

[Mr. Major]

which will greatly simplify the position. Let no one, least of all the hon. Lady, doubt that we are a listening Government in this respect.

At present, both flat rate and earnings-related benefit depend on an individual's earnings in any one year on which national insurance contributions are payable. However, the legislation is cast in terms of contributions and that is what employers and the Department of Health and Social Security computers record. To make the link between contributions and earnings, the Social Security Act 1975 and the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 use a device called earnings factors as a multiplier to derive from contributions paid a figure approximating to the earnings on which they were payable. The earnings factors then become the buildings blocks of benefit entitlement. The House may well think that this is a tortuous way round, and I agree. However, that is what the legislation at present does.

The introduction in the 1985 Budget of lower rate contribution bands without any alteration in benefit entitlement did, as the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) intimated in Committee, throw considerable complexity in what was already complicated machinery. Because differential rates of contribution are paid for those with different levels of earnings the value of contributions now gives no exact indication of the earnings to which they relate and hence, the amount of benefit entitlement. Without modification that would have meant that people with lower earnings, whom the national insurance contribution concessions were intended to help, would lose benefit entitlement.

To overcome that problem we introduced, as a temporary expedient in 1985, regulations to allow the earnings factors to be boosted. They were rather complex regulations, but they were introduced so that no one would lose out on benefit. That was intended only as a temporary expedient until the primary legislation could be amended. New clause 29 and its schedule now seek to derive earnings factors directly from the earnings on which class 1 contributions are payable and thus avoid the need for the boosting regulations we currently have. Therefore, to that extent only is it a deregulatory measure. I think that it will be generally welcomed in the House, without exception.

Unfortunately, the House does not have visual aids. Were it to have them I would be able to show an immensely large and complex set of regulations which we hope, in due course, will no longer be needed. Social security legislation tends to complexity, if not opacity, too. Regulations expressed entirely in algebraic formulae do nothing to make the law understandable to those affected by it or those administering it, with the possible exception of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) who showed a remarkable facility for such regulations in Committee. This amendment will remove the need for the artificial boosting arrangements and will enable earnings factors to be calculated more simply. Contributors will still have the advantage of lower rate contributions if they have low earnings, and their earnings-related benefit will link directly to their earnings, as was the case before last year's budget changes.

Therefore, this new clause enshrines the beneficial effect of the reduced rates of national insurance contributions. I hope that the House will agree that this is a sensible amendment which ties up the loose ends left over from the 1985 contribution changes. It is a change which we would have included in last year's Social Security Act, if there had been sufficient time to sort out the details of this rather lengthy amendment, which would simplify life for employers and for the DHSS. Moreover, it will reintroduce precision into the calculation of earnings factors. The present boosting regulations are, for all their complexity, clumsy and are no more than a stop-gap. They were never believed to be more than that. Beneficiaries will continue to receive the benefit to which their contributions properly entitle them. Therefore, I commend the new clause to the House together with amendments Nos. 143 to 148 inclusive, which are technical, and consequential.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister suggested that the existence of this new clause shows that this is a listening Government. It appears to me that its necessity shows the danger of listening to the Treasury, since it was clearly the Department's inability to convince the Treasury of the problems which might arise from the way in which the national insurance contributions were hastily shoved into last year's Bill which has led to the problem. However, we are glad to see it resolved to a degree at least, especially if it makes regulations less complex.

Mr. Stern: Echoing the comments of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), one is delighted to hear that this is a listening Government. However, from my hon. Friend the Minister's introduction to the clause I would suggest that the Government do not always listen to their own Department.

The Inland Revenue is currently carrying out a review of the complex area of the extent to which benefits should be included in earnings for national insurance purposes. The results of the review are not expected for some months, if not longer. I entirely welcome the intention of my hon. Friend the Minister in the new clause, not only to simplify the present complex regulations, but to bring the simplification in from April 1987, but I wonder whether he is underestimating the complexity that already exists, and the extent to which any regulations introduced at this stage in connection with earnings will be outdated in the near future by Inland Revenue practice. I commend my hon. Friend's effort, but I wonder whether it is not a little premature.

Mr. Roger Freeman (Kettering): I concur with my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) in his comment about the complexity of the regulations. I did not have the honour to serve on the Standing Committee that examined the Bill, much to my regret, but surely my hon. Friend's general point is right, that for the ordinary member of a pension fund—either a member of an occupational pension fund, or an employee who merely has the benefit of having made national insurance contributions enabling him to receive the basic state pension or the earnings-related state pension — the calculation of some of those figures is almost beyond comprehension.

I should like to make a suggestion to the Minister, because it is difficult to explain complicated issues such as those in new clause 29 in relation to the calculation of earnings factors. We expect literature from the Government about the specific provisions for portable pensions, which are greatly to be welcomed, and which the House has already dealt with in two earlier new clauses.

I urge the Government, particularly the Department of Health and Social Security, to be extremely clear and brief in the publications and advice offered not only to employers, who have the responsibility for making many of the calculations involved, including those entailed in new clause 29, but to employees, such as those in occupational pension schemes.

Those employees will shortly be faced with the important decision about whether to opt out of or join an occupational pension scheme, and will want to know exactly how they will be affected by the calculation of the guaranteed minimum pension, for example. The effective date for the 2 per cent. incentive payment that is to be made to those who establish their own personal pensions has already been reached—the scheme has run from 1 January this year. Therefore, important decisions will have to be taken, and it is important that all Government documents and advice given by the DHSS and Ministers to employers and employees is crystal clear.

Mr. Stern: I should like to reinforce my hon. Friend's point. From his accountancy background, which he shares with me, does he agree that the definition of "earnings" has exercised the courts for about 200 years, and that it is generally acknowledged that no satisfactory definition yet exists? In the light of that, does he agree that, given that we are now importing the same difficulty into social security regulations as already exists in taxation law, we are stepping into a minefield in which we need to go extremely carefully?

Mr. Freeman: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. With respect to my colleagues, I find that few understand the basis of calculation of the guaranteed minimum pension. Earlier this afternoon we debated the effect on the actuarial profession, which is being consulted not only about the actuarial tables involved in an earlier new clause, but about other provisions, for example, the precise requirements to be laid upon the trustees of occupational pension funds in calculating transfer values. Those actuarial calculations are extremely complex. I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that we should pay tribute to the actuarial profession for its contribution so far to the deliberations not only on the Bill but on some of the proposed regulations to be issued under it.

I support my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West in his main point, about the documents to be issued by the Government later this year in relation to the calculation of earnings factor and also the advantages and disadvantages of personal pensions. I hope that the regulations and explanatory documents will be as clear as I know the Government can make them. This will be an important decision for many people. I hope that the Government will take that point on board.

Mr. Major: I entirely understand the blandishments of my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), and will consider them. I agree that seeking to provide simplicity in Government communications is necessary and throughly desirable, particularly in complex areas. We have engaged consultants to advise on a whole range of communications, including pensions. I should like to précis their brief in a single word—simplicity. I hope that that thought will commend itself to my hon. Friends the Members for Kettering and for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). We entirely understand what underpins their remarks, and we shall attempt to meet them as far as we can.

Employers will not be involved in calculations under new clause 29. They will merely have to record the amount of earnings on which contributions have been paid. It will not affect personal pensions. The definition of "earnings", to which my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering referred, will be the definition that is already used for contributions.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West, referred to the Inland Revenue review. He may have misread the intent of the regulations, as I am advised that they will not be affected by the review that is now being carried out by the Inland Revenue. Here, we enter an extremely arcane area. It might be most appropriate if I were to write and set out to my hon. Friend precisely why we believe that the Inland Revenue review will not be germane to the regulations.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and his offer, but his comments are a little surprising. I shall await his letter with greater interest given that I think that the Inland Revenue review strikes at the heart of what my hon. Friend is trying to do. The review is trying to determine which earnings, in the form of non-cash earnings, should or should not rank for national insurance contributions. Given that we are discussing earnings factors that will be based on the earnings that rank for contributions, I am surprised to learn from my hon. Friend that the review is not germane, but I shall await his letter with great interest.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 30

REVIEWS

"(1) A social fund officer—

(a) shall review a determination made under this Part of this Act by himself or some other social fund officer, if an application for a review is made to him within such time and in such form and manner as may be prescribed by or on behalf of the person who applied for the social fund payment to which the determination relates; and

(b) may review such a determination in such other circumstances as he thinks fit;

and may exercise on a review any power exercisable by an officer under section 33 above.

(2) The power to review a determination conferred on a social fund officer by subsection (1) above includes power to review a determination made by a social fund officer on a previous review.

(3) On an application made by or on behalf of the person to whom a determination relates within such time and in such form and manner as may be prescribed a determination of a social fund officer which has been reviewed shall be further reviewed by a social fund inspector, and the Secretary of State shall appoint officers to be so called for the purpose of conducting such reviews.

(4) On a review a social fund inspector shall have the following powers—

(a) power to confirm the determination made by the social fund officer;

(b) power to make any determination which a social fund officer could have made;

(c) power to refer the matter to a social fund officer for determination.

(5) In determining a question on a review a social fund officer or social fund inspector shall have regard, subject to subsection (6) below, to all the circumstances of the case and, in particular, to the matters specified in section 33(9)*(a)* to *(e)* above.

[Mr. Stern]

(6) An officer or inspector shall determine any question on a review in accordance with any general directions issued by the Secretary of State under section 33(10) above and any general directions issued by him with regard to reviews and in determining any such question shall take account of any general guidance issued by him under that subsection or with regard to reviews.

(7) Directions under this section may specify—

(a) the circumstances in which a determination is to be reviewed; and

(b) the manner in which a review is to be conducted.'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Antony Newton): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Amendment *(a)* to the proposed new clause, in subsection 1*(b)* leave out

"such other circumstances as he thinks fit"

and insert "prescribed circumstances".

New clause 15—*Appeal against social fund officers' determination*—

'(1) A claimant may appeal against any determination made by a social fund officer under this Part of this Act.

(2) Any appeal under subsection (1) above shall be to a social security appeal tribunal under the procedure laid down in sections 100, 101 and 104 of the Social Security Act 1975 and section 15 of the Social Security Act 1980, and any reference to "adjudication officer" in those sections shall be construed as including reference to a social fund officer.

(3) Section 33(12) of this Act shall only be operative insofar as any determinations made under that section comply with the procedure established in subsection (2) above.'.

New clause 16 — *Appeals against housing benefit determination*—

'(1) A person who has claimed housing benefit may appeal against any determination of that claim.

(2) Any appeal under subsection (1) above shall be to a social security appeal tribunal under the procedure laid down in sections 100, 101 and 104 of the Social Security Act 1975 and section 15 of the Social Security Act 1980, and any reference to "adjudication officer" in those sections shall be construed as including reference to the appropriate authority responsible for administering housing benefit under section 28 of this Act.

(3) Section 29(3) of this Act shall only be operative insofar as any regulations made under that section comply with the procedure established in subsection (2) above.'.

New clause 27 — *Determinations by Social Fund Officers (Appeals)*—

'(1) The Secretary of State shall make arrangements for appeals against determinations by Social Fund officers to be heard by inspectors acting as his deputies.

(2) The recommendations of the inspectors (and the final decisions of the Secretary of State, if different) shall be communicated to the appellant in writing.

(3) The Secretary of State shall present to Parliament an annual report on the operation of the Social Fund and the appeals procedure.'.

Amendment No. 155, in clause 33, page 40, line 37, after 'shall', insert 'in the last instance'.

No. 156, in page 40, line 38, at end insert

'(2A) Sections 100, 101 and 104 of the Social Security Act 1975 relating to a claimant's rights of appeal shall apply to decisions taken by the Social Fund Officers.'.

No. 158, in clause 49, page 55, line 7, at end insert—

'(9) Regulations shall provide for a claimant or applicant to have a right of appeal to a social security appeal tribunal constituted under the Social Security Act 1975 against

(a) any determination or direction (including a determination to refuse to review a determination or direction) of a social fund officer under section 33 of this Act.

(b) any determination of a local authority (including a determination to refuse to review a determination) relating to housing benefit.'.

Government Amendment No. 162.

Amendment No. 80, in clause 33, page 42, line 3, at end add

'but shall in all cases provide for an appeal to a person independent from the Social Fund Officer who made or refused the award in question'.

4.30 pm

Mr. Newton: The new clause deals with the important subject of the review of social fund decisions. It was extensively debated in Committee. It seeks to make a response to the debate in Committee along the lines of my comments in Committee, and taking into account the views of hon. Members on both sides of the Committee.

It might be sensible if I started by outlining formally the provisions of the new clause. It provides for review by a social fund officer of determinations made under clause 33, either on application or on behalf of the person to whom the determination relates, or when he feels that the circumstances justify that. The clause provides that there can be a further review—this point specifically reflects the anxieties expressed in Committee—by a social fund inspector. It sets out the powers of the social fund inspector and provides that a social fund officer or inspector shall be subject to the directions and guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Subsection (1) provides that a social fund officer shall review a determination of an application in the prescribed manner and time by, or on behalf of, the person to whom the determination relates. He can also review a determination if the circumstances justify that. The subsection also provides that when reviewing a case the social fund officer continues to exercise his usual powers under clause 33.

With regard to the use of the regulation-making power, it is intended that, as the regulations provide for adjudication of weekly social security benefits, the regulations will set out time limits within which an application may be made, and details such as the application being made in writing.

Subsection (2) provides that the ability to review a determination applies also to one that has already been reviewed. Subsection (3) provides that when a determination has been reviewed by a social fund officer, if a further application is made within the prescribed manner and time, it will be further reviewed by a social fund inspector. These inspectors will be appointed under the subsection. The use of the regulation-making powers will be in line with that which I have already described under subsection (1).

Subsection (4) describes the powers of a social fund inspector. These state that he can confirm the determination, make a determination which a social fund officer might have made, or refer the matter to a social fund officer to determine. Subsection (5) provides that, subject to the following subsection, social fund officers and inspectors, when reviewing a determination, shall have regard to all the circumstances of a case and specifically to the matters referred to in subsection (9) of clause 33.

Subsection (6) provides that social fund officers and inspectors shall be subject to general directions and guidance issued by the Secretary of State under subsection (10) of clause 33. These can include specific guidance and

directions on reviews. Subsection (7) provides that the Secretary of State can issue directions on the circumstances in which cases are to be reviewed and on the procedures of review.

In an attempt to save time, I should like briefly to refer to Government amendment No. 162, which is part of the group of amendments that we are discussing. The amendment seeks out to leave out subsection (12) of clause 33. It is consequential on the proposition of the new clause and leaves out from clause 33 the previous provision which enables the Secretary of State to issue directions on the procedure as to how a review shall be conducted. That provision has been overtaken by the tabling of the extensive new clause.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Will the Minister tell the House where the social fund officer will be based? Will he be based in the office where the original decision was made, or will that have been taken at regional level? Will the Minister also say where the inspectors will be based? However inadequate the Opposition consider the review to be, what rights will the person making the appeal—if it can be described as such—possess? Will he be able to appear in person before the social fund officer, or will he be represented?

Mr. Newton: I shall come to some of the points which the hon. Gentleman has raised in my description of the provisions of the proposed new clause.

Before technically describing the clause, I said at the outset that the procedure under which a person unhappy with the decision of a social fund officer can seek a review was the subject of considerable discussion in Committee. I shall not rehearse now the arguments that were expressed in Committee on that subject, although I accept that I may need to do that as the debate progresses. The arguments in Committee led us to the conclusion that the adjudication machinery appropriate to a regulated system of benefit, and specifically appropriate to the regulated system of weekly rates of benefit, was not appropriate for the essentially discretionary decision-making machinery that we have proposed for the social fund.

It has always been our intention—I hope that this was clear in Committee—that there should be clear and proper rights for those who felt that the decision by a social fund officer in respect of possible payments by way of grant or loan under the social fund was wrong to have that decision properly reviewed and re-examined. One clearly significant point which gives greater emphasis to that in the new clause is that the clause confirms a clear statutory right for the claimant to require the social fund officer to review the decision if application is made. We would intend to set out in regulations the procedures for that right to be exercised.

We have considered the fact that the procedure for review must reflect the specific nature of the social fund and the fact that it is not based on a set of regulations. We believe that the review procedures should be within the same general framework as the fund and operate consistently with the way in which the original decision was taken. We therefore suggest that the logical procedure for review—this covers one of the points raised by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick)—should initially be at the local office level at which the original decision was taken. This has the advantage, which is part of the advantage that we see for the social fund mechanism as a whole, that the review will be close to the point of the decision and the person undertaking the review will himself or herself be aware of the local circumstances and the considerations affecting the social fund in the office where the decision was taken. There will therefore be a greater chance of a quick and flexible response.

Under the new clause we propose that the review at the local level should still be the first mechanism for the review of decisions. As I said in Committee, at greater length than I intend to repeat this afternoon, that will do no more than build on the procedure that already exists in relation to nearly all social security decisions. If a query is raised, the first step is normally for the person who took the decision or someone senior to that person in the local office, or possibly both these people, to take a further look at that decision. In other words, when an appeal is lodged within the system, the first step is that the decision is re-examined.

In the case of single payments, under the present system twice as many appeals have their decisions revised at that stage without ever reaching the formal appeal machinery. They are reviewed when the appeal comes in. Twice as many decisions are revised at that stage as are successful if they go on to be heard by an appeal tribunal. In practice, many decisions are reviewed as a result of an appeal being entered and never go to appeal. We would envisage that that would be part and parcel of the process. There should be an initial review at the same level as is the case for social security decisions.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): If, at the end of a financial year, when the fund is perhaps almost exhausted, will there be any danger that an officer will be reviewing cases with one eye over his shoulder, so to speak, to see whether there is any money in the kitty?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend raises a legitimate point, but it concerns the different and somewhat wider question of the budgeting arrangements. We have made it clear that in drawing up the budget proposals for the social fund our aim, particularly in the early stages, will be to proceed with flexibility. We expect to have arrangements for reserves at various levels rather than a completely rigid allocation down to every level of the system ab initio. It is to that point, rather than to the reviews, that my hon. Friend's remarks are directed. I acknowledge the importance of the point that she raised, but it is slightly aside from the review process that we are specifically discussing.

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I take the Minister's point about the number of cases that are reviewed before the rates tribunal; but does he accept that, by and large, such reviews are carried out as a result of representations made by outside agencies—such as citizens advice bureaux, politicians who are doing their job properly or trade unions—and that such an independent element will not be involved if the new clause is agreed to?

Mr. Newton: I am not absolutely sure that I understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I accept that questions about social security benefit decisions are raised by a variety of people. Sometimes they are raised by the claimants themselves, sometimes by the claimants with advice from a wide variety of people, and sometimes by others on behalf of the claimant—be it citizens advice bureaux,

[Mr. Newton]

Members of Parliament, local councillors or a variety of others, including social workers, probation officers and so on who, in one way or another, come into contact with the claimant.

There is no suggestion that the new system will be different in that respect. It will still be open to a wide variety of people to raise questions about a decision, and in our expectation the response of the local office will be precisely the same as under the present system. In other words, if questions are raised, the first stage is to take another look at the decision that has been made.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): Will my hon. Friend confirm that, if a request for review is unsuccessful, the applicant will get a written report explaining why the application was not successful? If such an applicant took his case to a Member of Parliament, who then took it to a Minister, would that Minister agree to review it at that stage?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend brings me to the next points that I wish to raise. I have described what normally happens in social security decision-making and the extent to which decisions are reviewed as a result of an application to appeal. That is an important part of understanding the problem that we face as well as the working of the system.

I was about to say that we have listened carefully to the arguments that have been put during the continuing consultation since the publication of the White Paper and the Bill. Not least, we listened to what was said by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee about the fact that, alongside the process of review—including formal review by a senior officer within the local office—there had to be some clearly established machinery that was separate from and outside the normal management chain of the administration of the social security system. In other words, it was argued that, whether or not the process of review within a local office was satisfactory, there should be a more clearly distinct mechanism for review to provide the kind of confidence that hon. Members felt was necessary to show that an element of independence was being applied.

As I said in Committee, we were impressed by the constructive way in which a number of hon. Members on both sides—not least my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) and others—tabled an amendment calling for the establishment of a group of social fund inspectors who would be independent of ordinary line management, in order to bring this additional element of independence to the review of social fund decisions.

4.45 pm

Essentially that is what we have sought to provide in the new clause. We have provided for a further review by this body of social fund inspectors. They will be officials of the Department, and the new clause provides for their appointment — *[Interruption.]* Perhaps hon. Members will allow me to continue, as it may be more sensible if they make their speeches, so that I can reply to them more systematically at a later stage.

These officers will be officials of the Department, and the new clause provides for their appointment by the Secretary of State. They will not be attached to one local office, nor will they operate within the management chain. They will therefore provide a check that is precisely related to the concern that was expressed in Committee —that a review confined to local office level would be thought to be, even it were not the case, merely the local office manager confirming the decision taken earlier by his own staff.

Like the social fund officers, the inspectors will also be subject to the directions and guidance of the Secretary of State and will need to pay regard to the same kind of criteria as the social fund officers. I am sure that my hon. Friends will at least agree that that is the only way in which this will make sense, given the nature of the fund, which is not a regulated system which is appropriate to the normal form of adjudication mechanism.

The House will also note that an inspector is given three powers. First, he can confirm the decision. Secondly, he can refer the case back to the social fund officer for him to redetermine. For example, that procedure will be followed where the inspector feels that on the evidence before him he cannot endorse the decision, but is not in a position to make a final determination on the case. Thirdly — this is essential to avoid the possible yo-yo effect if the only power were to refer the decision back —he can also determine a case in the same way as a social fund officer. The inspector's decision would then be substituted for the disputed decision.

I am anxious to keep my remarks brief, because I recognise that hon. Members will wish to raise a number of points. I hope the House will recognise that the new clause provides the kind of procedure that was urged in Committee, especially by some of my hon. Friends. It goes considerably beyond what was in the Bill in the first place, and that is right. It provides a statutory right to request a review, and a further review if it is felt that the first review is still unsatisfactory. Most important of all, it creates a new tier of reviewing such decisions that is outside the local office and the normal social security management chain. It is a significant and important response to the concerns that have been expressed, and I commend it to the House.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister has given a whole range of reasons for the proposals in new clause 30 — all except the one that most hon. Members who served in Committee believed to be the real reason. In a sense the hon. Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) put her finger on the point when she asked about cash limits.

Many aspects of the social fund have caused widespread anxiety both inside and outside the House. They include the facts that it is discretionary and that it may provide loans rather than grants, and the size of its budget. However, the two aspects which have caused most anxiety and which are inextricably linked are the twin issues of cash limits and the way in which appeals against decisions made under the social fund will be considered. They are inextricably interlinked because the more we listened and studied the arguments in Committee, the more the essential problem seemed to be that, if the Government conceded a right of independent appeal, each case must perforce be considered by those who serve on the independent appeal body on its merits and as a request for help, and the cash limits, which are so crucial to the Government's proposals and so much a part of what they seek to do, could not bite.

The Government have introduced this compromise proposal to give the impression of more independence—

at least the matter is not confined solely to a local office —but without there being a right of true independence through a judgment being made outside the local office and the Department within which the decision has been made. The sum left in the fund and the time of year will be crucial. In Committee, the Minister argued that one of the advantages of the social fund was its local nature, so there was no need for an independent right of appeal. He has now conceded that it would be seen to be unjust if the fund were maintained purely at a local level, but he is not prepared to concede a fully independent appeal procedure, because that would breach the principle of cash limits.

We are extremely worried about the scope and implications of the proposal, and therefore about the appeal procedure which will be applied. People— for example, refugees —often need help urgently. The death grant and maternity grant will be dealt with under the social fund, although they will not be subject to cash limits in the same way. At present all those areas of decision-making carry the right of appeal to an independent tribunal.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) asked how people could appeal to their Member of Parliament, as they do now, and obtain some sort of review or appeal procedure in that way. That will not apply in the same way because the Secretary of State will not be involved in the decisions and will not be able to overturn them. The local office, which will be at the root of decision-making, will be blamed and will carry the responsibility. As a cosmetic gesture, the Government are introducing a system of inspectors.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) pressed the Minister to say exactly how local the appeal procedure would be, the Minister's answer was not particularly clear. I think that the person who reviews the case will not be in the local office, so there will be some opportunity for the case to be reviewed by someone who is not necessarily in the immediate vicinity. However, the case will not be reviewed by anyone who has any considerations in mind other than the Department's guidelines and interests. That person will be a civil servant with an innate tendency to back his colleagues who made the decision, and not someone outside.

The right of appeal which is being withdrawn has existed for more than 50 years, as the Government have been reminded more than once, but not too often. This is a major withdrawal of a civil and legal right. It has been said that under the present procedures some reviews and appeals succeed prior to an appeal hearing before a tribunal. In Committee, the Minister conceded, as he has today in effect conceded, that many cases which succeed before the appeal comes to a hearing do so because the officer involved knows that it will go to a tribunal. Therefore, he takes a further look at the case, because naturally, he does not wish to lose the case before a tribunal. In 1984, some 19,000 cases were successfully reviewed in that way.

If there is no right to an independent tribunal beyond the initial decision, that pressure will be substantially reduced, if not removed altogether. Some 8,000 cases were overturned by tribunals, which is a success rate of between 20 and 25 per cent. The new clause means that the possibility of an independent review will be lost, and that 8,000 people will more than likely not have their decision beneficially reviewed and overturned.

The Government's comments and justifications for trying to abolish the right of appeal have been interesting, but weak. In the Green Paper they suggested:

"The present appeal arrangements . . . can have a sledgehammer effect. The full weight of legal consideration can be brought to bear on matters which may involve small sums."

What are small sums to those in well-paid work can be crucial to individual claimants, especially the long-term unemployed whose income is already below the poverty line. The fact that they are small sums in general terms and in the scope of the Government's Budget does not mean that they are not desperately important to the individuals who make claims and have them reviewed.

In the White Paper the Government said:

"The decisions which turn on whether or not it is reasonable to give or deny help in a particular case lend themselves far less readily to a separate external assessment than do matters which turn on more specific criteria."

The existing social security appeal tribunals already deal with such matters and must interpret words, such as "reasonable", which occur frequently in social security regulations. The Government sought to argue that independent appeals were not feasible because the decisions would be discretionary.

The Council on Tribunals, which is the expert body on these proposals, has made it absolutely clear that it does not accept almost any aspect —not a jot or tittle— of the Government's argument. Some months ago, after much consultation with the Secretary of State, it took the exceptional step of publishing a strong report, criticising the way in which the Government intended to proceed. It states:

"It is perfectly feasible to have independent appeals against discretionary decisions, as is shown by the system which operated before 1980 and by other appeal systems. In some ways it is even more important with discretionary decisions."

We wholeheartedly endorse that point of view.

Through amendment (a) we have sought to make a minor change in the Government's proposals. In Committee, we asked for the power to overturn decisions to be granted to whatever review system may exist. We asked for it to be made plain that if an independent right of appeal existed and the Government proposed to introduce a social fund inspectorate, the inspector would have the power to overturn the initial decision. That is contained in the new clause, but, as the new clause is drafted far too wide, it will allow the withdrawal of an award which had already been made for any reason, good or bad.

As the new clause is drafted, there is no scope for any restriction to be placed on the nature of the decision to overturn, or on the reasons for it to be taken. For that reason we propose amendment (a) to new clause 30, which allows, for example, for the grounds on which a decision might be overturned to be prescribed and, indeed, prevents the withdrawal of a payment, if an unfavourable decision should be made. Otherwise, an applicant could not rely on an award that had been made.

The main point of criticism remains unsatisfied by the new clause. The review procedure being devised will not be independent and will be seen not to be independent.

Control is what matters most to the Government—in particular, control of cash limits. Neither Ministers nor an independent authority will have the right to overturn this decision. The cash limits will prevail. I quote again from the words of the Council on Tribunals:

"The people most affected by this proposal are among the most vulnerable in society. Very good reasons are needed before

[Mrs. Beckett]

abolition of the right to an independent appeal in such circumstances … It is for these reasons that we are so critical of the proposal"

which is highly retrograde. The council urged that this proposal should be reconsidered, and the right of independent appeal retained. We urged this in Committee and we continue to urge it in the House.

5 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): New clause 30 is greatly to be welcomed and my hon. Friend the Minister has responded flexibly and sensibly to the strong volume and quality of arguments put to him in Committee. He has accepted the essential point that we were trying to press upon him. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was less than gracious in her response to this concession.

Some of the points of concern that I raised in Committee are not dealt with by the new clause. Nevertheless, the remarks of my hon. Friend the Minister have overcome some of my concerns and anxieties. It would have been preferable to put some other provisions in the new clause and on the face of the Bill; I hope that in any regulations made under the new clause my hon. Friend will be able to go a little further than he has done today to bolster confidence in the new appeal system. His intentions are in the right direction and his heart is in the right place.

My hon. Friend has not quite accepted the principle that the appeal shall be to the Secretary of State, with the social fund inspectors acting as deputies of the Secretary of State, which would make them at one more remove from the management structure than the new clause suggests. I agree that my hon. Friend has accepted that the social fund inspectors shall be, in large measure, independent of the local and regional management structure, and that is vital. It would have been preferable to have a system more akin to town and country planning, where there is an appeal with an independent inspector, employed by the Secretary of State, but nevertheless independent of him, against a local decision.

New clause 30 goes a long way to meet that system, but not as far as new clause 27, which would have given greater confidence to appellants and those involved in appealing against social fund decisions, in the quality of the decisions that were made. It would have eased some of the enormous responsibility that social fund officers will have to shoulder as a result of the powers being given to them by Parliament under the Bill.

I hope that it will be possible, as the appeals system develops, for my hon. Friend to introduce regulations to provide that decisions will be in writing, with the reasons for them fully set out. I hope also that it will be possible for appellants to obtain a hearing, with a friend or representative accompanying them if they so wish, and for the social fund officer to defend his decision at the hearing.

I understand why my hon. Friend does not wish to have the whole panoply of a tribunal system, and perhaps by this openness we may be moving towards such a position. However, it would give more confidence if there were the ability to challenge decisions and to hear the arguments of those most intimately connected with the proceedings when the appeal decision was being made. The rights of the appellant are not clearly set out in the new clause, and I hope that as the system evolves those rights will become more clear.

It is suggested that there should be established an annual report to Parliament on the operation of both the social fund and the appeal procedure, so that again there is openness and confidence in the way that the system is handled. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State may be prepared to do this on a voluntary basis without it being written on the face of the Bill, but it would be useful, if no more, to have a report to the House setting out how many applications and appeals there have been, what responses there have been, and how decisions were reached. Although it is not immediately germane to the new clause, there would be more confidence in the expenditure and cash-limiting elements to which my hon. Friend the Member for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman) referred. We need to know in monetary terms how the fund is working and whether the system of back-up resources is being handled appropriately by the Department.

I welcome the new clause, but I hope that it will be possible, under the regulations, for my hon. Friend to go a little further to bolster confidence in the appeals system, which we welcome.

Mr. Kirkwood: It would be churlish not to recognise that the Government have made some movement in the direction of the sentiments expressed in Committee, where debates were both useful and constructive. However, I am sorry to have to tell the Minister that if the clause is pushed to a Division, I shall vote against it. The system is still not adequate.

First, the need for an independent system in the review process has not been displaced by the proposals. Claimants need an environment for telling their story which is entirely separate from the DHSS, which takes the initial decision. I can tell a short story from my practical experience to show why that should be so. I used to be an honorary advisor to the citizens advice bureau in Hawick and we had a good young volunteer counsellor who was a conscientious DHSS officer. By chance, one day a claimant came into the CAB straight from the DHSS, steam coming out of his ears because of the treatment that he had had under the system. He ran into the young CAB counsellor who was the same person who had seen him in the DHSS office. The discussion in the CAB was full of sweetness and light, and the claimant was helped considerably because he was out of the context of the DHSS and being given advice from the CAB. The Government system will allow no circumstances where such things can happen.

Will the review process whereby a social fund inspector refers back a decision, to be reviewed again, be published and made available to advisors, claimants and others? It is essential that that should take place, to try to build up a picture of how the review procedure that has been announced in new clause 30 is working.

Secondly, I have severe worries, based on the experience of the special case officers since 1980. This small highly trained cadre of DHSS officials has been under tremendous pressure. If the Minister expects the social fund inspector that he is creating, through new clause 30, to function under that pressure, the social fund review process will fall apart at the seams. How many

inspectors does the Minister consider will be needed to operate new clause 30? How much time will they have, and what training can they expect to receive?

On the principle of the need for an appeal, the nature and quality of the decisions taken by inspectors is vital. The Green Paper advanced three main reasons against an independent system: first, that it was basically inappropriate; secondly, that it was a sledgehammer approach; and, thirdly, that it would involve inordinate delay. Those reasons were all discredited in Committee.

An independent review is essential for four reasons: first, it considers the substance of the matter and the decision taken; secondly, it reviews the facts—a very important process—on which the initial decision was based; thirdly, it produces an element of quality control and introduces some consistency and a cross-check on decisions taken by social fund officers; and, fourthly, and most important, it offers the applicants or claimants a review that will take the heat out of the matter.

I accept that a management review might be able to deal with the first three essential features, but I underline the fact that the prospect of an applicant or a claimant being told that if he does not like the decision he can take it to an independent appeal process would defuse any problems. That has been my experience in many cases.

The Green Paper's claim that an independent review is inappropriate is wrong. There is an element of discretion in the system. Words such as "reasonable", "appropriate" and "thinks fit" abound in some single payment regulations, and at present the adjudication officers must pick their way through the regulations using their discretion against the background of the guidance, the statutory instruments and the policy statements issued from head office. A move to discretion is nothing like enough justification for removing such cases from the tribunal system.

As the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) said on the sledgehammer argument, the sums of money involved may not be large in arithmetical terms, but there are broader social and political objectives in the set-up which an independent tribunal and appeal process creates. The sledgehammer argument is not conclusive for that reason.

The delay argument is also weak, if not irrelevant. The social security appeal tribunals do not produce unreasonable delays. If there are any delays in the tribunals, recent research shows that they are caused in the DHSS offices and are not the fault of the independent appeal tribunals. More recent research shows that similar delays occur where appeals are disposed of administratively. There are delays when administrative proceedings take place to review decisions. Those delays will be made considerably worse if not enough social fund officers and inspectors are made available to conduct the in-house reviews.

Tribunals can take decisions in principle to be implemented if resources are available. The Government could easily have taken that option. They should have left the independent appeal procedure in place. I accept that a major anxiety in the Minister of State's mind, if not in his mouth, is the money restraint, but the Government could have adopted the suggestion that I have just made.

The Minister will need stronger arguments before he can persuade me that new clause 30 is supportable. The hon. Member for Derby, South mentioned the persuasive arguments of the Council on Tribunals.

Will the Minister consider new clause 16, which relates to the housing benefit appeal process? We discussed the possibility of the Government's bringing housing benefit into the independent appeal process. Will the Minister say something about that?

Sir Geoffrey Finsberg (Hampstead and Highgate): When I read the Bill for the first time, I was worried that there appeared to be no form of appeal in such cases. When I met deputations on the subject, I understood the worries which were affecting people. I read the standing Committee reports and found a wide divergence of view, not so much about whether there should be an appeal, but about the nature of the appeal that should be inserted in the Bill. I tabled amendment No. 80 to try to get an appeal independent of the originator of a decision.

5.15 pm

I observed that the Association of Metropolitan Authorities briefing said that my amendment should be regarded with caution. I am grateful that the AMA should think it worthy of comment. The association could have telephoned me, as a previous deputy chairman of the Association of Municipal Corporations, but it chose not to do so.

Like the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), I have read the special report from the Council on Tribunals, but I have also read the council's annual reports. Hardly a report goes by without the council criticising some aspect of Government policy that impinges upon its work. The only difference on this occasion is that it has taken the trouble to issue a special report. It is not the first time that it has criticised Governments of all colours during the past 15 years, so I do not place as much credence upon its remarks as the hon. Lady did.

I tabled the amendment in that form because of my experience when working as a Housing Minister on the right-to-buy legislation, which provided for an appeal against the district valuer's determination. That appeal was to be to another member of the staff of the district valuer. During the four years that the legislation has been in place, I know of no complaint that the reviewing district valuer merely followed the advice of his colleague. As a former DHSS Minister, I consider it rotten of Opposition Members to say that DHSS officials would whitewash the decision of a colleague just because they come from the same Department. That may be how Transport House works; it is not the way in which the DHSS works. It has a large body of loyal, dedicated officials who are determined to do a good job and not just rubber-stamp the views of their colleagues.

Having said that, I can appreciate the Minister's difficulty. I examined with as much care and understanding as I could the somewhat complex new clause that he has tabled to try to understand exactly what he means and to see whether it goes some way towards providing the second view of a case for which so many people have asked.

The deputations that I have met wanted a proper second look at cases. If the Minister is not prepared to have a wholly independent review, with all the accompanying paraphernalia of setting up a new panel completely separately staffed, which might become cumbersome and bureaucratic, he has found an acceptable compromise. It is not the best by any means, but it is acceptable. Provided that hon. Members do not denigrate DHSS staff who are

[Sir Geoffrey Finsberg]

asked to review the working of the social fund, and say that they will not be independent, I believe that my right hon. Friend has found a way through the difficulty which will satisfy most people.

Reference has been made to an annual report and to the figures that might be made available. Legislation is on the statute book that covers a wide variety of DHSS subjects. If, after a year or so, it were found that the new clause was not providing adequately for a proper review, there would be plenty of opportunity to change it. We ought to go along the road that my right hon. Friend has suggested. Therefore, I do not intend to press amendment No. 80. I shall support the new clause.

Mr. Mallon: This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to speak on the Bill. Therefore, I am tempted to say everything that I should like to say about it, but I shall resist the temptation and will try to deal only with the way in which it will affect Northern Ireland. Circumstances are different in Northern Ireland; 26 per cent. of all household incomes there are derived from social security payments. In my constituency, 25 per cent. of the people are unemployed. Single payments in Northern Ireland amount to £25·5 million. In my constituency alone they account for £2·5 million. I shall consider the implications of the new clause against that background.

I am worried most of all about the lack of an independent review. That is very difficult to accept. I spent many years dealing with social security problems and found that the person who is properly represented at a tribunal has a much better chance of succeeding than the person who is not properly represented. That is a proven fact. It is also a proven fact that the person who receives good advice is much more likely to succeed. We deserve an answer to the question: at what stage will an independent input be available? At what stage will it be possible to avail oneself of the expertise that is available from citizens advice bureaux, trade unions, interested politicians and various other sources?

I pay tribute to the managers of Northern Ireland's social security offices for the way in which they have administered the single payments. However, it is interesting to note that when people applied for single payments and sought political assistance to obtain them, it was found in a large number of cases that another type of social security payment was available to them but that they were not claiming it. The benefit of the independent input and review will be lost in the implementation of the discretionary loan system or social fund system.

This is a crucial factor. We should not consider only how it will operate in the case of those who make a claim. We have to consider the implications for those who do not make a claim. There is a new type of need in our society. I call it the "lace curtain poor". Those who have tremendous pride and who have never had to go to a social security office will not like the discretionary system. Therefore, they will not ask for a loan or for charity from that system.

The begging stigma is to be introduced into a statutory entitlement. For that reason, many people who are entitled to assistance, and who receive it if they obtain help from an independent source, will not receive it if the independent source no longer exists. Therefore, we must remove the begging stigma from the term "social fund", or "discretionary loan system", or whatever name is eventually accepted by the public at large.

The absence of an independent tribunal is a grave mistake. Area boards have been created in Northern Ireland. By and large, they do a very good job. They administer efficiently social security, education and various other aspects. If, however, the Minister says that no appeal can be made to him because a "crunch" problem is a matter for the area board, the individual will have no ultimate arbiter. The area board will take the decision. There will be no ultimate arbiter and no ultimate right of appeal to a tribunal. The independent element will no longer exist.

Something has happened already in Northern Ireland which I do not like. There has been an increase in the number of applications for licences to lend money. I repeat that I live in an area where a great many people depend upon social security payments. The new clause will encourage the loan sharks in Northern Ireland. The absence of an independent tribunal will edge many people towards asking for a loan from the independent loan merchants rather than from the social fund.

I see that right hon. and hon. Members are shaking their heads. However, very many people, especially those who have never asked for social security because their pride will not allow them to do so, are getting into the hands of the loan sharks. That will happen increasingly because of this one element in the Bill. I discussed this matter early today with someone whose views I do not fully share. However, he made a very apt remark. He said, "It is the difference between being mugged and having your pockets picked." I hope that we shall be able to avoid both.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to make a brief contribution to the debate on this new clause. I shall be brief. Many of the hon. Members who served on the Standing Committee had an opportunity to contribute to the debate that gave rise to new clause 30. Therefore, we are grateful for the opportunity to hear the comments of other hon. Members — for example, the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon). I appreciated his comments about loan sharks, but he was a little unfair to the Government in suggesting that the Bill would contribute to the increase in their numbers. The Bill is at least a year and a half away from implementation. Nevertheless, that is important in areas where there is a high level of dependence on social security, and it is something that we shall have to look at closely in the regulation of the Bill because it is an ever-present danger.

5.30 pm

I welcome new clause 30 because it follows from an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Minister in Committee and it meets my objections to the clause as originally drafted. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) dealt briefly with the fact that the clause, unlike formal appeal systems, recognises one essential fact of the social fund system. A decision by a social fund commissioner or a decision on a review by an inspector or other official will not be based on a fixed view of the facts, or even on a correction of a view of the facts, but will be an expression of opinion.

I was accused by the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mr. Field), who, unfortunately, is not in his seat, of metaphysics when I raised that matter in Committee. Any

decision based on opinion is just as good as and no better than anyone else's. The fact that we are setting up a review system rather than an appeal system recognises that at the end of the day we shall merely be substituting one opinion for another—or not, as the case may be—rather than attempting to apply precedent or a finer view of the facts than those that were applied to the original decision.

I welcome the new clause because it is a full and fair recognition of the fact that an appeal system would be inappropriate for a social fund, and at the same time it gives the maximum opportunity for the factors put forward by the claimant to be taken into account. Throughout our legal system that distinction between a fresh look at the facts and a fresh look at the law relating to those facts is applied. It is in the High Court where the jury sits that the facts are finally decided. The whole purpose of the appeal system, as I understand it—I am not a lawyer—is to look at the way in which the law is applied to those facts rather than to take a fresh look at the facts. That is the system that we have at the moment in social security. We are replacing that with an opportunity to look again not at the law but at the facts.

I should like my hon. Friend the Minister to clarify one point which, again, follows from a point made in Committee. It has been generally welcomed that the inspector will be independent of the social fund officer whose decision is being reviewed. But one question that was left open in Committee, to which I ask my hon. Friend to return, is how far, within the social security network, the inspector will be removed from the social fund officer who took the original decision. For example, I see every advantage in an expert on housing benefits in Newcastle being called in to review a social fund decision in Cornwall and vice versa.

The one point that worries me about an internal review system is the extent to which the ethos and methods of operation of a particular local social fund and its officers will carry over into the review decisions made by the inspectors. We need to use the breadth of the facilities of the DHSS, which, after all, is the largest spending Government Department, to make sure that the inspector's remit in any decision on the social fund is as far removed from that of the social fund officer as possible. Indeed, I hope that in the administration of new clause 30 there will be a positive instruction to social security officers that they should not bring in as an inspector on a particular social fund anyone who has any other connections with that social fund or, indeed, the area.

Subject to that, I welcome the new clause. In introducing the new clause my hon. Friend has shown himself to be responsive to the worries that were expressed about the original clause and he has produced a system which will meet those worries.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): New clause 30 must be seen against the background of the social fund and the proposals which, as we know, give a great deal of discretion to the local DHSS office, the cash-limited social fund and, in many cases, the loans which are replacing the present practice. Understandably, we consider the social fund itself to be an onslaught on the poorest section of our community. That point has been made time and time again by Labour Members.

The new clause in no way deals adequately with the need for an independent appeal. The social fund officer is bound to be seen as part of an administration within the local office. In reply to an intervention of mine, the Minister said that the social fund officer would be based in that office. Clearly, he or she will be seen as part of the normal administration. Therefore, the refusal will come from the local office and a decision to turn down a claimant's appeal will come from the same office. In the eyes of the claimant there will be no distinction.

Mr. Newton: There may simply be a semantic confusion here. The social fund officer is the name given in the new system for what is the adjudication officer in the existing system and, by definition, in the local office. There is no change, other than a change of nomenclature. However, the inspector would not be in the local office.

Mr. Winnick: I take that point, but the first stage will clearly be to someone based in the local office.

The new clause, it should be remembered, has been put forward only after repeated criticisms. The Government did not intend to do anything of the kind. However, they now recognise that the original provision was totally inadequate.

I repeat my earlier question. Will the claimant whose application for assistance has been turned down be able to see the social fund officer, or will there be only written communications? If the claimant can be seen, can he take along someone to represent himself? That is important.

The social fund inspector is also part of the DHSS machinery. The Minister has just told us that the social fund inspector will not be based in the local office, but that is no substitute for an independent appeal. To use the old cliché which nevertheless remains true, justice not only needs to be done but needs to be seen to be done. Those whose review is turned down by a social fund inspector will only come to the conclusion that there has been no independent review of the claim, merely one by the regional machinery of the DHSS.

I stress that we are dealing with matters of tremendous concern to many claimants. Hardly a single week goes by when I do not receive letters from constituents on supplementary benefit who require assistance on essential items such as furniture, bedding and clothes. Those are matters of crucial importance to such people. We can debate what the Minister has referred to as a matter of semantics, whether it is a social fund officer or otherwise, but this is a matter which concerns the poorest in our community. They do not want to be in that state. Many are forced to apply for essentials because they are unemployed and, like those in my part of the world, have no opportunity of getting a job.

If a claim is turned down there should be every opportunity for that claim to be looked at properly, and for that to be done there needs to be—as there is now—proper independent machinery to assess whether the refusal was justified. Like my hon. Friends, I believe that what is proposed is in no way an adequate substitute for what has hitherto been a form of independent machinery.

Many of our fellow citizens are now forced to live in widespread poverty. That should be a cause of great anxiety to us all, although I wonder whether it is of much concern to Government Members, including the Front Bench. Who would have thought just a few years ago that so many people with no other means of support would have had to apply for single payments for furniture and clothing and the like? It is an indictment of Government

[Mr. Winnick]

policies that in the last seven years many more people have been forced to live in those circumstances than was previously the case.

All that the Opposition can do is to spotlight the difficulties faced by many of our constituents and also to press as now for a system under which there is a reasonable chance for the people who need such help to receive it. If a claim is turned down the claimant must be able to appeal in a proper way. I agree with my hon. Friends that new clause 30 is no substitute for that which we have been seeking, and there is every reason to reject it.

Mr. Lewis Stevens (Nuneaton): I should like to thank my right hon. Friend the Minister for introducing new clause 30 and for moving a long way towards the point made on the Government side of the Committee about some form of review over and above that of local officers. The new clause moves a long way towards that, but perhaps not quite as far as some of us had anticipated. It is important, as the clause lays down, that the social security inspector carrying out the second stage of a review should be seen as quite divorced from the local office and should be accepted as someone distinctly outside the normal DHSS claims machinery. That meets most of the worry that we had. It is important that someone who is a specialist within those functions related to the social fund can make decisions quite independently of the local office. That will give considerable confidence to those people who had, as they thought, a just claim that had been turned down at some stage of the procedure.

It is important to consider for the future the point made by other hon. Members about the representation of people during the various stages of the initial application. Many people need some sort of support, either formal support from a legal representative or from an organisation or even in some cases merely from members of the family. That needs to be spelt out in the regulations that will eventually appear, because we need to know exactly who can help these people and can meet the inspector, the Secretary of State or the social fund review officer. I hope that will become part of the procedure for looking at these cases. It is not quite fair for some members of the Opposition to dismiss an inspector by saying that because he would be an employee of the DHSS he could not look properly at cases. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) said he was anxious that cases should be looked at properly.

Mr. Winnick: Independently.

Mr. Stevens: The hon. Member said properly, and it can be done quite properly within the scheme suggested by the Minister in the new clause. An officer who is dealing with cases time and again and looking at the social fund and becoming an expert on it, can look properly at a specific case and make a decision which is fully in the interests of the people concerned. It will not be a biased decision, as has been suggested, made purely in the interests of the Department. To suggest that is a slight upon the DHSS officials. It is not right to suggest that they do not exercise care and attention.

Mr. Winnick: In no way could my remarks be seen as a criticism of DHSS officials. My criticism was of Government policies and was not intended as a slight to those who are forced to carry out Government policies. If the hon. Member is keen to see that everything should be looked at properly perhaps he could explain why he is not in favour of an independent review.

Mr. Stevens: Perhaps I cannot explain that fully, but the assumption that all tribunals, because they have some independent magic about them, necessarily perform the task in every case successfully and better than an employed officer is false. Many tribunals do not work as satisfactorily as they should. There have been cases where there was as much criticism after the result of a tribunal as there was of any decision made in the courts.

5.45 pm

Within the scheme that the Minister has suggested, there is the possibility that we could have a slicker operation than has been seen in many tribunals. The tribunal system does not always work and tribunals can become routine in the way they deal with cases just as individuals can become routine in making judgments. Tribunals do not have the magic that has been suggested —that merely because they are independent they are always successful.

When the scheme is working I hope that the Minister will look carefully at the possibility of the advertising that needs to be carried out about exactly what the procedures are. Such advertising is needed both for claimants and for officials in the Department. Despite a lot of work, the DHSS still suffers from a lack of understanding about how to set about various procedures. We are debating a new and extensive Bill, and I hope that the rules about the social fund and the reviews of appeals by claimants against decisions will be made simple and clear for the claimants and for the Department so that the scheme can be operated successfully. As I said before, the clause does not go quite as far as some of us had hoped, but I thank the Minister for moving towards what we were seeking in terms of a review outside the Department's local office area. New clause 30 meets that point and perhaps with care and a careful look at the procedures we will have a system that is satisfactory and helpful. It must be helpful to those who ask for their cases to be reviewed.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I know that some hon. Members, including myself, are anxious to have a chance to debate child benefits and the cold climate allowance, and I shall therefore be brief. I endorse everything that was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). I share with him a reluctance to be churlish, but it is inevitable to be so. I am not convinced by what the Minister said because I do not believe that the Minister was convinced by his own argument. From the time some months ago when the reviews and initial reports were announced and presented, the Minister has argued against any form of review or appeal. Now he tries to sound convincing or to be convinced himself, and to do that he has had to discard all those arguments or turn them on their heads.

There is no internal consistency in the case that the Minister tried to advance. That is because, as has already been noted in the debate, the Council on Tribunals has said that the Government are removing a right of independent appeal which has existed in law for 50 years. The Minister himself highlighted the central conundrum: that a regulatory system is to be replaced by a discretionary

system. He told us that the review mechanism he is introducing confers on claimants clear statutory rights. There can be clear statutory rights for people in a regulated system, but there can be no such thing as clear statutory rights for people under a system based on human discretion. That has the logic of trying to compare Locke to Leviathan, which is what the Minister did in his speech.

There is a need for an independent appeal. The compromise that the Minister is hailing is nothing of the sort; it is a cosmetic effort, attempting to dress up an inadequate and unsatisfactory system. The new clause should be defeated and the Minister should be made to go away, think again and come back with a proper system that respects human decency.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley (Surrey, South-West): The debate highlights the fact that our social security system has lost all sense of proportion. After all, we are discussing appeals about single payments and not about the basic rate of income, which is where our energies should be directed.

Frogs may sleep with their eyes shut, but hon. Members should not close their eyes to what has been happening to single payments, which have more than doubled in the past year. There may have been great enthusiasm among those interested in lodging appeals and going through the tribunal system to see whether, for example, someone who, like Anne Boleyn, has six fingers can have a special payment for his or her needs or difficulties, but the system is losing all sense of proportion.

Having been involved for many years as a social worker with the complexities of our social security system, and knowing that many people find it extremely difficult to understand, I believe that continuing with the existing cumbersome mechanism is out of all proportion to what needs to be done. I greatly welcome the introduction of the social fund, which will allow greater discretionary power and local flexibility. Opposition Members cannot have it both ways. If we go for a regulatory system, we cannot have the flexibility and local variation which others, including myself, would value. More fundamentally, I believe that the fact that so much energy is going into the administration of single payments detracts from the underlying need to have an adequate basic income maintenance system, with premiums for those with special difficulties.

I applaud the Minister for having introduced the new clause and I welcome the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Hampstead and Highgate (Sir. G. Finsberg) who said that it was possible and acceptable for social security officers to act independently within the system. The new clause will clear up the expectations and rights of claimants and will introduce an element of proportionality into a system which has recently been losing all sense of proportion and cannot be said to be serving the claimants whom we all hope to help.

Mr. Geoffrey Lofthouse (Pontefract and Castleford): A serious situation is developing in my area and, I am sure, in many other parts of the country. In the area covered by the Wakefield metropolitan council, a backlog of single payment applications has been building up and the situation has become so serious that one area office has had to advertise in the local press asking people to be patient because it cannot deal with all the single payment applications.

My worry is that pressure will build up and the officers will be pushed into making unfair decisions because they do not have enough time to consider cases properly. The thousands of people whose cases are awaiting decisions should have an independent appeal procedure.

I have heard from an old gentleman who says that he has not had a new suit for 20 years and that, although he takes size 8 shoes he is having to wear size 9 shoes, which he buys at the market. A dear old lady of 83 told me that she has never applied for social security, but now needs some clothing to make her feel respectable when she goes out. Another lady aged 80 told me that she has been saving money to go on only the third holiday of her life, but is now having to spend it on household necessities.

Those applications and many others are in the queue at social security offices. If they are turned down because officers do not have time to look into them, there should be a right of appeal. We believe that there ought to be a safeguard, and I hope that the Government will share our view.

Mr. Newton: I, too, will try to be brief, and I hope that the House will understand the reasons for that.

A number of comments, especially those by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and other Opposition Members, have been directed to the basic proposition whether there should be an appeal to the independent appeal tribunals that we have for the present regulated system and will have for the regulated parts of the system in future. We went over that ground exhaustively in Committee and it would be wrong for me to rehearse all the arguments, especially given the time constraints faced by the House.

However, I ask the House to consider whether, after all the trouble that we have gone to in trying to improve—I think that it is widely acknowledged that we have succeeded—the appeal tribunals which take decisions within sets of regulations passed by Parliament, to improve the legal quality of those decisions by importing legal chairmen and to relate the system more closely to a regulated system, we would be doing anyone a favour by asking those tribunals to take a completely different decision, not within regulations passed by Parliament, but under directions and guidelines, including budgetary guidelines, made by the Secretary of State.

I suspect that it would be a cause of anxiety if we asked tribunals to do two different jobs, and it might undermine some of the improvements that we have made in their work. I know that some hon Members do not accept that view, but it cannot be dismissed.

I also ask hon. Members to bear in mind the fact that part of the background to the move to a regulated system in respect of single payments and other parts of the system in 1980 was dissatisfaction with the way in which the previous discretionary system, with appeals to the previous supplementary benefit appeals tribunals — which were not subject to the discretionary guidelines of the Supplementary Benefits Commission—was working and the extent to which it was leading to variable decision-making throughout the country. The previous Government found the position so unsatisfactory that they set up the social assistance review in the late 1970s which led us into the present, more regulated, system.

I shall look into the points made by the hon. Member for Pontefract and Castleford (Mr. Lofthouse) about the working of the single payments system in his area. In the past few weeks my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State

[Mr. Newton]

has announced a substantial increase in the number of DHSS staff throughout the country, and that may encourage the hon. Gentleman.

The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) asked me about his new clause 16 and housing benefit appeals. He will know what I said in Committee, and that I held out the possibility of making some sort of amendment on Report. However, I think he will acknowledge that I spoke in very cautious terms. As it would be necessary to talk the matter through with the local authority associations, particularly as those who make housing benefit decisions at present are not adjudication officers, and as there are clearly several very difficult issues to be resolved, I did not think it right to bring forward an amendment on Report. That is not to say that I have forgotten the problem or dismissed it. We are continuing to look at it very carefully, as I understand the points made by hon. Members on both sides of the Committee.

6 pm

I think that there is a little misunderstanding between hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) and me. I recognise that he does not entirely agree with me, but I repeat that there is no reason why our proposals should deprive people of the type of independent advice that they get from bodies outside the Department, which will, and can, operate regardless of the review or appeal mechanism within the Department. There will continue to be a role for citizens advice bureaux, Members of Parliament and others within whatever system we have.

I was asked several questions, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley), about what notification of the review would be given to people. I assure my hon. Friend that those seeking a review will receive a formal notification, by which I mean a written notification, of the outcome of the review, both at local level and following a review by a social fund inspector. Procedures for that will be set out in directions. We envisage that the review by a social fund officer will be on the basis of the person seeking the review being able to be heard and to take a representative with him.

Several hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), asked about inspectors. The intention is for inspectors to be stationed at regional level, and at a significant distance from the local office.

I think that I have touched, albeit briefly, on most of the points raised in the debate. I hope that hon. Members will understand if I have been unable to respond to them all, but I shall read the debate carefully afterwards.

Mrs. Beckett: The Minister referred again to the fact that people objected to the discretionary system that existed before the present system of single payments with statutory regulations. He is perfectly well aware that people objected, not to the method of the appeal, but to the discretionary nature of the system. Yet that is what the Minister is restoring, without even the benefit of a right of appeal to an independent body.

The only other observation that I have time to make involves a point made by the hon. Member for Surrey, South-West (Mrs. Bottomley). She referred rather unkindly to Members of Parliament closing their eyes to the fact that the number of single payments has increased. Opposition Members are very conscious of the way in which the number has increased. We deplore the fact that this is due to increased poverty and to the vastly increased level of unemployment. It is extraordinary that she should chide hon. Members about closing their eyes to the facts, when she apparently is quite content to close her eyes to the observations made by the Council on Tribunals and to the removal of an independent right of appeal that has existed for 50 years.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Does the hon. Lady agree that a disproportionate amount of energy goes into fighting over single payments compared with the amount that should be going into discussing the basic rate? That is particularly true given the small number of people who claim single ayments and the proportion of the budget that goes towards them. There is an unfair mechanism within the social security system. We should be talking about basic rates of income support rather than about single payments.

Mrs. Beckett: I accept that we should be talking about basic rates of income support. Indeed, Opposition Members do talk about that. Next time the Opposition table an amendment on extending the long-term rate of supplementary benefit or the equivalent, for the long-term unemployed, I hope that the hon. Lady will come into the Lobby with us. We would certainly appreciate that.

We would very much like to press this matter to a Division, but we have one reason for not doing so. Since the timetable motion was agreed, the Government have tabled two new clauses, including this one, which have substantially pre-empted time which might otherwise have been devoted to major debates. We are most anxious to reach new clause 1, so we shall not take 15 minutes for a vote. However, that is our only reason for not dividing the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 31

ENTITLEMENT TO MOBILITY ALLOWANCE—GENERAL

'(1) In paragraph *(a)* of section 37A(2) of the Social Security Act 1975 (duration of inability or virtual inability to walk for the purposes of entitlement to mobility allowance) for the words "time when a claim for the allowance is received by the Secretary of State" there shall be substituted the words "relevant date".

(2) The following subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(2A) Subject to subsection (2B) below, in subsection (2)*(a)* above "the relevant date" means the date on which the claimant's inability or virtual inability to walk commenced or the date on which his claim was received or treated as received by the Secretary of State, whichever is the later.

(2B) Where—

(a) a claimant is awarded an allowance for a period; and

(b) he subsequently claims an allowance for a further period;

the relevant date is the first date not earlier than the end of the period for which the allowance was awarded on which the claimant was unable or virtually unable to walk.

(2C) Regulations may make provision

(a) for permitting an award on a claim for a mobility allowance to be made either as from the date on which the claim is received by the Secretary of State for a period beginning after that date subject to the condition that the person in respect

of whom the claim is made satisfies the prescribed requirements for entitlement when benefit becomes payable under the award;

(b) for the review of any such award if those requirements are found not to have satisfied.'.

(3) Section 37A(7) (under which, except so far as may be provided by regulations, the question of a person's entitlement to a mobility allowance falls to be determined as at the time when a claim for the allowance is received by the Secretary of State) shall cease to have effect.

(4) Where—

(a) it has been determined that a person was entitled to mobility allowance; and

(b) the claim should have been determined as at the date when it was received by the Secretary of State, but was determined as at a later date,

the fact that the claim was determined as at that date shall not invalidate the determination.'—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Newton: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following: new clause 5—*Removal of Age Barrier to Mobility Allowance*—

'( ) From and after this Act, no application for Mobility Allowance shall be treated as ineligible solely on the ground that the applicant had not established a claim prior to the age of 66 years.'.

New clause 23—*Mobility allowance*—

'At the end of section 37A(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 there shall be inserted the words "or unable to make progress on foot in an intended direction, unaided by another person, without risk or substantial danger to oneself or others".'.

New clause 24 — *Mobility allowance: ability to walk*—

'( ) After section 37A(2) of the Social Security Act 1975 there shall be inserted

"(2A) In determining whether a person is unable, or virtually unable, to walk, account shall be taken of

(a) the distance, speed, time and manner in which he can make progress on foot without severe discomfort;

(b) the need for guidance or assistance;

(c) the ability to conceive and achieve a desired destination.".'.

New clause 25 — *Mobility allowance: mental handicap*—

'( ) After section 37A(2) of the Social Security Act 1975 there shall be inserted:

"(2A) An applicant shall be entitled to consideration for mobility allowance, notwithstanding an ability to undertake the physical movements of walking, if, because of mental or physical disorder, he cannot control the destination to which he moves without the guidance or assistance of another person.".'.

Government amendments Nos. 187, 188 and 186.

Mr. Newton: I hope that I will be in order if I spend a few moments explaining the reasons behind the new clause and then describe its provisions briefly.

The existing legislation for mobility allowance ties consideration of a person's entitlement to the allowance to the date that his claim is received. If the conditions are not satisfied on that date, they cannot be considered on any other date and the claim fails.

There has been some uncertainty about the matter, and last year a tribunal of social security commissioners held that medical appeal tribunals, the highest of the independent adjudicating appeal authorities, could consider whether a claimant satisfied the medical conditions for the allowance from a date later than the date of his claim. If he did, the allowance could be awarded from that later date. Following that decision, a number of claimants were awarded the allowance in that way. That was then followed by an event in the Court of Appeal earlier this year, when the court overruled the commissioners' decision and held that entitlement could be considered only as at the date of claim.

We are introducing this legislation in order to re-establish the commissioners' view against the finding of the Court of Appeal. We do not in any way criticise the Court of Appeal, but it found that the law was something that we did not wish it to be. I am sure that the House shares our view. The new clause is intended to put the matter back to where the commissioners left it.

The new clause restores the power of medical appeal tribunals to decide medical conditions from a later date, extends that power of later-date determination to the other independent adjudicating authorities dealing with mobility allowance claims, and enables regulations to be made permitting the allowance to be awarded from the first date, the date of claim or a later date, on which the conditions for entitlement are satisfied. That means that claimants who are not found unable or virtually unable to walk as at the date of claim, but whose ability to walk is deteriorating, can be found to satisfy this condition at a later date and can be awarded the allowance from that date.

In that way, the need for such claimants—most hon. Members will have come across this problem—to make repeated claims in the hope that one will be received on the day that they are unable or virtually unable to walk will be removed. The new clause will also enable more claims to be dealt with successfully and speedily by the lower tiers of the independent adjudication system. I hope that the House realises that that will be of benefit to mobility allowance claimants generally.

I shall give a brief outline of the new clause. Subsection (1) changes the time from which, as a condition of entitlement to mobility allowance, the period of 12 months or more over which inability or virtual inability to walk is likely to persist, has to be reckoned. That is to bring this entitlement condition into line with the other changes proposed.

Subsection (2) inserts three new subsections in section 57A of the Social Security Act 1975. New subsections (2A) and (2B) define the "relevant date" of the start of the 12-month period in relation to first claims and renewal claims. New subsection (2C) enables the introduction of regulations to allow mobility allowance to be awarded from a date later than the date of claim.

Subsection (3) repeals section 37(A)(7) of the Social Security Act 1975, which at present limits consideration of a person's entitlement to the date when his claim is received.

Subsection (4) validates retrospectively awards of mobility allowance made from a date later than the date of claim following the decision of the social security commissioners.

Government amendments Nos. 187, 188 and 186 are all consequential on the introduction of the new clause. The new clause is a modest proposal which falls a good deal short of some of the other new clauses that Opposition Members have tabled. However, I hope that it will at least be seen as an unqualified goody, and that, for once, I shall get a modest pat on the back for introducing the measure.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): New clause 23 is necessary because of the continued controversy about

[Mr. Jack Ashley]

eligibility for mobility allowance. The Department, its commissioners, the House of Lords and many lawyers are in endless dispute over the existing law and regulations and what they mean. Costly time is being wasted and, more importantly, this terrible confusion and uncertainty is resulting in many severely disabled people being deprived of mobility allowance when they should be receiving it.

The fundamental controversy is about what is meant by the phrase

"unable or virtually unable to walk."

It has been held that there is a distinction between cannot walk and will not walk. One gives eligibility and the other does not.

The mother of the 12-year-old severely mentally handicapped boy who featured in the "Link" television programme on the subject would find legal mumbo-jumbo laughable but tragic. Her child is so strong that he has pulled her to the ground. He has the ability to walk, but his frequent random refusal to do so makes it more difficult to cope with him. He is a strong, powerful young man, and it is much more difficult to cope with him than with a child whose disability weakens or confines him to a wheelchair. But that boy and his mother are refused the mobility allowance.

A social security commissioner, with the subsequent approval of the House of Lords, held that if the legislation intended to include the inability to direct one's walking, it would have done so. The new clause responds to that. It clarifies the situation and makes it clear that the mobility allowance is about the social loss of being unable to walk in an intended direction rather than the physical loss of being unable to put one leg in front of the other.

The mobility allowance grew out of the three-wheeler car provision, which shows that its intended, if unspecified, aim was to enable people to go from A to B. Being

"unable or virtually unable to walk"

should have been a convenient means of identifying those requiring help to get from A to B. It has proved to be a net with a larger holes through which deserving cases easily fall.

Many mentally handicapped people—those who are autistic, hyperactive or blind or who have other handicaps such as deafness or mental handicap—are quite unable to move in any intended direction without personal care and attention which is sometimes extremely demanding. Yet they often do not receive mobility allowance, and if they have received it they are at risk of losing it.

The new clause provides for the mobility allowance to go to those who are unable to make progress on foot in an intended direction without risk of substantial danger to themselves or to others. It will clarify the eligibility provisions for mobility allowance and ensure that those who desperately need the allowance will receive it.

6.15 pm

Mr. John Hannam (Exeter): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security on his concession in the Government new clause. I support the three new clauses which seek to amend an unsatisfactory arrangement. Most hon. Members will have received representations from constituents who have been refused mobility allowance on the judgment that they are able to walk satisfactorily and therefore do not require it.

It is easy for hon. Members to judge, by looking at and talking to constituents, that they are able to walk and are therefore ineligible for the allowance. We usually advise such people to come back after six months if their conditions worsen. However, we have received representations from those who suffer from severe sensory or mental handicaps which make it impossible for them to walk properly without assistance. When such people are refused mobility allowance, we must conclude that something is drastically wrong with the qualifying conditions in the regulations.

The problem lies in the interpretation of the words "to walk". Our new clauses seek to remove the anomalies which surround the literal interpretation of those words. They are designed to extend the meaning to cover what was originally intended by the mobility allowance regulations to help disabled and handicapped people who are

"unable to make progress on foot . . . without risk or substantial danger to oneself or others."

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Does my hon. Friend agree that this affects not only the award of mobility allowance? I am taking up a case against an ambulance authority which refuses to provide an ambulance for people who are capable of putting one foot before the other but have little ability to determine in which direction they should go.

Mr. Hannam: That highlights the anomaly in the interpretation of the legislation.

The numbers involved are not large, but we should try to help the sensory or mentally impaired. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Ashley) referred to the difficulty and the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley), in his new clause refers to the mentally handicapped. No one has greater knowledge of their problems than he. However, other small groups are desperately in need of our help, particularly the deaf and blind, the blind and mentally handicapped and autistic children.

In recent years some deaf and blind persons have properly been granted the mobility allowance in some areas. In other areas people with the same handicaps have been refused mobility allowance. That discrimination is unacceptable.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the most difficult examples is of someone who has been granted the mobility allowance and then loses it? People are unable to understand why the allowance is taken away, because the medical evidence has not changed.

Mr. Hannam: I was about to discuss that. Organisations such as SENSE, which represent the deaf-blind, tell me that officials say that no decision can be made until test cases have proceeded through the courts. The recent House of Lords test case has resulted in further confusion. People who have been granted mobility allowance are being turned down when they try to renew it.

The present regulations are based on an unstable, unsure and unacceptable basis. A rejigging of the regulations must be worked out so that it is clearly shown that the inability of a person to achieve reasonable mobility without help must be the criterion for the granting of mobility allowance. I hope that my hon. Friend the

Minister, who has done so much for the disabled, will heed the call of all organisations representing disabled people and do something to sort out this serious anomaly in the system.

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I support and lend weight to the comments made by the right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) for the Minister for Social Security to continue along the lines on which he introduced the debate, to respond to problems with the working of the mobility allowance and to look at the specific points that have been raised. I will not talk about the problem of people between the ages of 65 and 75 and of those above 75 years, which new clause 5 deals with, other than to mention, as a benchmark, that there is reason for dissatisfaction. I will not talk—as the hon. Member for Exeter did—about the real problems of blind people and blind people with other disabilities.

Some people who need assistance have not received it. I refer to those who suffer from mental handicap, to which new clauses 24 and 25 relate. I have concentrated on that area because there has been a tremendous amount of uncertainty and people have lost out. There appears to have been a move backwards. On 11 June last year, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), wrote to me, saying:

"there have been difficulties in recent times over the interpretation of the qualifying conditions for the allowance. The case-law has been in an unsatisfactory state because there have been doubts about the extent to which the need for assistance from another person whilst walking could be taken into account."

The problem goes back at least to the case from Worcester, of which the Minister will be aware, R(M)2/78. That led to the amendment of regulations in 1979 to clarify the qualifying conditions. That is when factors such as distance, speed, length of time and manner were introduced, and they are featured in my new clause. In other words, I am trying to get back to what we thought we had established in 1979.

Unfortunately, the Lees case came forward and raised the question of the ability to perform the physical act of walking, rather than the ability to make purposeful use of walking. That is the differentiation to which reference has been made. In a letter dated 11 November, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), said:

"The application of the judgment in cases where there are behavioural limitations on a claimant's walking ability has evidently raised a point of law of special difficulty."

He continued:

"When the Commissioners have given their decision, we will then decide whether there is anything further we need to do to clarify the situation."

The tribunal of commissioners gave its decision in CM/173/85. It appears that only those whose behavioural difficulties cause frequent interruptions to the physical act of walking will qualify. That was a move backwards. The Under-Secretary's letter continued:

"I hope that the background which I have described shows that the intention of the allowance, and the basic qualifying conditions, remain as they have always been."

That is not so. The qualifying conditions are not the same as they have always been. When my two boys were alive, they received a mobility allowance, not because they could not undertake the physical act of walking but because they could not go in a meaningful direction. If they were alive and were to apply for a mobility allowance now—I see similar cases to theirs—they would not receive it. Some people who were eligible a few years ago are not eligible now. The law has become an utter tangle. I hope that at the very least, the Minister will undertake to bring forward a remedy to ensure that the people who deserve and need mobility allowance will receive it.

Mr. Thurnham: The matter goes back some time. In an Adjournment debate on 13 November 1984, the Minister for Social Security promised to review the guidelines pending the Lees case, which had not at that stage been announced. I put a question to him and he was kind enough to answer it on 10 April this year. He said that recent decisions had clarified the law and should help adjudicating authorities. However, it does not seem to me that matters have been clarified. In fact, in a telephone call to a local DHSS office on 8 April, two days before the answer was given, I was told that the Department did not know how to interpret the Lees decision, and things seemed to be completely up in the air. I ask the Minister to consider the matter further and perhaps undertake to bring in further amendments when the Bill goes to another place. There is great confusion. I draw the Minister's attention to early-day motions 656 and 847 which I tabled and which have been supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House. I hope that the Minister will offer some help in this area.

I should declare a personal and a constituency interest in the matter. The constituency interest arises in the case of Daniel Heaton, aged 9½ years, who was granted mobility allowance in a decision made on 12 December 1984. The medical appeal tribunal granted the allowance for two years only, on the basis that within the next year or two years he would be admitted to a residential home on a permanent basis, whereupon the benefit to be derived from an allowance would be uncertain. When I corresponded about the case with my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security, the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr. Major), he said that the possibility of admission to a residential home should not have been a relevant factor as it would not have affected entitlement to the allowance. The Heatons are now confused, because the allowance has not been continued, despite the fact that further medical examinations have shown that Daniel Heaton's position medically is the same as it was.

Daniel was re-examined by a general practitioner on 25 November last year. The adjudicating officer referred him to the medical board. The medical board examined him on 12 January 1986, but again the adjudicating officer decided to refer the case to the medical appeal tribunal. In March this year, the Heatons were told by the tribunal that no date could be set for a hearing until the Lees decision had been clarified by a tribunal of commissioners. The tribunal of commissioners made a decision the day before the letter was sent. Presumably, that would have helped to clarify the position.

My constituent, Daniel's mother, is in a state of complete confusion. She wrote to me saying:

"they are making us go through all the hearings we went through last year."

It is impossible for my constituent to see the need for that when the medical evidence is the same as it was earlier. Obviously, the costs incurred by the Heatons in looking after Daniel are based on the fact that they would receive the allowance. The Minister will be aware of the costs

[Mr. Thurnham]

incurred if a child such as Daniel were to go into a residential home. The fact that it was mentioned earlier should be borne in mind in asking for further guidance to be given in such cases.

The confusion is confirmed by the number of people who have written stating that it is a difficult and contentious area. I received a letter from the Spastics Society dated 16 May, which stated:

"it is particularly unfair that those who have physical disabilities in their legs should qualify for the allowance, whilst others who though in theory are able to 'walk' cannot do so because of a mental handicap or a combination of disabilities cannot qualify."

The Spastics Society went on to say that the Lees case seems to have added to the confusion. I think that the society helped to word some of the amendments which are on the Amendment Paper.

I draw the Minister's attention to a letter which was sent to him by the Disability Alliance and refer him to the number of people who have signed the letter. The letter from the Disability Alliance was signed by the Campaign for People with Mental Handicaps, the Child Poverty Action Group, Down's Children's Association, the Royal Society for Mentally Handicapped Children and Adults, the National Association for Mental Health, the National Autistic Society, the National Federation for the Blind, the National League of the Blind and Disabled, the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation, the Royal National Institute for the Blind, the National Deaf-Blind and Rubella Association. If all those organisations are as concerned as they say they are about the need for better guidance, I earnestly request my hon. Friend the Minister to see whether he can provide further clarification outside the Bill or as part of it through an amendment introduced in another place.

Mr. Kevin Barron (Rother Valley): I support new clauses 23, 24 and 25 and the removal from section 37 of the Social Security Act 1975 of the anomalies regarding mobility allowance.

The evidence has been presented well today. I am sorry that the Minister chose to help only in a small way and in another respect, and did not clear up the anomaly. Hon. Members on both sides of the House will know of people who have been refused mobility allowance because they suffer non-physical handicaps. They might have gone to a medical officer and been refused mobility allowance because they have normal gait.

I had such a case, which ended up at the regional medical appeal tribunal. I represented the people concerned and we won. We argued that the family, with an eight-year-old daughter, as she was then, ought to have mobility allowance to help her and the whole family. The father and the mother were unemployed and they had two other children. Although we won the case, there was initially an objection by the Minister to the appeal going in their favour. Next year, or the year after, however, when the matter comes up again, we do not know whether the family will be able to receive the help.

The Minister is presenting major changes in the law, but he has missed a golden opportunity to amend the 1975 Act fairly and properly so that people with other than physical handicaps are no longer discriminated against.

6.30 pm

Mr. Galley: When moving the motion, That the new clause 31 be read a Second time, my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security suggested several minor, technical, but helpful and useful changes to mobility allowance, and it is singularly graceless of the Opposition not to have referred to those improvements.

There are, nevertheless, serious worries about mobility allowance, and I should like to emphasise some of the arguments that have already been made so that my hon. Friend the Minister is fully aware of the breadth of concern about the elegibility criteria for the allowance.

There will always be some definition problems and borderline cases, however the legislation is written, but it is clear that the current criteria about being unable, or virtually unable, to walk are not adequate to determine whether somebody should be eligible for mobility allowance.

We all have constituents whom any layman would say are unable to walk. We all have constituents who obviously need some assistance with mobility but who, because of the interpretation of definitions, are not entitled to mobility allowance. It is important that my hon. Friend the Minister should give us an assurance that he will reconsider the matter. I understand that he may not be able to accept new clauses 23, 24 and 25 now, but they embrace important considerations which I hope he will examine to see whether we can improve the wording of the eligibility criteria.

None of the new clauses will open the floodgates to people who would, by reasonable criteria, be ineligible. The numbers will be small and it would be a sensitive response to a small problem for my hon: Friend to give us an assurance that he will re-examine the definitional problems.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) spoke to new clause 5. There is an important principle here and, as we are having a rare debate on mobility allowance, we should not skate over the fact that somebody who has passed his or her 66th birthday is not entitled to claim mobility allowance although his or her need for it may be as significant as that of somebody who was recently 65 —or more so.

A number—I do not wish to exaggerate—of elderly people have considerable difficulty with mobility and are beleaguered in their homes. There is little help for people aged over 66 who are immobile. The elderly have growing expectations in terms of mobility, activity and the richness of life, so we must consider such groups who are significantly disadvantaged because of lack of mobility.

Such a change obviously has resource implications, and I can understand my right hon. and hon. Friends being anxious about ramifications to the tune of some £300 million for the social security budget arising from significant changes in eligibility for mobility allowance for people aged over 66. I am not asking my hon. Friend to accept the principle and go ahead straight away; merely that he should give greater thought to the mobility needs of elderly people when no other source of help is available.

There might come a time when we have the resources to allow a wider interpretation of the mobility allowance for elderly people.

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): We shall need a change of Government before that happens.

Mr. Galley: The hon. Lady often interrupts me in the Social Services Select Committee, and she is doing it again now. That comment was unworthy of her and inaccurate.

New clause 5 has significant resource implications, but improvements in social security have come one by one. The hon. Member for Eccles (Mr. Carter-Jones) is fond of telling us that he is in favour of what he calls the salami approach of improvements for the disabled. He argues that improvements come slice by slice. I hope my hon. Friend will consider that extending the mobility allowance to the over-65s should be the next improving slice.

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): I should like to speak in support of new clause 5. I do not have to say too much about the generality, as the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) has just urged the Minister for Social Security to take account of the needs of the elderly.

I should like to spotlight another anomaly. Is there any reason why people who have not applied for mobility allowance should not be eligible between the ages of 65 and 75, when people who have received it before the age of 66 are able to have it, provided that the medical criteria are satisfied, until they are 75? I cannot understand why that should happen.

I should like to give the example of an injustice which was brought to my attention. Someone consulted his general practitioner about four years ago when he was still under 65. The general practitioner failed to diagnose a medical condition and, by the time it was diagnosed and a specialist had confirmed it, the gentleman had lost his claim to mobility allowance. He applied, went to the tribunal and got a lot of sympathy. However, he did not get any money at the end of the day. The people concerned feel very strongly about this injustice.

A letter from the consultant physician said that he suffered from chronic bronchitis and emphysema and was significantly disabled to the point where he was breathless after walking a short distance on level ground. The letter said:

"His illness represents one which has progresed slowly over a period of years. He is markedly disabled now but was significantly disabled several years ago before he reached the age of 65. I can most strongly support his claim for Mobility Allowance on Medical grounds."

That is what the consultant physician said, and the tribunal agreed. However, he did not succeed in his claim, simply because he was over 65. I do not see how the Minister can justify this dreadful situation anyway. I hope that he will do something this evening to give some hope to the elderly who are disabled and immobile.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): There is no doubt that mobility allowance is one of the most useful, best understood and widely used of all the benefits that have been introduced in recent years. I hope that it will not put anybody's back up on Conservative Benches if I say that and pay tribute to those elsewhere who took the time and trouble to introduce it. However, I confess to a sense of disappointment that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has not yet managed to make major progress on the entitlement to mobility allowance of mentally handicapped people.

My right hon. Friend will recall debating with me late one night, I think it was in 1984, the case of Shelley and Russell Tulloch, who are my constituents in Melbourne near Derby. They are mentally handicapped adults suffering from a congenital disease which was not discovered until after the younger one was born. The disease means that they have progressively become more mentally handicapped and increasingly difficult to manage. They are cared for by devoted parents who have applied for mobility allowance and who raised the question with me. After several attempts they were eventually granted the mobility allowance and the DHSS then appealed against the decision and took the case to higher authorities, at which point they were refused mobility allowance.

The family receives a great deal of help and assistance. The two young people receive non-contributory invalidity pension, the family has the assistance of Derbyshire social services and they have access to a day centre and training centre. There is no doubt that the fact that the young people are mentally handicapped and quite severely restricted in what they can do is known and noted and is very much a part of all the assessments that have been done of the family. When I debated the case with my right hon. Friend, the family were sufficiently devoted to come down to listen to what was being said and advise me.

Therefore, I take a close interest in the subject and I hope that the day may come when both sides of the House can welcome the opportunity for mobility allowance to be paid not only to people who cannot walk, but to those with other problems.

If Shelley and Russell were here now they could walk through this Chamber as readily as anybody—that is, if they could understand what the Chamber was and what was being asked of them. They could manage to put one foot in front of the other. There is no doubt about that, although their ability so to do is becoming increasingly restricted. They would need to be on somebody's arm. They would need to be assisted and aided, not by a walking stick, a frame or a zimmer, but by a caring person, especially a relative or someone they could trust in order to make progress of any kind, even of a few yards. It is impossible for them to travel or use public transport unaided or to use the minibus without an escort. Therefore, it follows that they need help with transport.

Some years ago when I was involved in social services in Birmingham we were able to make use of a different piece of legislation to aid such people. We were able to grant bus passes to such people under the transport legislation of 1976. That gave us greater leeway. Apart from anything else, it gave more power to local councillors and, provided we kept within the broad letter of the legislation, we were able to decide whether we felt that someone would benefit from a bus pass. There were occasions when we watched somebody walk into the office to see whether we thought he needed a bus pass. We always watched them from the window as they walked out again because we were well aware that some people would abuse the system.

We were able to use this facility to grant assistance to families with mentally handicapped members. We were quite sure that the wording of that legislation enabled us to use our power to pay the transport authority for a free bus pass so that a mentally handicapped person could use it and be assisted in that way. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will explore the ways in which local authorities can use their powers and see whether they could be extended in some way to mentally handicapped people.

6.45 pm

Various additional criteria for deciding whether someone should claim mobility allowance are proposed in the new clauses, especially that of the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) with which I have a great deal of sympathy. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State would agree that the current criteria are restrictive and increasingly seem old-fashioned. A disabled person is now recognised not just as someone who cannot walk very well. These days we regard as disabled those who cannot make as full use of facilities as the rest of us can, and somebody who is mentally handicapped, not just physically handicapped.

Although the legislation was not written all that long ago, in the days when it was written, when mental handicap was beginning to be recognised as a problem for which the whole community should be responsible, a very large proportion of the mentally handicapped people, such as Shelley and Russell Tulloch, would have been in institutions. Therefore, there would have been no need for them to have mobility allowance or to try to find ways of living in society. They no longer go into institutions, and the whole thrust of our policy is to get them out of them and into the community. Therefore, it behoves us, in so far as we can, to ensure that they have the same rights as everybody else in the community and that their disability enables and entitles them to the same sort of help.

A full review of disability is currently under way. I have asked and pleaded in this House before that we should include the mentally handicapped in the general word disability. I believe that my right hon. and hon. Friends have taken careful note of that. I hope that the day will come when they will feel able to add criteria to the granting of mobility allowance which will recognise that walking unaided does not just mean walking without a stick. It may also mean needing to walk with an escort. Travelling unaided may mean not just being able to get on the bus by oneself but perhaps requiring some assistance and guidance and an escort at all times in order to be able to do that. Therefore, I hope that in the current review the question of mobility allowance is being looked at seriously and that at some point we may look forward to proposals by my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench in order to allow the payment of this important and valuable benefit to those who are mentally handicapped and could make use of it.

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): Time is at a premium and I shall be studiedly brief. My main concern is with new clause 23 and the others so ably explained by my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). There is now widespread and increasing concern about current restrictions on entitlement to mobility allowance. It has been put to the House strongly again today by the Spastics Society. The Society's concern is shared by many other organisations. What seems particularly unfair to the organisations is that those who have physical disabilities in their legs qualify for the allowance while others, who in theory are able to walk but cannot do so because of a mental handicap or a combination of disabilities, do not. That rankles also with the families of many disabled children.

There has been reference to the legal confusion which surrounds entitlement to the allowance. To some extent that confusion stems from various interpretations of the verb "to walk". It is argued that the needs of many disabled people could be met if "to walk" was defined in the regulations as meaning:

"to make progress on foot in an intended direction, unaided by another person, without risk or substantial danger to oneself or others".

Those are the words of new clause 23.

This would be a simple amendment to introduce, and would clarify the current confusion. It would also remove an anomaly that causes considerable distress to severely disabled people and those who care for them.

The mobility allowance is a child of which many people have claimed paternity, such has been its success. Having legislated for the allowance, and having then moved regulations that extended it to some people with mental handicaps, I very much hope that our plea will be accepted. Certainly, if everyone who has claimed paternity were now to vote for the redefinition that we are seeking, there could be no doubt whatever that it would be approved.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I should like to add a few words, as someone who has listened to the debate and who was not privileged to be on the Committee. Therefore, I hope that my words will carry a slightly different emphasis from the words of those who served many long hours in Committee and with whose views Ministers are familiar.

I ask why we should risk giving any impression that we are not willing and prepared to give the maximum help to those in society who most need it. I favour concentrating that help and the resources that are available most on those who are least able to help themselves. That category is headed by the disabled. In using the word "disabled", I agree with all my hon. Friends and Opposition Members who have given the widest possible definition of "disablement" in this context, because I believe that if we allow the law and regulations to continue, as they have in the past, to be drawn in the most narrow way and therefore to seek to exclude people from the category of those who need help, we are open and vulnerable to criticism—and rightly so.

I say that the more so because I believe that it is that category of people in society who, in many ways, are the most easily enumerated and quantified. We should be able to identify them very well, with regard to the age limit and physical disabilities; we should be able to quantify them and therefore make estimates and allowances of the resources required to give them the help that they need and deserve.

I agree with the point that was made by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) about the age limit. In that category more than any other we are well able to identify those who would qualify were we to change the ridiculous regulations, and therefore build into our estimates of the resources coming under this heading what was required to give those people the help that they need. That is an easy case. A more difficult case is one that requires a definition of mobility or immobility, or the ability to walk. Again, I agree with many Opposition Members and my hon. Friends. Surely in that case we should be able to make the definition more generous rather than narrower. Even if we did that, we should still be able to quantify with reasonable accuracy the number of people who might qualify for the benefits, assistance and help.

On these occasions, I am always the first to say to people who want more resources for any aspect of social

security services: where would the money come from? I am prepared, in a rare act of generosity, to offer my hon. Friends some advice and guidance. I am referring to the next new clause that we shall discuss, which is about child benefit.

I give a small trailer to my speech by telling Ministers that we could start to find the resources required by not giving child benefit to those who do not need it. In other words, why should we give child benefit to the relatively well off when there are disabled people and people in genuine need of help and resources, people who deserve the resources of the social services much more than do wealthy people with children? My positive and helpful suggestion to my hon. Friend the Minister is along these lines. I believe that we could legitimately transfer to where they are needed a large quantity of resources presently going to where they are not. I support what all Opposition Members and my hon. Friends have said on this important subject.

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I welcome new clause 31, which seems to introduce common sense into an area where the Court of Appeal has intervened and threatened an over-legalistic approach. I am sympathetic towards the common sense expressed in new clauses 23 to 25. It seems to me that one can or cannot walk. One could ask someone in the street whether he realised that the following person is not eligible for mobility allowance—someone who is

"unable to make progress on foot in an intended direction, unaided by another person, without risk or substantial danger to oneself or others".

I think that the man in the street would be extremely surprised at that.

I am also sympathetic to the concept in new clause 5. If someone reaches the age of 68 and is unable to get around by himself, it is odd that his entitlement to mobility allowance depends on whether he was able to get around by himself at the age of 65. That is another anomaly that the Government should examine.

Mr. Newton: This has been an important debate. However, there has been very little discussion of the proposition with which we started — the relatively modest but generally welcome new clause that I moved. The debate has ranged across many broader issues, as I expected, following the court decisions to which reference had been made.

Before I comment on what hon. Members on both sides of the House have said, I should like to say a word about the Heaton case which was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham). He will understand that it would not be appropriate for me to attempt to discuss the details of an individual case at length on the Floor of the House, certainly not in present circumstances. I should make it clear that on the initial claim, as my hon. Friend knows, the independent adjudicating authorities decided to make an award for two years only. They do not have to give reasons for that. The fact that the claimant was going into residential accommodation should not have been a factor, as payment of the allowance is not affected by that. My understanding is that there has been no final decision on the case to which my hon. Friend referred. It is still before a medical appeal tribunal.

The major issue that has been raised by hon. Members is related to new clause 23 and the two other new clauses of similar character, including the one tabled by the hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley). There is also the slightly different issue raised by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) in his new clause 5.

The House will be aware that since mobility allowance was introduced in 1976 by the then Labour Government —indeed, by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris)—the basic qualification has been the inability or virtual inability to walk. New clause 23—as well as new clauses 24 and 25—is directed to the meaning of the phrase "virtual inability to walk" as interpreted by the House of Lords in the Lees case, and by the social security commissioners in the Hilton case.

In the case of Christine Lees, as the House will be aware, the judgment of the House of Lords was that the ability to walk referred to locomotion, not to the ability to direct one's steps to a desired destination. In the case of Mark Hilton, the decision of the tribunal of social security commissioners showed that mentally handicapped people, despite their physical ability to walk, can be entitled to mobility allowance if they are affected by what the commissioners describe as

"temporary paralysis as far as walking is concerned",

which has a physical cause.

I acknowledge that the views expressed by a number of organisations outside the House and by some hon. Members tonight——

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Can you advise me whether it is in order, when the guillotine motion falls at 7 o'clock, for the Opposition to move new clause 1 formally, to secure a vote on the clause? It is clear that there has been a filibuster by the Government on the new clause to prevent a clear humiliation by a vote on this important issue, which will now not be debated.

Mr. Speaker: I have no authority to do as the hon. Gentleman wishes. If the Minister were to resume his seat before 7 o'clock and there was time to move the new clause, that would be a different matter.

Mr. Newton: I recognise the difficulty, but I stress that I spoke for only a short time in moving the new clause less than one hour ago. The issues that have been raised are extremely important and complicated, and there is much anxiety outside the House——

It being Seven o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

Mr. Meacher: Further to my earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker. Would it be in order now for the Opposition to move new clause 1 formally to allow a vote on the matter? There has already been a great deal of discussion on this matter. We believe that it is proper that the House should have the opportunity to declare a view on this crucial issue. Can there now be a vote on new clause 1?

Mr. Speaker: I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Gentleman, but I am bound by the rules of the House and I have no authority to go beyond the guillotine motion that has been agreed by the House.

Mr. Barron: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have just had a debate on new clause 31,

[Mr. Barron]

which totalled 57 minutes. Forty-three minutes were used by the Government Benches for speeches to filibuster and stop us getting to new clause 1. This is a disgraceful state of affairs. The Minister spoke for 11 minutes. The hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) spoke about child benefit, knowing that we would not get to new clause 1 because he was filibustering.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot recognise a filibuster. Hon. Members who have spoken have done so very briefly.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I add my words to those of Opposition Members who are disgusted at the way in which the discussion on child benefits in new clause 1 has been avoided.

Mr. Speaker: There is always the chance of such sadness when a guillotine motion is in force.

Clause 1

MINIMUM CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERSONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 1 in page 1, line 15, leave out from 'election' to 'and' in line 16 and insert

'which is still operative that her liability in respect of primary Class 1 contributions shall be a liability to contribute at a reduced rate'.

Mr. Speaker: Before we discuss Government amendment No. 1, it would be right for me to tell the House that I have reconsidered my provisional selection of amendments. I have selected amendment No. 206 in the name of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and his hon. Friends. This amendment will fall for debate immediately after Government amendment No. 59, that is, after the 9 o'clock guillotine.

Mr. Harry Cohen (Leyton): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of the importance of the comments which have been made about child benefit and the fact that you have just added to your selection of amendments to be discussed, will you consider adding the debate on child benefit under new clause 1 later in the evening so that the House can give a view on the matter?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has been a member of this House for long enough to know that we move forward and not backwards in this place.

Mr. Major: This is a drafting amendment which clarifies the intent of subsection (1)*(b)* of clause 1 which states that married women and widows who have opted to pay reduced rates of national insurance contributions are excluded from receiving the contracted-out rebate. This is not a piece of miscellaneous beastliness but simply reflects the fact that they are not covered by SERPS and consequently have no SERPS pension to contract out of. It would therefore be extremely odd to pay a rebate. I draw to the attention of the House that an optant who wishes the DHSS to pay minimum contributions to her personal pension will first need to end her election.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 189, in page 2, line 12, at end insert—

'(4A) If the Secretary of State pays an amount by way of minimum contributions which he is not required to pay, he may recover it from the person to whom he paid it or from any person in respect of whom he paid it.

(4B) If he pays in respect of an earner an amount by way of minimum contributions which he is required to pay, but does not pay it to the trustees or managers of the earner's chosen scheme, he may recover it from the person to whom he paid it or from the earner.'

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 190, 191 and 194.

Mr. Major: These amendments ensure that the Secretary of State has a legal right to recover any wrong payments of minimum contributions through the contracted-out rebate under clause 1 or incentive payments —the 2 per cent. incentive under clause 7—and to restore to the national insurance fund the amounts recovered. They also clarify that regulations under the Social Security Act 1975 can enable amounts owed by a person to the Secretary of State to be offset against a refund of overpaid national insurance contributions to that person.

I shall give examples of how this will work if pressed, but it is a fairly straightforward and non-contentious proposal and, for the present, I merely commend the amendments to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 2, in page 2, line 30, leave out from 'date' to end of line 32 and insert 'some other appropriate scheme is the earner's chosen scheme'.

This is a drafting amendment which is required for clarification because clause 3 does not provide for exceptions to clause 1 as the existing words may be read to suggest. The substituted words in amendment No. 2 achieve the intended effect that a person cannot nominate a personal pension scheme to receive his minimum contributions from DHSS Newcastle without cancelling a previous nomination which is still valid.

Amendment agree to.

Schedule 1

APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 192, in page 82, line 9, leave out pargraph 2 and insert—

'2. The Secretary of State may prescribe descriptions of persons by whom or bodies by which a scheme may be established and, if he does so, a scheme may only be established by a person or body of a prescribed description.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 193.

Mr. Major: Paragraph of schedule 1 provides a power to prescribe who may establish personal pension schemes. The amendments extend that power, adding a general power enabling requirements to be placed on personal pension schemes as a condition of them becoming appropriate to receive minimum contributions from the DHSS-Newcastle. The amendments also reword paragraph 2 so that the Secretary of State need not exercise the power given there to prescribe who may establish a personal pension scheme if that proves unnecessary to enable the new providers—unit trusts, banks and building societies —to participate in personal pensions.

Our intention is to use the power in the new paragraph 5*(b)* set out in amendment No. 193, to make regulations

about the form and nature of appropriate personal pension schemes. For example, they are likely to specify that schemes which are authorised unit trusts under the financial services legislation, or which offer special kinds of contract under insurance company legislation, may be appropriate. That approach will enable us to ensure that the investor protection provisions that apply to existing forms of investment business will apply automatically to personal pension schemes receiving the minimum contributions.

We had a lengthy and interesting debate in Committee about investor protection and we regard that as critically important in the provision of pensions. I am sure that that view is supported by all hon. Members. Together with other legislation, for example the Building Societies Bill, the proposed regulations will show that the route for the new providers to become involved in the provision of personal pensions is by setting up or by being associated with suitable forms of investment business offering such pensions.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 3, in page 82, line 11 leave out paragraph 3.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to discuss Government amendments Nos. 5, 8, 24 and 25.

Mr. Newton: These amendments meet a point that was raised by Opposition Members during the Committee stage. The Government undertook to discuss these points with the parliamentary draftsmen. The amendments ensure that the minimum contributions to a personal pension scheme and the corresponding minimum payments and incentive payments to a money purchase occupational scheme are used for the benefit of the member concerned. That anxiety was expressed in an amendment in Committee. The amendment also paves the way for other amendments to clause 6 and schedule 2 which meet a related point raised in Committee by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern).

Appropriate personal pension schemes and money purchase contracted-out occupational pension schemes will not, as the Bill presently states, have to provide only money purchase benefits. They will also be able to provide some defined benefits provided that the minimum contributions are applied — subject to permitted administrative charges — to providing money purchase benefits. I hope that that explanation will assist the House to form a favourable view of the matter.

Mrs. Beckett: I listened with interest to the Minister's explanation of the reasons for the amendment, and the debate affords an opportunity to the Opposition to draw attention to a couple of defects that we still see in the scheme.

The Minister said that the amendment would allow occupational pension schemes to give defined benefits as well as only money purchase benefits, which might have been the case previously. We are concerned that the part of the Bill that is now being amended will allow schemes to be contracted out on the basis of minimum contributions rather than, as in the past, on the basis of the much higher standard of defined benefits.

Most people who were anxious when the Government proposed the abolition of SERPS might have felt some sense of relief that they now propose only to modify that scheme. But such relief will rapidly evaporate once it is realised that as a quid pro quo for having a modified earnings-related pension scheme within the state sector the standards that occupational pension schemes are expected to meet are significantly lowered. Rather than merely making the state pension worse, the Government have effectively lowered pensions right across the board, but, as that is the clear intention of their overall policy, I suppose we should not be surprised.

The Minister also said that another intention of the amendments was to try to ensure that benefits were more definitely devoted to the interests of the member. That goes to the heart of our concern about the proposal to introduce personal pensions.

In Committee it was noteworthy that all the amendments that sought to introduce some guarantee — even insurance — that people would not be able to sign away all their pension rights, thereby finding themselves destitute when they retired, were repulsed. The Government made it very clear that personal pensions were a risk — although they described it as an opportunity — and that the full burden of that risk should be borne by the individual who chose to take out a personal pension. To be completely fair to the Government, that was made plain in their first consultative document, but it has been far from the forefront of their remarks ever since.

Mr. Freeman: As I did not serve on the Committee I did not have the benefit of hearing the arguments that I am sure the hon. Lady deployed with great skill. However, I am concerned about the line of her argument. She has expressed fears — which I do not share — about the introduction of personal pensions. This is a marvellous opportunity to encourage those who are not already in occupational pension schemes to make provision for themselves. Will the hon. Lady enlighten us by explaining the risk that she thinks will be borne by those who take out personal pensions? Perhaps she will bear in mind that before such a pension is taken out there are restrictions on those who may offer such schemes and limitations on the amount and timing of the benefit to be received. The hon. Lady should also bear in mind that those already in occupational pension schemes might think carefully about withdrawing from such generous schemes, particularly those which are non-contributory.

Mrs. Beckett: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman, who has led me to my next point. I shall tell him why the Opposition and others are concerned about personal pensions and why some of the major insurance companies have expressed reservations. I can do no better than quote the CBI. The hon. Gentleman may not have much sympathy with my views, but I am sure that he sympathises with the view of the CBI. It states that relying solely on personal pensions could leave people and their families less well off and inadequately provided for in later years because they do not provide a pension based on final salary or average earnings, as would an occupational pension; they do not include discretionary increases to keep pace with inflation; and they do not provide life assurance, and so on. The CBI also draws attention to the danger that younger employees may be tempted to leave their occupational pension schemes. When we are young, we are less worried about our pension provision and are

[Mrs. Beckett]

much more likely to be tempted by cash in the hand. Many people are extremely concerned about the dangers that could be incurred as a result of unwise investments.

7.15 pm

There are other problems, as well as the possibility of not getting an adequate pension because of poor investments. The Minister said that it was intended to try to obtain better value for money, but he must be aware that the overheads of personal pension schemes are likely to be substantially higher than those of occupational pension schemes, and infinitely higher than those of SERPS, which is the most efficient way of providing a good pension and good value for money. After all the things that they have said, it is extraordinary that a Conservative Government should be insisting on people getting poor value for their investments.

There is the danger that people may be misled into taking out personal pensions, without realising the risks that they will incur. I draw the attention of the House to an advertisement that appeared shortly after we finished debating these matters in Committee. It is almost as misleading as an advertisement for pensions could be. It says that SERPS is unfair and poor value for money. That is totally untrue. Even Conservative Members would not argue that. They would complain that it is too good value for money, which is why it must be reduced. The advertisement lists all the advantages that would accrue to someone setting up or taking out a personal pension.

One of the most disturbing things about that advertisement is that it is placed by a company which has in its title the word "Crown". Its logo is very like the HMSO logo. It looks very much like a Government-sponsored advertisement. But it is a misleading attempt to draw someone into taking out a personal pension that might well be to his or her disadvantage. I know that the Government intend to control misleading advertising, and the sooner they start the better.

We are also concerned about what is likely to happen at a time when unemployment is high and is likely to remain high even when, after the next election, we have a Government who will bend all their efforts towards reducing it.

In Committee we discussed whether the value of someone's personal pension would be treated in the same way as other insurance policies are now—for example, whether as a capital resource it would deprive someone of entitlement to income support, housing benefit, and so on. I am not sure whether the Minister has wholly met that concern, but we will not know what the dangers are until we see how the value of personal pensions is assessed.

I am much more concerned about the fact that someone who is unemployed is unlikely to be able to maintain the contributions. People will then be in danger of effectively losing all of their supplementary pension entitlement.

The hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) spoke of the opportunity of encouraging people who have no occupational pension. But if, having taken out such a pension, they become unemployed for a sustained period and are forced to give up the scheme to which they have contributed, they will then have no state earnings-related supplement and no occupational pension supplement either. That is a serious danger that the Government have effectively ignored.

Later amendments deal with what the Government call a 2 per cent. incentive, but what we call a 2 per cent. bribe. The proposal to give people extra contributions to attract them into such schemes is particularly invidious because those people are in serious danger of providing themselves with an inadequate pension. It seems wrong for the Government to seek to give someone a cash incentive which will ultimately leave that person in poverty in retirement.

I shall draw attention to the observations of the United Kingdom steering committee on superannuation about what are and what are not advantageous proposals and what is and what is not in the public interest. During the Committee stage, and again on report, that committee wrote saying that its views have not changed. It draws attention to the fact that, the Secretary of State has claimed that the proposals will foster industrywide schemes, but that it believes that damage could accrue to industrywide schemes, especially specialised ones for the police and firemen.

In Committee the Minister said that no one in the police or the fire service would be so unwise as to leave an occupational pension scheme, and we hope that no one will do so. However, those who represent the police and firemen and their pension schemes are worried about the temptation to do so. They draw attention to the fact that contributions to the police scheme are 11 per cent. per annum for men and 8 per cent. per annum for women, and 10·75 per cent. per annum for both male and female fire fighters. Those figures represent considerable sums, such as would cover the cost of running a car. They think it is likely that some young people will be tempted to take out proposals of the type envisaged in this section of the Bill. Our anxiety, like theirs, remains unassuaged by our discussions in Committee.

Although we shall not vote against the amendment, we believe that it is right to express our anxiety at the damage that the Government are doing to pension provisions.

Mr. Freeman: I did not have the benefit of listening to the arguments of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) in Committee, but I disagree with two of her criticisms of the provisions for personal pensions in this amendment, with which I agree.

The hon. Lady cited the anxiety of the Confederation of British Industry, which I believe is misplaced. I have read the article in question. If I have understood her summary of the argument correctly, it is that if an individual leaves an occupational pensions scheme and makes a money purchase provision for his personal pension, it would not be as good as a final salary or defined benefit scheme. That misses two points.

First, about 11 million employees — a goodly proportion of whom are admittedly on extremely low pay, such as married women who work, and for whom discussion of the provision of a personal pension is not entirely appropriate — are not covered by occupational pension schemes. Therefore, the introduction of personal pensions is a major breakthrough which will be popular with the electorate during the next few years and as the schemes get going. Those who are not covered by occupational pension schemes will mainly be attracted to personal pension schemes. Therefore, The CBI's argument is not relevant to them. Surely the objective is to bring in as many people as possible who have no provision made for them by their employer, perhaps

because they work in a small firm or for an employer who does not have a final salary scheme. Many small and medium firms have money purchase schemes only and do not have defined benefit and final salary schemes.

Mrs. Beckett: I take the hon. Gentleman's point but I am sure he will recall the two arguments expressed by those worried about personal pension schemes. He said that many people did not have occupational pensions. We do not think it matters what type of pension one has, so long as it ensures an adequate income. We do not agree with the Secretary of State that sticking a different label on a rose makes it smell different. We believe that a poor occupational pension is disadvantageous. The hon. Gentleman also pointed to the stop in growth of occupational pensions. He will be aware that it is widely believed that, as the state scheme has been so good, there is no need for an expansion of occupational pension schemes.

Mr. Freeman: My experience does not bear out what the hon. Lady says. It is wholly at variance with hers.

Some analysis is needed of the central point of the hon. Lady's speech. She expressed the fear that some people would leave a relatively good occupational pension scheme which provides two thirds of final salary after 40 years of service and an indexed pension or one increased by a minimum of 5 per cent. per annum. She feared that people nearing retirement might be induced away from the relatively generous benefits of that scheme and seek to make their personal pension provision, ending up worse off than if they had remained in the occupational pension scheme.

The fallacy of that argument is the implicit belief in a relatively high rate of inflation. The hon. Lady will agree that if one assumes that inflation will remain below 5 per cent. and an economic growth of 2 to 3 per cent. per annum, a money purchase scheme will provide adequate benefits compared with the best occupational pension scheme on a final salary basis. One would be substantially worse off only if there was a high rate of inflation. The Government's proposal contains the implicit assumption that inflation has been licked, thus providing the economic background for pension provision with inflation under control and sustained economic growth.

We must consider the young person who leaves, or never joins, an occupational pension scheme, and makes his own personal pension provision. It must be remembered that we are not dealing with an economy where a person joins an employer at 18 and stays until he retires. We must deal with a flexible employment career where a person is in employment, is unemployed temporarily, and moves to a different employer. Gone are the days when a person joins an employer and remains with the company for the whole of his working life.

I hope that before a young person opts out or decides not to join a generous occupational pension scheme, he will think carefully about it. He may decide not to join, based on a correct assessment of all the facts. Earlier I alluded to my belief that the literature presented by employers and those selling personal pensions should be clear and enable those who are considering them to reflect properly and with due regard to the seriousness of their decision. The legislation that the Government have enacted, coupled with the Financial Services Bill, fulfils those objectives.

The second objection of the hon. Member for Derby, South concerned what she described as the unemployment problem. We have unemployment problems, as do many other countries in the Western world, but she must distinguish between the long-term unemployed and those who are moving out of employment temporarily and will go back into other employment.

I grant that there is a problem in pension provision for the long-term unemployed. However, those who move out of employment for a few months before finding other employment, and who are making provision for their personal pension under a money purchase scheme, will find that when they go back into employment they can probably increase their contributions for a short time up to the Inland Revenue limits. That will allow them to catch up for the period when they were not making provision. Therefore, when it comes to retirement, their provision will be adequate. The results of the original clause and the amendments now tabled to it are wise and beneficial and will be popular with the electorate.

7.30 pm

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) ranged widely in her comments and made almost a Second Reading speech. I hope that she will not expect me to respond in the same way to everything that she said.

Once again, in the Opposition's response to these amendments, which are quite modest in themselves, we have had a clear illustration of how they dislike offering people a wider choice in making provision for themselves and their pensions. The experience of the past 10 or 20 years shows that such behaviour will carry a penalty, in that it will make it more likely that people who should have access to occupational or personal pensions will not have such access, simply because schemes in which they could participate will not be there. We believe that it is right to open up those choices, for the reasons on which my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman), with his particular expertise, touched.

We have to accept that many purchase schemes cannot, by definition, give the same guarantees that can, at least purportedly, be given by the state earnings-related pension scheme. Its ability to deliver depends on the capacity and willingness of future generations of taxpayers and contributors to find the money. We accept that there is a different balance of considerations for purchase schemes, occupational money purchase schemes and personal pension schemes. I hope the hon. Lady will at least acknowledge that although she talks relentlessly as if it were all downside risk, a good money purchase scheme or personal pension scheme will bring significant additional rewards for those who have made that choice. We simply think that those opportunities should be made available.

I shall not proceed further down that almost Second Reading line of argument, but will move on to some more particular issues raised by the hon. Lady. Money purchase schemes, both occupational and personal pensions, will have to provide widows' and widowers' benefits in circumstances which parallel those required from salary-related schemes. The hon. Lady seems not to have sufficiently appreciated that point.

The hon. Lady spoke about representations on behalf of some of the local government schemes. We have already made it clear that we do not expect people in good occupational schemes to leave them and take personal

[Mr. Newton]

pensions, and that would apply to the special pension schemes for policemen and firemen, which provide rapid accrual. It is significant that the examples quoted by the hon. Lady are all from the public sector, which returns us to my earlier point. Without the option of money purchase contracted out, there is no real prospect of the sort of growth in private-sector, industrywide schemes which we, and many others, would wish to see. As I understand what the hon. Lady was saying, she was not seeking to attack or resist our amendments, but rather to use them as a peg on which to hang some wider points. I commend the amendments to the House.

Mrs. Beckett: With the leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall make a few brief observations on what the Minister said.

It still remains significant that the Government have refused at any stage to accept any proposal that people should have any minimal guarantee. In their consultation document, the Government said that if a personal pension scheme failed to provide people with adequate income, that would be hard luck. They did not phrase it quite like that, but that is what they meant.

Both the Minister and the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) asked how anybody could think that people might get poor pensions. I draw the Minister's attention to the fact that when the Government initially put forward these proposals, everyone throughout the pensions world, and everyone who wrote to us or whom we consulted, could not understand why the Government were making these proposals, because they were likely to provide so much lower pensions than SERPS. Much of the comment on the Minister's consultation document drew attention to that fact. Therefore, it is not merely the Opposition who think that people are likely to get a lower pension as a result of these changes.

The Minister talked about the way in which the Government wanted to extend freedom. That is an objective with which we agree. They want to extend the freedom to make people destitute in their old age. We see no qualms of conscience in resisting that.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 4, in page 82, line 25 after 'member', insert—

'*(aa)* of any income or capital gain arising from the investment of payments such as are mentioned in paragraph *(a)* above;'.

In Committee hon. Members were concerned, as are the Government, to ensure fair and proper control of administrative charges. The amendment extends the power to control such charges in respect of personal pension schemes and contracted-out money purchase occupational schemes. The practical effect is to include in the controls any deductions from income and capital gains arising from investment of members' contribution. As the House will know, there is already a power in schedule 1(5) to control charges deducted direct from contributions or benefits.

This new power is entirely beneficial to the potential holders of pensions. Without the extended power it might not be possible to make effective regulations controlling the administrative charges on schemes offering benefit in the form of a declared interest or bonus, for example with a with-profits insurance contract. In such cases, the charges are not explicity or overtly deducted from contributions or benefits, but are taken into account in deciding what benefits or returns are declared.

I must emphasise again, as we made clear in Committee, that all the power of schedule 1(5) may be kept in reserve if we are satisfied that the combined effect of disclosure and extra competition will be sufficient to keep charges down to reasonable levels. Equally, if we are not sure that that will happen, we shall not hesitate to exercise the power from the outset. The amendment ensures that the power will serve as a catch-all should we need to use it.

Amendment agreed to

Amendments made: No. 5, in page 82, line 31 at end insert—

'5A.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, all minimum contributions which are paid to a scheme in respect of one of its members must be applied so as to provide money purchase benefits for or in respect of that member, except so far as they are used—

(a) to defray the administrative expenses of the scheme; or

(b) to pay commission.

(2) If regulations are made under paragraph 5 above, minimum contributions may be used in any way which the regulations permit, but not in any way not so permitted except to provide money purchase benefits for or in respect of the member.'.

No. 193, in page 82, line 31 at end insert—

'5B. A scheme must satisfy such other requirements as may be prescribed.'.

No. 6, in page 82, line 35 after 'rights', insert 'to money purchase benefits'.

No. 7, in page 82, line 38 after 'his', insert 'to money purchase benefits'.

No. 8, in page 83, line 7, after 'member', insert 'to money purchase benefits'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 9, in page 83, line 9, leave out 'or' and insert 'and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendments Nos. 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 30, 31, 32, 33 and 106.

Mr. Newton: Amendments Nos. 9 and 10 are minor drafting amendments. The Bill as drafted provides power to require that the protected rights which result from the minimum contributions to a personal pension scheme are calculated in a way approved by an actuary, and power to prescribe who may act in that capacity. it will not always be an actuary who is the appropriate person to ensure that the protected rights are calculated properly. In many money purchase schemes, it is more likely to be an accountant or auditor. The amendments generalise the power in the Bill, so that "persons" can be prescribed for this purpose. They also correct some minor drafting errors, bringing the wording into line with similar provisions about the calculation of transfer values in paragraph 14 of schedule 1A to the Social Security Pensions Act.

Amendments Nos. 14 to 17 and 30 to 33, among other things, meet a query which was raised by Opposition Members about the drafting of clause 5(9). They clarify the fact that someone other than the member himself or herself can top up the amount of a protected rights premium. They also correct other unintended effects of the drafting so that, where a person wishes to top up the premium, he need not include the value of his other rights

in the scheme if he does not want to; nor will he be obliged to make a topping-up payment just because he has expressed a wish to do so.

These are matters of some complexity, but I hope that the House will accept that the amendments are moved in good will with the aim of doing good, and will accept my brief explanation.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 10, in page 83, leave out lines 11 to 21 and insert—

'(5) The power to make regulations conferred by sub-paragraph (4) above includes power to provide that protected rights such as are mentioned in sub-paragraph (2) above are to be calculated and verified in such manner as may be approved in particular cases—

(a) by prescribed persons; or

(b) by persons with prescribed professional qualifications or experience; or

(c) by persons approved by the Secretary of State, and power to provide that they shall be calculated and verified in accordance with guidance prepared by a prescribed body.'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 11, in page 83, line 26 leave out 'only'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss Government amendment No. 12.

Mr. Major: Amendments Nos. 11 and 12 reorganise the order and wording of paragraph 8 of schedule 1 to ensure that it works properly as intended. They meet a point which was made by Opposition Members in Committee by clarifying that the pension or annuity paid to a widow or widower in respect of a person's protected rights in a scheme is subject to the same conditions as the pension or annuity paid to the member.

That will be generally welcome to the Opposition. It responds to the anxiety that they expressed in Committee, and I commend the amendments to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 12, in page 83, line 31, leave out from beginning to end of line 15 on page 84 and insert 'or

(b) in such circumstances and subject to such conditions as may be prescribed, by the making of a transfer payment—

(i) to another personal pension scheme; or

(ii) to an occupational pension scheme, where the scheme to which the payment is made satisfies such requirements as may be prescribed.

(1A) If—

(a) the rules of the scheme do not provide for a pension; or

(b) the member so elects,

effect may be given to protected rights by the purchase by the scheme of an annuity which—

(i) complies with the requirements of sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) below; and

(ii) satisfies such conditions as may be prescribed.

(1B) If the annual rate at commencement—

(a) of a pension under sub-paragraph (1) above; or

(b) of an annuity under sub-paragraph (1A) above,

would not exceed a prescribed amount, effect may be given to protected rights by the provision of a lump sum calculated in a manner satisfactory to the Occupational Pensions Board by reference to the amount of the pension or annuity and payable on the date on which the member attains pensionable age or on such later date as has been agreed by him.

(1C) If the member has died without effect being given to protected rights under sub-paragraphs (1), (1A) or (1B) above, effect may be given to them in such manner as may be prescribed.

(1D) No transaction is to be taken to give effect to protected rights unless it falls within this paragraph.

(1E) Effect need not be given to protected rights if they have been extinguished by the payment of a personal pension protected rights premium.

(2) A pension or annuity complies with this sub-paragraph if—

(a) it commences—

(i) on the date on which the member attains pensionable age; or

(ii) on such later date as has been agreed by him, and continues until the date of his death,

(b) in a case where the member dies while it is payable to him and is survived by a widow or widower—

(i) it is payable to the widow or widower in prescribed circumstances and for the prescribed period at an annual rate which at any given time is one-half of the rate at which it would have been payable to the member if the member had been living at that time; or

(ii) where that annual rate would not exceed a prescribed amount, a lump sum calculated in a manner satisfactory to the Occupational Pensions Board is provided in lieu of it.'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 3

AMOUNT OF MINIMUM CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Kirkwood: I beg to move amendment No. 160, in page 4, line 10, at beginning insert

'subject to subsection (5) below'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss amendment No. 161, in page 5, line 4 at end insert—

'(5) Subsection 1*(b)* above does not apply in respect of an earner who is a non-qualifying earner.

(6) Regulations may provide for—

(a) notice that an earner is a non-qualifying earner to be given to the Secretary of State by such person, in such manner and within such time as may be prescribed;

(b) such additional modifications to the definition of "connected employer" as may be prescribed.

(7) In subsections (5) and (6) above—

"non-qualifying earner" means, in relation to a tax week, an earner who at any time after 31st December, 1985 but before that tax week—

(a) has elected to cease to be a member of a relevant scheme which is contracted-out in relation to his employment; or

(b) does not fall within *(a)* above, has ceased to be a member of a relevant scheme which was contracted-out in relation to his employment but receives within six months of such cessation an offer of membership made by or on behalf of the trustees or managers of a related scheme by reference to which his employment would be contracted-out employment (if he accepted that offer) and does not within one month of its being made accept that offer.

"relevant scheme" means an occupational pension scheme which is a contracted-out scheme under Part III of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975.

"related scheme" means, where an earner has ceased to be a member of a relevant scheme which was contracted-out in relation to his employment, a relevant scheme which is for the time being specified in a contracting-out certificate issued to—

(a) the person who was the employer of the earner in relation to his first period of employment; or

(b) a connected employer,

as a scheme by reference to which the earner's employment would be contracted-out employment if he became a member of that scheme.

"connected employer" has the meaning given to it for the purposes of section 51A of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 with such modifications as may be prescribed.'.

Mr. Kirkwood: The House will realise that the amendments seek to change the Government's proposals to introduce an incentive for persons to move into personal pension schemes. The purpose of my amendment is straightforward. It is to restrict that 2 per cent. incentive —or, as some might describe it, bribe—to cases that I consider to be of genuine concern to the state. That means employees who are accruing benefits under SERPS and, therefore, increasing the state's long-term liabilities. The amendment seeks to do that by creating a new category of non-qualifying earners, or earners to whom the incentive will not be paid. Non-qualifying earners are people who opt for an appropriate personal pension although they are currently contracted out of SERPS and accruing guaranteed minimum pensions under contracted-out schemes.

To pay the 2 per cent. incentive, or bribe, as required by clause 3 would be wrong for three reasons. First, the decision that people who are in that position must take is between an occupational pension scheme and a personal pension plan. It will not affect the long-term liabilities of the state earnings-related pension. It is essentially a choice between two forms of private sector saving. It is legitimate for people to make up their minds about that, but incentives funded by the state will merely upset the free market economy and the forces of free competition. It is strange for the Government — we rehearsed these arguments in Committee — to deny the free market economy and the forces of free competition.

7.45 pm

Secondly, the incentive is wrong because it is payable from the national insurance fund, which is contributed to by everyone through national insurance contributions and is effectively taxpayers' money. At a time when insufficient resources are available for all the demands placed on the social security system, it is wrong in principle and reprehensibly wasteful to use some of those resources to sway private sector decisions which will not reduce the state's liabilities.

Thirdly, it is wrong to introduce the incentive because, whatever view one has of personal pensions — I am prepared to countenance them—there is a risk in taking out a personal pension contract. The rewards may be great, but in some cases the losses would seem fairly difficult to bear, especially for dependants and spouses, who may lose the minimum of the death benefits payable under contracted-out schemes. It is risky to induce people by means of an incentive payable from state funds to give up a guaranteed minimum pension.

I believe that the amendment is legally permissible—at least I would not like to think there was a technical reason for refusing it — but it has an additional advantage in that it brings the incentive under clause 3, which is payable to those opting for personal pensions, more closely into line with that available in clause 7, which is payable to members of newly contracted-out occupational pension schemes. It is clear from examining the details of the clause 7 incentive that it is payable only where the member has not, since the beginning of this year, already been contracted out in the employment concerned under another occupational scheme. Therefore, it is intended only to persuade employers to take out of SERPS those employees who are accruing SERPS benefits.

The Government will be aware that they have caused much worry in the occupational pensions industry. I favour personal pension schemes, and it is right for people to have that choice, but I do not share the Government's confidence that occupational schemes can thole the results of the incentive, which puts them at a massive disadvantage.

The occupational pensions industry is also worried about the restructuring effects of some company plans and schemes that may accrue from some of the take-up of the personal pension plans. The Secretary of State may become a victim of his success because if many people dive out of their present occupational schemes into personal pensions, it may destabilise the occupational pensions industry. That would be a retrograde step. The Government actuary may have underestimated the take-up of the scheme. If that is so, it would put at risk some of the valuable and good occupational pension schemes. That would be a retrograde step.

Therefore, I hope that the Secretary of State will look carefully at the amendment. It is drafted with as much precision as possible. It seeks not to damage either personal schemes or occupational schemes, but to redress the imbalance and unfairness that I submit will be created by the introduction of the 2 per cent. incentive. I hope that the Government will look very carefully at this amendment.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) said that he would broadly countenance personal pensions, which I interpreted as Liberal language for support, but then he made it quite clear that he favours the concept of personal pensions.

The effect of his amendment would be to withhold the 2 per cent. incentive addition to personal pensions held by people who, since 1 January 1986, have opted to leave a contracted-out occupational scheme, or have refused to join one within six months of leaving another contracted-out scheme that is operated by the same or an associated employer. I shall deal in a moment with why I am not entirely happy with that formulation.

We believe that it is important to give people the new option of a personal pension. At present the only alternative to remaining fully within the state earnings-related pension scheme is to belong to a salary-related occupational scheme. That option is open only to half of the work force. There are still "two nations" in pensions. That has been the case for the last 20 years. There are those who get a pension from their jobs and there are those who have no alternative but the state system.

The provisions in the Bill will do a great deal to change that. It will be easier and more attractive for employers to provide schemes. They will be able to contract out without the open-ended commitment of providing the salary-related pension which must not deter many small employers. The rules for contracting out will be made much simpler for those who want to offer salary-related pensions.

However, even those improvements do not go far enough. They will not give a pensions choice to everyone. Even with these reforms and changes, not all employers will offer schemes. In any event, occupational schemes may not be the best option for some people. To make choice for all a reality, we are seeking to allow people to contract out of the state scheme by choosing an individual

personal pension scheme with which to save for their retirement. The Bill will provide everyone with the opportunity to choose a personal pension and the type of body with which they want to save. It will give them some say in how their savings are invested and, above all, it will provide them with the scheme that suits them best.

Most of those who are now in schemes are expected to stay in them. The market research that we carried out in 1983-84 showed a high level of satisfaction among scheme members, but many of those without an occupational pension, and others — such as those who expect to change their job frequently — will want to take advantage of the opportunity that personal pensions offer. For that reason, we have put forward personal pensions. The concept of personal pensions is accepted and recognised not just by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire but by the public and commentators generally.

The 2 per cent. incentive payment, which is the guts of this amendment, is a small feature of the strategy to encourage the expansion of occupational schemes. When we reach clause 7, we shall explain why we think that an incentive is necessary to ensure the expansion of occupational schemes.

Much the same reason lies behind our approach to personal pensions. Employees who are not in an occupational scheme already have access to a sort of personal pension—the so-called section 226 retirement annuity contract. However, its take-up has been very disappointing. Less than 5 per cent. of the employees who are not in schemes have taken out a section 226 policy, despite very generous tax treatment and the wide range of schemes that are on offer.

There are features of the section 226 schemes that limit their attraction. They cannot be contracted out from SERPS and employers cannot contribute to them. The personal pensions that are provided for in the Bill will have a substantial edge on section 226 policies on both counts. They will be contracted out from SERPS, and we made it clear in the White Paper that the tax rules will allow employers to contribute to them. These improvements will make personal pensions a much more attractive investment than section 226 policies. However, we believe that something extra will still be needed to set the ball rolling. That is the reason for the 2 per cent. incentive.

I do not believe that anyone has seriously argued that the 2 per cent. incentive will not be effective. The concern of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire, and of other hon. Members, is that it will be too effective. The hon. Gentleman referred to me as being the prisoner of my own success. The arguments that have been put forward at length tonight by various pensions industry spokesmen have been directed mainly at the fact that, as clause 3 stands, the 2 per cent. incentive will go to everybody with a personal pension, whether or not they were previously in a contracted-out occupational scheme.

It has been claimed that this incentive will pose a serious threat to occupational schemes. Those claims are very much overdone, and I made my views clear in Committee. I view the claims made with a great deal of scepticism. I find it hard to believe that employees will be tempted out of a good occupational scheme just to take advantage not only of a modest incentive—2 per cent. —but of a temporary incentive, because it lasts only for five years. Employees may have other reasons for preferring a personal pension, such as the expectation that they will frequently change their jobs. If they left an occupational scheme, they might be giving up the promise of pension contributions from their employer and they would have no statutory right of return to their employer's scheme. That is a matter that they will have to weigh in the balance.

I acknowledge that there still fears in the pensions industry that the incentive will damage existing occupational schemes—for example, by tempting young employees out of occupational schemes. Those who take that view also voice doubts about the strength and sincerity of the Government's commitment to existing occupational schemes. Throughout the pensions inquiry we made it absolutely clear how strongly we value occupational schemes and how much we are indebted to them for the progress that has been made. It has never remotely been part of the Government's policy or approach to threaten their stability. Everything in the Social Security Act 1985 —especially the improvements for early leavers—and the new requirements and options for occupational schemes in the Bill should considerably strengthen occupational schemes.

I do not want to close the door to any change, and I shall think about what has been said. However, as it stands, the amendment is unacceptable. It would be far too rigid in its application. It would deny the incentive payment to someone who was in a contracted-out scheme for just a week — to someone who literally had joined a contracted-out scheme, had been a member of it for just a week and had then decided he had made the wrong decision and that he wanted to opt for a personal pension. I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman would want that kind of inflexibility to be incorporated in the Bill. I shall certainly think about what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire has said. He has made clear his support for the concept of personal pensions. I welcome that; and I believe that it will be a fresh and attractive option to the British public.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 5

PERSONAL PENSION PROTECTED RIGHTS PREMIUM

8 pm

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 13, in page 6, line 12, after 'under', insert 'section 52C of or'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 29 and 103.

Mr. Major: Amendment No. 13 and the associated amendments are purely technical amendments which correct a possible inconsistency in the discharge of liability given to trustees or managers of schemes when a member's rights to benefits are secured by an insurance policy or annuity contract. The amendments make it clear that the purchase of such policies or contracts will also discharge trustees or managers of liability for the payment of state scheme premiums.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 14, in page 6, line 17, leave out

'Subject to subsection (9) below'.

No. 15, in page 6, line 21, leave out subsections (9) and (10).

No. 16, in page 7, line 17, after 'premium', insert

[Mr. Major]

'together with, if the person in respect of whom it falls to be paid gives notice to the prescribed person within the prescribed period—

(i) the cash equivalent, calculated and verified in the prescribed manner and paid to the Secretary of State within the prescribed period, of any other rights which he has under the scheme and specifies in the notice, and

(ii) the amount of any voluntary contribution paid to the Secretary of State within the prescribed period by, or in respect of, the person concerned.'.

No. 17, in page 7, line 30, at end insert—

'(15A) The power to make regulations conferred by subsections (8) and (12) above includes power to provide that cash equivalents are to be calculated and verified in such manner as may be approved in particular cases—

(a) by prescribed persons;

(b) by persons with prescribed professional qualifications or experience; or

(c) by persons approved by the Secretary of State,

and power to provide that they shall be calculated and verified in accordance with guidance prepared by a prescribed body.'.

No. 18, in page 7, line 41, leave out subsections (17) to (19).—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 6

MONEY PURCHASE OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 19, in page 8, line 21, leave out from 'effect' to end of line 24 and insert

'to make amendments of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 in relation to the contracting-out of schemes which provide money purchase benefits'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 20 to 23, 26 to 28, 35 and 38.

Mr. Major: Amendment No. 19, with the extensive selection that follows it, appears at first glimpse rather daunting, but, in reality, it is not. The amendments simply make a number of drafting changes to clause 6 and schedule 2 so as to allow occupational pension schemes which provide money purchase and defined benefits to contract out by satisfying the money purchase conditions.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) for raising in Committee the position of such schemes. I explained at that time that we had received representations from the pensions industry on the same subject and we recognise that there is a clear case for allowing such schemes to contract out either by providing guarenteed minimum pensions, as they would have to do now, or by satisfying the new money purchase conditions. I said then that many detailed drafing amendments would be needed to achieve that object. The amendments in front of us are clear evidence that that supposition was correct.

The amendments also have the virtue of meeting the point made by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) that money purchase contracted-out schemes should not be exempt from section 40(1) of the Pensions Act. That section required that a contracted-out scheme is financed at least in part by the employer. I promised that we would consider what the hon. Lady said about that. When we did we found that it made good sense. I am grateful to the hon. Lady. I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Schedule 2

MONEY PURCHASE OCCUPATIONAL PENSION SCHEMES

Amendment made: No. 20, in page 85, leave out lines 34 and 35 and insert

'an occupational pension scheme which, in relation to the earner's employment, is a money purchase contracted-out scheme, then, for the purposes of this section'.

No. 21, in page 86, line 17, leave out from 'to' to 'scheme' in line 19 and insert

'a money purchase contracted-out'.

No. 22, in page 87, line 30, leave out paragraph 5.

No. 23, in page 88, line 2, leave out from 'schems)' to end of line 11 and insert—

'*(a)* in subsection (2), the words "or it satisfies subsection (2A) below." shall be inserted after paragraph *(b)* (but not as part of it);

(b) the following subsections shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(2A) An occupational pension scheme satisfies that subsection only if—

(a) the requirements imposed by or by virtue of Schedule 1 to the Social Security Act 1986, modified under subsection (2B) below, are satisfied in its case;

(aa) it complies with section 40(1) below; and'.

No. 24, in line 25 leave out 'and' and insert—

'*(aa)* that for the references in paragraph 5A to all minimum contributions there shall be substituted references to all minimum payments (within the meaning of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975) and any payments by the Secretary of State under section 7 of this Act.'.

No. 25, in line 33 leave out from 'the' to 'which' in line 34 and insert 'member and any rights of the member to money purchase benefits'.

No. 26, line 43, at end insert—

'(2C) A contracting-out certificate shall state whether the scheme is contracted-out by virtue of subsection (2) or subsection (2A) above; and where a scheme satisfies both of those subsections the trustees or managers, in their application for a certificate, shall specify one of the subsections as the subsection by virtue of which they desire the scheme to be contracted-out.

(2D) A scheme which has been contracted-out by virtue of one of those subsections may not become contracted-out by reason of the other, except in prescribed circumstances.'.

No. 27, line 43, at end insert—

'6A.—(1) The words "which is not a money purchase contracted-out scheme" shall be inserted after the words "occupational pension scheme" in—

(a) section 33(1);

(b) section 36(1);

(c) sections 40(3) and (4);

(d) section 41A(1);

(e) section 42(1);

(f) section 44(1);

(g) section 44A(1);

(h) section 45(1);

(j) section 51;

(k) paragraphs 4(1) and (2) of Schedule 2.

(2) If section 9 above comes into force after this paragraph, the amendment to section 36(1) made by sub-paragraph (1) above shall be made in the subsection both as amended by section 9 above and as unamended.

(3) The words "or a money purchase contracted-out scheme" shall be inserted after the words "public service pension scheme" in—

(a) section 40(2);

(b) section 41(1);

(c) section 41E(1).'.

No. 28, line 45 leave out from 'a' to end of line 46 and insert

'scheme which is or has been a money purchase contracted-out scheme'.

No. 29, in page 89, line 20 after 'under', insert 'section 52C of or'.

No. 30, in line 32 leave out 'Subject to subsection (8) below,'.

No. 31, in line 37 leave out from beginning to end of line 6 on page 90.

No. 32, in page 90, line 32 after 'premium', insert 'together with, if the person in respect of whom it falls to be paid gives notice to the prescribed person within the prescribed period—

(i) the cash equivalent, calculated and verified in the prescribed manner, and paid to the Secretary of State within the prescribed period, of any other rights which he has under the scheme and specifies in the notice; and

(ii) the amount of any voluntary contribution paid to the Secretary of State within the prescribed period by, or in respect of, the person concerned.'.

No. 33, in line 47 at end insert—

'(14A) The power to make regulations conferred by subsections (7) and (11) above includes power to provide that cash equivalents are to be calculated and verified in such manner as may be approved in particular cases—

(a) by prescribed persons;

(b) by persons with prescribed professional qualifications or experience; or

(c) by persons approved by the Secretary of State,

and power to provide that they shall be calculated and verified in accordance with guidance prepared by a prescribed body.'.

No. 34, in page 91 leave out lines 10 to 30.

No. 35, in page 91, line 46 leave out from beginning to end of line 25 on page 92 and insert—

'*(a)* the following paragraph shall be substituted for subsection (1)*(b)*—

"*(b)* there has not been a payment—

(i) of a premium under section 44 above in respect of each person entitled to receive, or having accrued rights to, guaranteed minimum pensions under the scheme; or

(ii) a premium under section 44ZA above in respect of each person who has protected rights under it or is entitled to any benefit giving effect to protected rights under it;

";

(b) in subsection (2)*(a)* after the word "above" there shall be inserted the words "or, by virtue of subsections (2A) and (2B) of section 32 above, paragraph 9(1) of Schedule 1 to the Social Security Act 1986"; and

(c) in subsection (5), "32" shall be substituted for "33".

10. At the end of subsection (3) of section 50 (alteration of rules of contracted-out schemes) there shall be added the words "or any person has protected rights under it or is entitled to any benefit giving effect to protected rights under it".'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 36, in page 92, line 26, at end insert—

'( ) the following definition shall be inserted after the definition of "accrued rights"—"'average salary benefits' means benefits the rate or amount of which is calculated by reference to a member's average salary over the period of service on which the benefits are based;";'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 37, 94, 96 and 104.

Mr. Major: The effect of amendment No. 36 and the related amendments is to alter the definition of "money purchase benefits" in all the places where it appears in the Bill and in the Pensions Act 1975 so as to ensure that it does not include "average salary benefit".

A few schemes provide what are known as "unrevalued average salary benefits", where members pay a percentage of their earnings as a contribution, and the benefits are then calculated as a straightforward multiple of those contributions. These are not "money purchase benefits" in the sense we intend in the new pension arrangements provided by this Bill, because they are fixed in value and there is no element of investment return. In effect they are salary-related benefits.

These amendments make sure that they are excluded from the definition of "money pruchase benefits", so that—for example—they are not satisfactory benefits for the purpose of money purchase contracting-out, and minumum contributions cannot be channelled into this kind of benefit.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 37, in page 92, line 35, at end insert

'other than average salary benefits;'.

No. 38, in line 36 leave out from 'purchase' to end of line 38 and insert

'"contracted-out scheme" means an occupational pension scheme which is contracted-out by virtue of satisfying section 32(2A) above'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 7

SCHEMES BECOMING CONTRACTED OUT BETWEEN 1986 AND 1993

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 39, in page 8, line 25, after 'below', insert

'and except in such cases as may be prescribed'.

The amendment provides a power to make exceptions to the circumstances in which the 2 per cent. incentive payment will be made to newly contracted-out occupational pension schemes.

At present the Bill provides in clause 7 for the incentive payment to go to schemes which are newly contracted-out since January 1986 in respect of each job they cover which is also newly contracted-out since then. The incentive will apply for the five years, April 1988 to April 1993, as the House will be well aware.

There are cases where it will not be appropriate to make the payment. For example, it will not be appropriate where there might be a business take-over of a firm which had a contracted-out scheme for its employees. This might result in employments and a scheme which were newly contracted-out in the strict legal sense, but which were really the same jobs as before. It would not be appropriate to pay the incentive in this case. I think that I will carry all hon. Members with me in that observation.

The amendment provides the power to clarify that position beyond doubt, and I commend it to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I beg to move amendment No. 195, in page 8, leave out from end of line 28 to first 'the' in line 30.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take amendment No. 196, in page 8, leave out lines 37 to 40.

Sir David Price: As the House will appreciate, these are probing amendments. They follow logically from the amendments moved by the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood). They are, as it were, the other side of the coin. They are an alternative method of dealing with the problems that he identified, to which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State responded with sympathy and understanding, and even with a promise that the last word had not been said on that. It is in that spirit that I can be remarkably brief, which will be to the relief of the entire House.

[Sir David Price]

The purpose of my amendment is to offer a subsidy to all those who contract out of SERPS, whether they go to the occupational scheme or the personal pension scheme. In other words, the amendment takes up my right hon. Friend's concern about those people who have neither an occupational pension scheme nor a personal pension scheme. We know, as he pointed out in his Green Paper, that that has been a static situation for the past 10 years. All of us who care about the second pension want to see that opportunity opened up further. Part of the purpose of this Report stage is to throw out to my right hon. Friend different methods by which that can be achieved.

If my amendments were to be accepted they would avoid discrimination against those employees who have already joined occupational schemes. They would also avoid the undermining of such schemes, which in many cases have been set up with great care to ensure that members get the best possible pensions in later years.

The hon. Gentleman dwelt a little on that point. I shall not detain the House on it. I am sure that my right hon. Friend and his Department know my point. There is a feeling in the occupational pensions industry that particularly young members of this scheme could leave their existing scheme, go into a personal pension scheme and find themselves in the long run worse off, although in the short run they might contribute less. The House will understand that retirement is probably a more real matter to me than to the hon. Gentleman, who, I suspect, is a year or two lighter than I am. One should reflect on the measure of the scope of a pension scheme.

I think that most hon. Members would feel that any form of occupational or personal pension scheme should provide for a proper pension. Ideally, the best way is based on final salary or average earnings. It should include discretionary increases to keep pace with inflation. It should provide life assurance benefit, which is a new practice that has come in more recently. It should allow for earlier retirement, and it should provide widow's benefit. Those are the sorts of features that most of us today expect to see in pension schemes.

The case has not been made for discriminating in the incentive between either the occupational or the personal scheme. The object of my amendments is simply to raise the possibility that it would be better to give the incentive to both rather than to discriminate purely in favour of the personal scheme.

Mr. Fowler: There is no difference of opinion between my hon. Friend and me, because we both want to encourage the maximum number of good occupational pensions. The effect that my hon. Friend intends to achieve by this amendment seems to be that all members of all contracted-out occupational pension schemes should be able to qualify for the 2 per cent. incentive payment which is at the moment intended only for new schemes and newly contracted-out jobs. I am afraid I have to use the time-honoured phrase that the amendment is technically defective and would not achieve what is desired.

We estimate that at the moment the 2 per cent. incentive for pensions might cost about £60 million per year under our proposals. We further estimate that the amendment would increase the cost to about £1·5 billion per year and would mean nearly 1 percentage point more on national insurance contributions. For that variety of reasons I must upstage my hon. Friend and tell him that I am not able to accede to his request.

I think I have made it clear to the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) that I do not want to close the door on any change in the area of the 2 per cent. incentive. I shall reflect not only on what he has said, but on what my hon. Friend has said, and especially on the principle of what my hon. Friend has set forward. Perhaps my hon. Friend will understand if I advise the House to resist his amendment.

Sir David Price: Given the spirit of my right hon. Friend's reply, and in the knowledge that I am probably being rather more generous than usual in pushing my luck with the Treasury, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment made: No. 190, in page 9, line 46 (Clause 7], at end add—

'(7) If the Secretary of State makes a payment under this section which he is not required to make, he may recover the amount of the payment from the person to whom he paid it or from any person in respect of whom he paid it.

(8) If he makes in respect of an earner a payment under this section he is required to make, but does not make it to the trustees or managers to whom he is required to make it, he may recover the amount of the payment from the person to whom he paid it or from the earner.'.— *[Mr. Fowler.]*

Clause 9

GUARANTEED MINIMUM PENSIONS

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 40, in page 10, line 31 leave out first 'subsection' and insert 'subsections'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendment No. 41.

Mr. Major: This amendment relates to the growth of guaranteed minimum pensions when receipt of the pension is postponed beyond the normal retirement age. The amendment ensures that when those increments are calculated they are based on the value of the guaranteed minimum pension as increased annually by the lesser of 3 per cent. or the increase in prices during the period in which it was postponed, and not on its value at pension age. This corresponds with the arrangements for SERPS increments. It has always been the intention that the increments would be worked out in this way, but the amendment puts the matter beyond doubt. It is a wholly beneficent amendment for pensioners.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 41, in page 10, line 37, at end insert—

'(6B) Where one or more orders have come into force under section 37A below during the period for which the commencement of a guaranteed minimum pension is postponed, the amount of the pension for any week in that period shall be determined as if the order or orders had come into force before the beginning of the period.'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 42, in page 11, line 36, at end insert '( ) section 26(2);'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendments Nos. 43 to 45.

Mr. Newton: This technical amendment ensures that the definition of a guaranteed minimum pension in section

26(2) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 is widened to cover widowers as a result of the introduction of widowers' guaranteed minimum pensions by clause 9(3).

Perhaps I might also say a brief word about amendments Nos. 43, 44 and 45. The intention of amendment No. 43 is to make it clear that schemes are not required to increase the rate of guaranteed minimum pension under clause 9(7) for periods before pensionable age or date of widowhood. Arrangements already exist for protecting the value of guaranteed minimum pensions before those times.

As guaranteed minimum pension increases will take place from the beginning of a tax year, but the uprating of state pensions will not take place until the first Monday of a tax year, the guaranteed minimum pension increase will, in some years, be a week earlier than the state scheme uprating. This amendment ensures that where this happens the pensioner's SERPS pension is not reduced on account of the guaranteed minimum pension increase until his SERPS entitlement has been uprated. This will prevent his net SERPS pension temporarily going down.

Amendment No. 45 is a minor technical amendment. It simply widens the scope of the cross reference in subsection (7) of new section 37 so that it refers to the whole section rather than to subsection (3). That sounds rather like the ultimate drafting amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 43, in page 12, line 38, leave out from 'rate' to end of line 41 and insert

'of that part of guaranteed minimum pensions which is attributable to earnings factors for the tax year 1988-89 and subsequent tax years for—

(a) earners who have attained pensionable age; and

(b) widows and widowers.'.

No. 44, in page 13, line 10, at end insert—

'(6A) Where the benefits mentioned in sections 16(2B), 28(7A) and 59(1A) of the Social Security Act 1975 and section 29(1) above are not increased on the day on which an order under this section takes effect, the order shall be treated for the purposes of those subsections as not taking effect until the day on which the benefits mentioned in them are next increased.'.

No. 45, in page 13, line 13, leave out 'subsection (3) above' and insert 'this section'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

8.15 pm

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 46, in page 14, line 5, leave out

'increase the rate of pensions under the scheme'

and insert

'make an increase in the rate of pensions currently payable to the members of the scheme who have attained pensionable age or to the widows or widowers of members'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendments Nos. 47 and 48.

Mr. Major: These technical amendments correct defects in drafting and clarify the arrangements for annual increases of guaranteed minimum pensions, with particular regard to those occupational pension schemes which already provide increases in the rates of their pensions, so that they do not have to provide two separate increases in a year.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 47, in page 14, line 9, leave out

'in that tax year to make under this section'

and insert

'to make under this section in the tax year 1990-91'.

No. 48, in page 14, line 10, leave out from 'Where' to 'the' in line 12 and insert

'the trustees or managers of such a scheme make an increase otherwise than in pursuance of this section in a tax year subsequent to 1989-90, they may deduct the amount of'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 49, in page 14, line 15, at end insert—

'(8) In section 59 of that Act (increase of official pensions) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (5)—

"(5A) Nothing in section 37A(12) or (13) above authorises any deduction from an increase in the rate of an official pension under this section.".

(9) In section 59A of that Act (modification of effect of section 59(5)) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (2)—

"(2A) Where in any tax year—

(a) an increase is calculated in accordance with a direction under this section; and

(b) the amount by reference to which the increase is calculated, or any part of it is increased in that tax year under section 37A above,

the increase calculated in accordance with the direction shall be reduced by the amount of the increase under section 37A above.".'.

This is a technical amendment which ensures that special arrangements which currently apply to the inflation proofing of the guaranteed minimum pension element of a public service pension continue to work when public service schemes become responsible for increasing the GMP by up to 3 per cent. under clause 9(7). The amendment ensures that the public service pensioner will continue to receive full inflation proofing of his occupational pension.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. Major: I beg to move, amendment No. 50, in page 14, line 15, at end insert—

'(14) Where by virtue of subsection (12) or (13) above guaranteed minimum pensions are not required to be increased in pursuance of this section, their amount shall be calculated for any purpose as if they had been so increased.'.

The purpose of this amendment is to make it clear that although schemes need not increase the GMPs separately from the remainder of the occupational pension, the GMP's value shall nevertheless be calculated, for all purposes, as if it had been separately increased each year.

The reason for the amendment is to make it clear to contracted out occupational schemes that although they need not increase GMPs in April of each year if they have already provided for an increase in the rate of pension in the preceding year, the pension from then on must always include the GMP element as increased in line with the lesser of the RPI or 3 per cent. This will also be the amount that will be deducted from the pensioner's SERPS pension and the amount that a scheme must secure or buy back from the state scheme if they cease to be contracted out.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 11

CONTRIBUTIONS

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 51, in page 14, line 21 leave out from 'prescribed,' to end of line 26 and insert

'and except so far as is necessary to ensure that a personal or occupational pension scheme has, or may be expected to qualify for, tax-exemption or tax-approval, the rules of the scheme—

(a) must not impose, or allow any person to impose, any upper or lower limit on the contributions which may be paid by a member and which are additional to the contributions that must be paid as a condition of membership of the scheme;'.

[Mr. Newton]

This is a drafting amendment which replaces some of the opening words of clause 11. The Inland Revenue applies limits to the total amount of benefit a person can receive from a pension scheme, as well as to the contributions he can make to it. It is therefore necessary to allow both these kinds of limit to constrain the otherwise unlimited "additional voluntary contribution" facility which schemes will now be required to provide. As currently drafted, clause 11 would allow only the Revenue contribution limits to be observed.

The amendment also improves the drafting of clause 11(1)*(a)* to achieve the intended effect that, apart from complying with Revenue requirements, the rules of a pension scheme must not impose, or allow anyone to impose, an upper or lower limit on the additional voluntary contributions which may be paid.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 14

TERMS OF CONTRACTS OF SERVICE RELATING TO MEMBERSHIP

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 52, in page 17, line 13, after 'made)', insert

'or any rule of a personal or occupational pension scheme'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this we may take Government amendments Nos. 53 to 55.

Mr. Major: The amendments make drafting changes to clause 14, which liberates employees from compulsory membership of an occupational pension scheme. In Committee my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security said that we were discussing the wording of the clause with the parliamentary draftsman to ensure that it achieved our intention. The amendments are the result of that discussion.

The amendments tighten up the wording in three ways. First, they ensure that scheme rules, as well as contracts of service, cannot provide for compulsory membership of a pension scheme. Secondly, they ensure that, subject to any prescribed exceptions, the rules or contract cannot insist that the employee belongs to any pension scheme at all, personal or occupational. Thirdly, the amendments to clause 14(2) ensure that the clause could not have the unintended and unwelcome effect of requiring an employer to increase pay in lieu of pension contributions for an employee who decides not to join his scheme.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 53, in page 17, line 14, after 'of', insert

'a personal or occupational pension scheme, of'.

No. 54, in page 17, line 24, after 'required', insert

', when he would not otherwise be'.

No. 55, in page 17, line 26, leave out

'when he would not otherwise be so required'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 16

APPLICATION TO SPECIAL CASES

Amendment made: No. 56, in page 18, line 11, leave out clause 16.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 17

RETIREMENT PENSIONS

Mrs. Beckett: I beg to move amendment No. 57, in page 19, line 12, leave out clause 17.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, we may take amendment No. 58, in page 20, line 14, after 'cases', insert

'which shall include unemployed people'.

Mrs. Beckett: If we had to pick out the most obnoxious aspect of the clause—and, given the time constraints, we can pick out only one aspect—we would say that the most disadvantageous proposal is the change not merely away from the calculation of pensions on the basis of the 20 best years of earnings but right away from that to the calculation of pensions on the basis of earnings over a person's whole working life.

I have never fully understood, nor do I recall having heard an argument on the matter from the Government, why if, as they argue—we do not accept their argument—one of the reasons why SERPS is so expensive is the 20-years provision, they did not merely increase it to a degree without going as far as the increase proposed in clause 17.

The intention in making SERPS dependent on the best 20 years of earnings was a redistributive intention, aimed at benefiting people who, on the whole, did not enjoy a good pension entitlement. For example, the earnings of manual workers tend to reduce as they get older and it was suggested that they should be allowed to have a pension that was more related to the peak years of their earnings than would be the case under the scheme such as that proposed by the Government. Another example are women who take years out of the employment market and get a better pension by using the earnings of their best 20 years rather than the earnings over their whole working life.

We are very worried about the implications of the Government's proposals and we are convinced that they will lead to far more pensioners being dependent on what we must learn to call income support. The Government have said in a parliamentary answer that about 1 million pensioners will still be dependent on supplementary benefits at the end of the century. We firmly believe that the number in that equivalent position — below the poverty line with their pension entitlement — will be significantly higher than 1 million after the Bill becomes law. We are encouraged in that supposition by the fact that the Government say that it is too difficult to answer all the questions that we have tabled on the subject, no matter how we have phrased them.

A person who starts work after the Bill becomes law and is never unemployed or sick will find that the pension to which he would have been entitled before this measure became an Act will be halved. Indeed, that person's pension entitlement will be so reduced from what it would otherwise have been that, even on the Government's own figures, it is likely to be substantially less than even the basic state pension alone is worth today. We have substantial ammunition for our contention that the Government are returning pensioners to the poverty from which the scheme was designed in 1975 to rescue them — an intention which Conservatives supported at the time, but from which the Government have resiled.

People who have many years of unemployment will see their pensions reduced even more than the halving that is implicit in the Bill. Figures show the impact of the Government's proposals on someone who is unemployed for the comparatively short time of three years or six years. Obviously, those are much longer periods than any of us would find acceptable, but when we see the thousands of young people who have never had a job since they left school, one has to wonder how realistic it is to assume that they will be unemployed for as short a period as three years or six years over their whole working lives.

Let us examine the case of a man who was 27 in November 1985 and who earns £120 a week for 23 years and £80 a week for another 23 years—perhaps because he is a manual worker and his earning capacity declines as he gets older—and has three years unemployment at some point in his working life. His additional pension will be reduced from £51·70 to £21·70. In other words, a young man now in the labour market who is unemployed for two or three years, could work for 46 years and still lose 58 per cent. of the additional pension to which he would otherwise be entitled. I am sure that that proposition would be greeted with amazement, shock and dismay by any of our constituents.

If that man spent six years unemployed, he would receive only £19·70—a loss of 62 per cent. of the pension to which he would otherwise be entitled. Those are significant sums and they demonstrate the impact of unemployment on a person's pension entitlement.

Let us now examine the case of a woman who was 27 in 1985 and earns £80 a week for 24 years and £40 a week for 12 years and who, for eight years—for whatever reason—has no earnings. Her additional pension will drop from £17·70 to £9·70—a loss of 45 per cent. If she spent another six years unemployed her expected £15·70 would become £7·70—a loss of 51 per cent. We are talking about substantially reduced pensions which will be further dramatically reduced by the problems of unemployment which are so prevalent.

In addition to the implications for people who are unemployed, women who work part-time are likely to lose substantially under the Bill. Women who work part-time, but have earnings above the lower earnings limit, will not be able to benefit from the home responsibility premium, and will not be covered by being out of the work force altogether, but will have the years in which they have part-time earnings taken into account—adding to their years in the work force, but incorporating lower earnings because they are working only part-time. Proportionately, they will lose substantially. The disabled are also likely to be losers. When we raised this point in Committee, the Minister said that half the women now in part-time work earned less than the lower earnings limit. He was good enough to say that that might not be a good thing. That may sound as though it is not too bad, but he failed to point out that although half of the women in part-time work would not be affected because their earnings were so low, 2·25 million women in part-time work would still be affected, and would see their pension entitlement reduced.

8.30 pm

Mr. Major: Many of those women would be in receipt of child benefit and would be receiving, therefore, home responsibilities protection. That should be borne in mind.

Mrs. Beckett: That may be so, but it is not clear how many women will be affected. The figure of 2·25 million is so substantial that obviously many women will be losers. At present, 40 per cent. of elderly women live at, or below, the supplementary benefit level. Millions more pensioners will be living at or below the poverty line as a result of the Bill, and as a result, in particular, of these provisions. Moreover, a significant number of them will be women. Instead of seeking to improve the clause, we have sought to delete it, as it contains proposals that are unbelievably damaging to the pension entitlement and standard of living of future pensioners.

The Government's proposals seem to tie in well with the Government's other actions, with their intention to keep wages low, and with their attacks on the trade unions. Apparently, they want to return to the days when ordinary working people spent much of their lives in fear of unemployment, sickness, a lack of decent housing or not being able to educate their children properly. This provision returns us to the days when people lived in fear. They will start wondering how long they will live, how they will eke out their savings and how they will manage in their retirement. There is no doubt in our minds that the Bill returns us to the days of poverty pensioners.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I would not go as far as the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) in her opposition to the clause. As we know, the Bill changes the calculation of the additional payment under SERPS from the best 20 years to a lifetime's average earnings. The present scheme only requires contributions over 20 years for a full additional pension, but now contributions will be required over a lifetime. Therefore, those who, for any reason, spend years out of the work force could be disadvantaged. Indeed, in many parts of the country, such as the east and west midlands, unemployment is endemic. The new provision is therefore of considerable concern. Anyone who left the work force could be disadvantaged if he retired after 1998.

The Government have acknowledged that some categories should be protected. For example, they say that they will protect the position of married women and lone parents, and that special arrangements will be made for those who take time away from work to bring up children. I am glad to say that similar protection will be given to disabled people and to those who are not earning money because they are looking after them. That is fine, but I have tabled my amendment because unemployed people will not be afforded the same protection.

I have enormous respect for my hon. Friend the Minister of State. In Committee, he said:

> "Therefore while I do not in any way suggest that there may not be a problem in relation to this group in the early part of the next century, I think that it is a problem which can sensibly be examined in relation to the unemployment problems that exist at that time and is not one which we need to settle at this time." —[*Official Report, Standing Committee B;* 25 February 1986, c. 439.]

I take exception to that. Obviously, we are trying to look a long way ahead. But my hon. Friend the Minister admitted that the Government sometimes had to make forward commitments, not least in respect of social security and pensions. He said that of necessity they had to be considered in the long term. I hope to persuade my hon. Friend to give a public commitment that the unemployed will have their situation taken into account when the time comes.

The House should not accept that people are unemployed through their own deficiencies. The majority

[Mr. Jim Lester]

of those who are unemployed have been made redundant. Consequently, I cannot see why those retiring should be additionally disadvantaged because they happen to come from an area of high unemployment. It is quite unacceptable to me that the 4,028 unemployed people in Broxstowe should be treated differently from those in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames), where far fewer people are unemployed. Why should people be additionally disadvantaged in retirement because they work in Cornwall, where the highest rates of unemployment were found in March to be 28·4 per cent. in Newquay, as against 5·6 per cent. in Crawley?

Under the Bill, standard national insurance contributions are credited towards the basic state pension. Unemployed people can receive those credits. Thus, the Bill does not exclude them in the sense that the credits will not be allowed. The difference is in the earnings-related element. I should be delighted if the Government would correct my understanding that they intend to exclude the credits at a later regulatory stage. At this stage, I should like a commitment from my hon. Friend the Minister that he will not exclude unemployed people in terms of a special calculation for the period that they are unemployed.

If the Government do not make that change, many people may be disadvantaged. Figures have been extrapolated for the number of those who may be unemployed for more than a year. They are based on the *Department of Employment Gazette* 1986. For 1996, the figure is 757,924; for the year 2006, the figure is 786,260; and for the year 2016, the figure is 1,160,667. Thus we are talking about substantial numbers. Unless the Government give a commitment to take into account a period of unemployment, just as married women and the disabled are taken into account, the unemployed may be materially disadvantaged.

Among those unemployed people whose pension rights will be reduced may be older men and women in their fifties who have little chance of further employment before retirement. Some men who accept voluntary or forced retirement at 60 will be able to claim the lower rate pensioner premium in income support until they qualify for the basic state pension at 65. Their entitlement to the full basic pension will not be affected by years without work, but as each year goes by they will know that the expected additional pension will decrease. That is in sharp contrast to many people in occupational, contracted-out pensions who will receive a full pension after 40 years and the qualifying conditions for the basic rate pension will ensure that, for those whose working life is 41 years or more, the full pension can be received after a working life minus five years.

The Prime Minister said at Perth that unemployment was an issue and a dragon to be slain. The Government have done many things to ease unemployment through training schemes and community programmes, but that will count as little if the Bill discriminates against the unemployed in relation to the state earnings-related pension. I request that the Minister responds positively to the amendment because not only is it in the interests of my party but, more materially, in the interests of the unemployed.

Mr. Kirkwood: I listened carefully to the heartfelt plea by the hon. Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester) and I sympathise with his argument. I am sure that he will agree that the proposition is an inevitable consequence of any earnings-related scheme being attached to pension provision. That was one of the reasons why in 1975 when the original Bill was put together my former friends took the view that the earnings-related component was wrong because of the anomalies and costs. Eleven years later some of the chickens have come to roost because demographic changes have caused arguments about costs and anomalies. We have taken that view since 1965, and the alliance has thought the same in the last five years.

I attempted to table amendments in Committee to persuade the Government to consider making the earnings-related element of the scheme proposed in clause 17 more redistributive and to work out a formula that would mitigate the earnings-related component. My argument was that if one was a director of ICI one could gain more from the state earnings-related pension scheme than a shop-floor worker could. Not surprisingly, the Government rejected that proposition, so we must face clause 17. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) suggested that we should throw out clause 17. I sympathise with much of what she said, but I do not think that we should throw out the whole of clause 17. That would be throwing out the baby with the bath water.

The Government are wrong to suggest the propositions in clause 17 against the background of the existing state pension level. The schemes in the Bill do nothing to alleviate the lot of basic state pensioners. Their lot will not be improved so long as we insist upon indexing their benefits only to the increase in prices, because they will fall behind earnings and outpace inflation over the next 15 or 20 years until SERPS comes into effect. Any proposal from any Administration should change the pension provision only after they had provided a basic state pension upon which people can live sensibly. The basic state pension does not allow that.

We came forward with a plan to utilise the contracted-out rebate which could have financed substantial increases in the basic state pension. That did not find favour with the Government and our idea was rejected.

8.45 pm

The Social Democratic and Liberal parties are aware of the importance of having consensus about the way forward. If anything derived from the 1975 proposals, it was that they were agreed—with the exception of one dissenting voice — and that there was a reasonable prospect of the pensions industry settling down and prospering.

That consensus is broken. We have fallen over backwards to achieve that consensus. I say to the Government that, even at this late stage, there must be some arrangement whereby the major political divisions can be bridged. I continue to be interested in talking about that possibility. Against that faint hope, I fear that we are faced with the deep blue sea, because if the amendment is pressed to a Division I regret that I shall have to advise my hon. Friends to abstain and vote neither for the abolition of clause 17 nor for the Government's new clause.

Mr. Major: The hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) gave a qualified welcome to some of our provisions, so I shall refrain from making

any remarks about the firm smack of decision in the alliance upon a clause which is a central part of the Bill's pensions provisions. Without any mockery, I must say to the hon. Gentleman that I am grateful to him for his qualified acceptance of reality. I commend his speech for the future, because I am sure that it will sit well with his being a prominent member of the Liberal party for some years to come.

I recognise the strong feelings aroused by the changes in the state earnings-related pension scheme. It was reflected, although in a lower key than we might have expected a few months ago, in some of the speeches this evening. Our original proposition was for greater changes. Our current propositions are substantially different from those which originally saw the light of day in the Green Paper. *[Interruption.]* I shall not be tempted by interruptions, because of the limited time available.

The speech by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) was a sustained plea for the status quo, irrespective of the probable effects, of the costs and of the difficulties, all of which have been exposed in debates over recent months. If we were to adopt amendment No. 57, to delete clause 17, the Bill would leave in place all the costly and over-generous features of SERPS which make it a commitment to the future which no responsible Government of any party could leave untouched. We would, in practice, be leaving open a blank cheque for future national insurance contributors. The very real threat that concerns us deeply is that of a future Government needing to break faith with future generations of pensioners if today's promises cannot be met. That is not a tolerable, let alone an attractive, proposition. I shall return, in good time, to some of the detailed points made by the hon. Lady.

The amendment clearly illustrates the carefree "wait and see" approach of the Opposition compared with what we regard as our realistic and responsible approach.

Mrs. Beckett: It is appropriate at this point to remind the hon. Gentleman that, because the Government have broken the link between pensions and prices, if they do nothing to SERPS and accept our amendment, the basic pension and the state earnings-related pension will steadily decline in value until they go back to the level of the basic pension now. The Government have already ruined the pension scheme. They are now compounding the felony.

Mr. Major: We are not ruining it. We are placing it in a position in which it can be sustained so that pensioners may have security in future, not the possiblity of promises that may or may not be met by a future Government. It is all too easy to be irresponsible and say, "Wait and see," or, worse still, claim, as the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has done occasionally, that there is not and there never will be a problem. I am bound to say that I regard that as a Scarlett O'Hara option. I shall explain precisely what that means. Whenever Scarlett O'Hara faced difficulties, she said, "I will think about that tomorrow." That is the Opposition's point of view. Whenever there is a difficulty, they say that they will think about it tomorrow. They will not plan for it today. It is wholly irresponsible to take such a view.

It is not an easy option to make changes in SERPS. It is not, as the hon. Lady sought to demonstrate in recent months, necessarily a popular option to make changes in SERPS. We made the changes after careful and prolonged study, because we concluded, in the interests of a long-term, sustainable pension scheme that future generations could make, that we must take action now. None of us, not least my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, is under any illusion whatever that we would have had a much more comfortable time had we decided to adopt the "wait and see" approach that is so attractive to the Opposition.

The fact is that pensions are long-term commitments, and the time for action and decision is now. People must be given time and opportunity to make additional or alternative provision for their retirement. The way in which SERPS works means that every year of delay leaves people clocking up expensive rights which must be honoured in future.

It is relevant—I shall not dwell on the point for too long — that, if the amendment were to succeed and SERPS were left unchanged, the Government Actuary's modest assumptions show that costs would take off quite dramatically next century. By 2033, SERPS would be costing £25·5 billion compared with £200 million today. To put that another way, the combined cost of basic pension and SERPS pension as at today's prices would rise from £16 billion now to £49 billion by 2033. The Opposition have from time to time said that they are not perturbed by the potential impact of that increase on national insurance contributions. The Opposition may regard that as a defensible proposition, but we are in no doubt that the working population and employers may see it entirely differently.

Other factors are involved in the changing cost scenario. The vast increase in expenditure would come at a time when there would be over 3·5 million more pensioners. Yet the number of workers supporting them is expected, on demographic figures, to remain approximately the same. The "pay-as-you-go" principle —that is undeniable from whatever point of view one has — means that there is no way of making advance provision to pay for SERPS promises. Advance funding is not a realistic option for a state-run scheme. By 2033, instead of there being 2·3 contributors to every pensioner, as there are today, there are expected to be only 1·6 contributors to every pensioner. That adds up to a substantial problem.

I should also make it clear — perhaps not least because the Opposition decline to be swayed by cost arguments — that it is not just an argument about affordability. They must accept, even more crucially, that it is one about priorities. Even if SERPS were to continue unchecked and unchanged, with the cost implications I have outlined, there would be another practical effect. The practical effect would be that the pre-emption of such a huge amount for pensions would severely constrain future spending options of future Governments at a time when the pressure from the elderly for other services, such as health, social services and housing, is bound to increase, apart from the increasing demands of science and demography.

The Green Paper made a convincing case for the total abolition of SERPS. We took account of the substantial body of opinion which favoured modifying rather than abolishing the scheme. In the White Paper, we concluded that our aims could be met by modifications rather than by abolition, provided it went hand in hand with realistic encouragement to extend occupational and personal pension coverage. The proposals embodied in clauses 9, 17 and 18 will reduce the emerging costs of SERPS by half

[Mr. Major]

in 2033, bringing it down to about £12·5 billion. The commitment for future contributors will be set at a more acceptable level. We are cutting out—the hon. Member for Derby, South and my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe touched on this — some of the more extravagant features of the scheme while still providing a worthwhile second pension.

The proposals in clause 17 should cut more than £10 billion from the emerging cost of SERPS by 2033. Over half of that comes from the most extravagant and badly targeted feature of the scheme—the 20 best years rule. That was invented with worthy enough motives. It was intended to protect mothers and other people with years out of the work force. Its main effect would come from topping up the pensions of people in good occupational pension schemes, where the guaranteed minimum was always intended to be continued on lifetime average earnings. Most people who favoured modifying SERPS took the view that the 20 best years rule was over-generous.

The hon. Lady asked whether we had considered increasing the 20 best years rule to an undisclosed future number of years—perhaps 30 years. We did consider extending the number of years, but to do so would simply reimpose—although perhaps not so badly—the poor targeting of the 20 best years. The beneficial results would apply without discrimination to everybody in SERPS so that, like the 20 best years, much of the cost would go on topping up good occupational schemes and there would also be all the anomalies which there would be with the 20 best years rule.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe, who introduced amendment No. 58, spoke, as he always does, with considerable understanding of and compassion for the position of our fellow citizens who are unemployed. Before I turn to that aspect of his remarks, I thank my hon. Friend for his support for many of the forms of protection that are available for people in SERPS, although I understand his concern and the thrust of his speech that the unemployed are not included.

I appreciate my hon. Friend's desire to see unemployed people specifically covered by the special protection provided by clause 17(3) for people who would have benefited from the 20 best years rule. He is obviously worried that unemployed people may be worse off if they retire after 1998. As we made clear in Committee, the abolition of the best 20 years rule will not begin to have any effect on people's state pensions until the end of the century, by which time many of today's long-term unemployed will have retired.

We do not at present propose to extend to unemployed people the special protection that we intend to provide for people who spend time out of the work force because of disablement or for some other reason. Those contingencies tend to be much longer term and cover a larger proportion of the working life than periods of unemployment. It is right that we should make clear now our intention to protect people in those circumstances.

As for what my hon. Friend said about unemployment, bearing in mind the difficulties with predicting unemployment levels and patterns accurately, we feel that it is better to wait until nearer the time when the SERPS changes begin to take effect, when we, or our successors in government, will have a clearer measure of the extent of the problem if there should prove to be one.

I can reassure my hon. Friend that any regulations needed to extend the protection may be made at any time until 1999. As we explained in Committee, we have ensured that the power in clause 17 is sufficiently wide to enable protection to be extended to any group of people deemed to be deserving of special treatment without the need for new primary legislation. I hope that my hon. Friend will welcome that enabling power.

If protection is extended to unemployed people, the Department's records are held in such a way as to make it possible to identify anybody who is entitled to contribution credits for unemployment since 1978. I hope that my hon. Friend will find that reassuring.

The hon. Member for Derby, South spoke of part-time——

It being Nine o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 175, Noes 331.

Division No. 184] **[9.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashby, David
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'rmline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*

Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. James Hamilton.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Chalker, Mrs Lynda
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian

Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Clause 19

INCOME RELATED BENEFITS

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 59, in page 22, line 17 at end insert—

'(1A) The Secretary of State shall make copies of schemes prescribed under subsection (1)*(a)* or *(b)* above available for public inspection at local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security at all reasonable hours without payment.'.

This is an entirely benevolent amendment, which we have introduced in response to an undertaking given by my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) in Committee. It brings income support and family credit into line with housing benefit, by ensuring that copies of the two schemes are readily available for inspection by members of the public at the Department's local offices. I hope that the House will welcome that and I commend the amendment to the House.

Amendment agreed to.

9.15 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move amendment No. 206, in page 22, line 17 at end insert—

'(1A) The scheme prescribed in subsection (1)*(a)* above shall include a weekly payment of a community care addition to disabled or elderly people or in respect of disabled children or other disabled or elderly dependants in need of care and attention.

(1B) Regulations shall provide that payments of community care additions made under subsection (1A) shall be payable at a rate that shall be determined by reference to:

(a) the needs of the claimant in relation to his proper welfare and need for care and attention in a dwelling which he occupies or is to occupy as his home or in which he resides or is to reside as a member of a family; and

(b) the extent to which other benefits or payments that are payable under Part II or Part III of this Act fail to meet those needs.

(1C) Payments made under subsection (1A) shall be payable in addition to any attendance allowance and mobility allowance that may be in payment.'.

I do so in my name and those of right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House. For all of them I thank you most warmly, Mr. Speaker, for having selected what was unavoidably a starred amendment.

The seventh report of the Select Committee on Social Services noted, and the Minister for Social Security agreed, that no premium for disability can cover the highest sums of additional requirements that individual disabled people in most need now receive. A small survey of the Disablement Income Group's existing case load has shown that payments for additional requirements range from 13 per cent. to 30 per cent. of a severely disabled claimant's total benefit income.

Notable among the payments for additional requirements that cannot be covered by the proposed premium is that for domestic assistance, a weekly payment that can now amount to £44·90 a week plus, of course, any employee's national insurance contributions. This crucially important benefit helps to keep many severely disabled people out of institutions. The payments now made will not be met by the social fund, despite the suggestion that the fund will be a means of helping to meet community care needs. Such needs cannot be met because the social fund will not cover regular payments. Moreover, the social fund is a wholly unsuitable vehicle for giving financial help to disabled people.

As DIG stated in its response to the Green Paper, there are grave defects in the concept and details of the social fund, more particularly in relation to disabled people. In applying cash limits, the operation of the fund will introduce a new and undesirable concept into the social security benefit system. Instead of meeting all financial needs on the basis of pre-determined criteria, some financial needs in future will be met according to the availability of pre-allocated resources.

The absence of a satisfactory appeal system will inevitably lead to injustices and bad relations locally between staff and clients. The local management of the fund will also lead to variations of treatment throughout the country, thus compounding existing variations in respect of the provision of services under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Help for disabled people should depend on need, not on where they live, and the Bill shows a most worrying lack of understanding of what care in the community for severely disabled people really involves.

The amendment introduces a community care addition to augment the proposed inadequate basic income support payment and disablement premium. This addition would be to help meet the regular financial needs of disabled people trying to live outside institutions.

Three examples from the current case load of the organisations that work to help disabled people illustrate the problems that will result if the amendment is not agreed. None of the three examples is extreme. There are many others showing potential losses of £40, £50 and even £60 a week.

My first example is that of Miss Y who lives in a Sussex village. She is paralysed from the neck down following a road accident. She requires help with virtually all aspects of personal care. Miss Y was looked after by her elderly mother who became progressively more frail and unable to cope. Miss Y consequently had to spend weekends in bed before employing a domestic assistant. After intervention by DIG, her entitlement to a domestic assistance allowance of £20 a week was established. Her weekly income from supplementary benefits is £64·20, comprising £37·50 long-term rate, £5·45 for heating requirements, £1·25 laundry requirement and £20 domestic assistance allowance. Under the proposed income support scheme, she would receive £30·60 weekly rate and £12·25 disability premium — a total of only £42·85. That is a loss of £21·35. If Miss Y qualifies for the full rate of domestic assistance of £47·20, as DIG thinks probable, the loss to her would be £48·55.

My second example is that of Mr. S who graduated from university in 1984. He is 24 years old and confined to a wheelchair. He needs help with washing, dressing and toilet, and must also be turned in bed at frequent intervals during the night. He receives the higher rate attendance allowance and the following amounts of supplementary benefit: long-term rate of £35·70, domestic care allowance of £40, minus available scale margin of £1, leaving him with £74·70. Under income support this would be reduced to personal allowances of £24 and disabled person's premium of £12·25, giving a total of £36·25. This young man's home care costs him more than £70 a week. Without maintenance in real terms of his current income from supplementary benefit, he would no longer be able to remain living in the community and will have to move into residential care.

Thirdly, I turn to Miss A, who is 20 years old and, due to her disabilities, is confined to an electric wheelchair. She has very little strength or length of reach in her arms. She needs help in washing, dressing and using the toilet. She receives attendance allowance. Her present supplementary benefit weekly payment is as follows: long-term rate £35·70, domestic care allowance £44·90, diet allowance £3·60, heating allowance £5·20, bathing addition £1·50, minus available scale margin of £1, giving a total of £89·90. Under the income support proposals she would receive personal allowance of £24 and disabled person's premium of £12·25, giving a total of £36·25. Miss A left full-time education in 1984 and was determined to take her rightful place in the community. Her live-in care attendance costs currently amount to £40 per week plus board and lodging. So how can anyone, in these circumstances, retain his or her independence under this Bill as it now stands?

It is the contention of every major organisation of and for disabled people in this country that it would cost more in public expenditure terms to fund these three people, and very many others like them, in residential care than it would cost to maintain their benefits in real terms.

Let me spell out the point in sharper terms. The Spastics Society provides residential care for severely disabled people at a cost of between £233 and £288·50 per week. Of these amounts, the DHSS currently pays £180 per week per person. This sum far exceeds the amount of supplementary benefit received in my three examples, who are all severely disabled but just managing to remain in the community. That is why the Spastics Society has put it to me that

> "Independent living will no longer be possible for many severely disabled people if they are expected to live on less money than they do now. It is our belief that by, in effect, reducing the incomes of such people . . . the Government will defeat its own objectives of 'Care in the Community'. The alternative will lead to considerably higher public expenditure."

For the Government to reject this amendment would thus be self-defeating as well as inhumane. All hon. Members know that disabled people crave nothing more than to live independently and, wherever possible, in their own homes. Many will incontrovertibly be forced into institutions unless the Bill is amended. I implore both the House and the Minister to accept amendment No. 206. Let us at least all agree that there will be no point in sloganising about caring for severely disabled people in the community, ever again, if they reject this amendment tonight.

Mr. Hannam: This is a crucial debate for the most severely disabled members of our society, and I am extremely grateful to you, Mr. Speaker, for accepting our amendment.

I am surprised that we are having to debate this matter, because it is a long time since the all-party disablement group first began to express anxiety and to discuss with the various disability organisations the implications of the social security review, especially for severely disabled people. Under the present system severely disabled people receive a range of additional payments to cover the additional costs of living. However, they, or at least those who come into the scheme in future, will lose some of those benefits.

Throughout last year my hon. Friend the Minister has signified his acceptance and knowledge of the matter and of the need to find a satisfactory solution. In our discussions with the group and other organisations he has repeatedly implied that the Government hope to come up with a scheme to solve the problem. I sincerely hope that that proposal will not be long in coming. Indeed, I hope that it may be forthcoming tonight.

The number in the group is not large. The Government estimate that we are talking about a total of 4,600 people who are severely disabled and are likely to lose by these proposals in the Bill. We cannot be sure that the figure is completely accurate. Indeed, they may be more than that. We are not talking about large numbers, and we are certainly not asking the Government for a large sum. Moreover, under the present system these severely handicapped people are judged to be in need of the various additional allowances that they receive.

The right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) illustrated the type of people whom we want to help and who will suffer under these proposals. I have a further example. A married woman has a 14-year-old son who has multiple sclerosis and is chairbound. The family

[Mr. Hannam]

receive a total of £109·55, whereas under income support that figure would be reduced to £81·10. Multiple sclerosis is a deteriorating condition, and in future additional allowances will be required. Certainly the family could not cope with any loss in their present income.

All present recipients will continue to receive the existing level of allowances under the transitional arrangements, but those allowances will not keep pace with inflation as time goes by. Therefore, even existing recipients will suffer a steady erosion of their support income. I know that my hon. Friend the Minister recognises the problem, and has suggested that it can be met under the provisions of the social fund. However, there are a number of difficulties with this, as he knows. It would be much better to tackle the problem and to meet the financial needs of severely disabled people through income support schemes, as our amendment proposes.

If we mean to encourage severely disabled people to live in the community, it is essential to provide them with the independence that they must have. If this is not done, they will have to resort to institutional or residential care or to residential homes, and we know what the cost of that will amount to.

The present arrangements in the Bill mean that existing recipients of disablement benefits will continue to receive them as long as they do not visit hospital, but if they have to do so for further treatment, they will lose entitlement and will go on to the income support, which will be far less. There is an anomaly that we must resolve. New claimants will only have the disability premium, which for most severely disabled people will be inadequate to live on.

9.30 pm

All the disability organisations have made strong representations on both these counts, as has the all-party group, to my hon. Friend the Minister, and I hope that we can have some sign of how he intends to rectify the situation. He has shown by his replies that he recognises the problem and wants to do something about it. I am sure that he would not want to force people back into institutions at the same time as encouraging them to go out into the community, which is the Government's policy.

There is a clear need for a regular, guaranteed payment each week, and our amendment will provide for a community care addition to be paid through the income support scheme to disabled or elderly people. It will be a weekly payment, and regulations will determine the rate of the payment, by reference to

"*(a)* the needs of the claimant in relation to his proper welfare and need for care and attention in a dwelling which he occupies or is to occupy as his home or in which he resides or is to reside as a member of a family; and

(b) the extent to which other benefits or payments that are payable under Part II or Part III of this Act fail to meet those needs."

It is important that this is a weekly payment. Disabled people must be able to budget adequately for their day-to-day needs. For example, they need to pay for attendance, laundry, special diet and their additional heating needs. They must know that they will be able to meet all those additional expenses if they are to continue to live at home. This is an important aspect of the community care addition, and I do not see a payment from the social fund being able to meet this requirement.

It is also essential that the community care addition is not open to discretion. If a disabled person is to continue to live in the community, he must be able to plan ahead. For instance, he needs to know that he will be able to meet the cost of an attendant in the long term, and any other domestic assistance that he may require. It would be impossible if his addition were subject to the discretion of a social fund officer every so often and he had no absolute knowledge of what he was entitled to. Faced with such uncertainty, many people would have no alternative but to live in an institution. It is obviously important that the regulations establishing the rate are flexible enough to allow for the varying needs of people with a progressive or intermittent disability, but people must know what they are entitled to and know that they will always be entitled to that.

We recognise that it is intended for the social fund to meet various community care needs. For that reason, we have included subsection *(b)* so that account can be given to the extent to which the social fund meets those needs. However, at this stage we cannot see how the social fund will be suited to give a regular, guaranteed cash payment to enable severely disabled people to live independently in the community. Severely disabled people need this over and above any other back-up support that may be provided through the social fund.

Our principal contention in the all-party group is that we want disabled people to live in the community and we must ensure that they are entitled to sufficient means to be able to do this. In the longterm, it is both cost-effective and care efficient to give people sufficient cash to prevent them from having to live in an institution. The amendment emphasises the importance of this. It says that payments shall be made to meet the requirements of a disabled person living at home. I commend it to the House. I hope that the Government will be able to accept it.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): I endorse the constructive comments of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and those of the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), both of whom do such splendid work for the disabled.

This amendment is vital. Without it, the most severely disabled people will lose the most. Simply to replace the flexible and sensitive additional payments under the supplementary benefit system with just one level of disability premium is an inflexible and insensitive decision. I do not believe that it is possible simply to average the needs of severely disabled people in this way. None of them is average. All of them are individuals and they should be assessed as individuals. Failure to assess and recognise their individuality is the hallmark of the unimaginative.

It is impossible seriously to doubt the claim that, without cash from the community care addition, the severely disabled will be forced into institutions. Failure to recognise this fact is the hallmark of the illiterate, who cannot read case histories. It is also the hallmark of the innumerate, who cannot do simple sums, because the figures are there for all to see.

Without this amendment, the most severely disabled lose from a few pounds to over £50 a week. That money has helped to keep many of them out of institutions. Without it, and without the community care addition that we recommend, they may be forced into institutions. If they are forced into institutions, the Government will have

to pay very heavily. Of course, the disabled will pay far more heavily because they are severely affected by being forced into institutions.

Those of us who know severely disabled people know that they fight very hard for their independence and that they cherish it. If they are forced into institutions, they find that their independence is eroded and that it is insulting, demeaning and demoralising. That is why this Government, or any Government, at all costs should avoid forcing the severely disabled into institutions. To force, to impel or to compel one severely disabled person into an institution against his will is the hallmark of a ruthless person. I am not accusing the Minister, but I am saying that to force any severely disabled person against his will into an institution, simply for lack of cash, is the hallmark of a ruthless person.

It is completely false to suggest, as I understand the Minister has suggested, that in the attendance allowance and the mobility allowance the most severely disabled people already have a premium, in the way that we understand it. It is wrong to make that claim. These essential allowances are made for a quite different purpose. It was never intended, either by the former Minister, or by the former Government, or by Parliament, that the cash from these allowances should be used for needs which ought to be met by supplementary benefit. I do not believe that that is intended by this Government.

However, the allowances are inadequate, in any case. The full attendance allowance for a very severely disabled person is a mere £30 a week. To qualify for the full allowance, those people must have constant care, day and night. Care costs some £2.50 per hour. There is nothing cheaper than that, even in poor areas. Therefore, £30 a week will pay for some 12 hours for someone needing constant care day and night who is severely disabled and unable to help herself or himself. That is quite wrong.

Another poppycock suggestion that has been made by some Ministers—the Minister will have the chance to answer this if he thinks that I am doing him or the Government an injustice — is that severely disabled people can rely upon the social fund for their individual needs. That is rubbish because that fund does not provide weekly payments. It is limited and there will be enormous local variations. The difficulties of severely disabled people are far too intense for them to be left to flounder at the mercy of local officials.

I conclude by suggesting that the unique problems of severely disabled people must be met by unique payments. Those payments should be in the form of the community care addition which has been suggested and spelt out in the amendment. I make it clear that this is not simply a financial test for the Government. This is a major moral test, requiring a specific and categoric response. An affirmative answer from the Minister would help to allay the anxieties of severely disabled people. Silence or an evasive answer will be unforgivable.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): I endorse what the right hon. Members for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam) have said. It is beyond doubt that a number of people will be financially worse off under the new proposed income support scheme. When my hon. Friend the Minister came to the Select Committee on Social Services to answer questions about the proposals in the Bill, he assured us that, quite apart from protecting people during the transitional phase, there was the social fund.

The social fund rests on a discretionary element which undermines the main objective of severely disabled people. The severely disabled are a group with whom I have had close personal contacts in the past five years. The overwhelming conclusion that I reached after working with a number of severely disabled people, with whom I developed a close relationship, was that of all the aspirations which they treasure, independence, which everyone else takes for granted, was the one which they held in the highest esteem.

Nothing will undermine the independence of the severely disabled more than a feeling that their financial provision from the state is based upon some kind of discretionary handout element. It is critical to the feeling of dignity independence and self-respect, which I hope that the Government wish every British citizen to enjoy, that any financial benefits which they receive, and will need in order to maintain their present standard of living, should be paid as of right.

This group of people is not enormous, so the cost of the necessary provision is not high. The Government do not wish to demean this group of people who have many other disadvantages. I cannot believe that they would wish to do so especially now. My hon. Friend the Minister, with his considerable knowledge and widely recognised sensitivity to the aspirations of disabled people, will see the merits of the amendment, and I commend it strongly to him.

9.45 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): I, too, support the amendment. From the large volume of correspondence that we received when the Bill was in Committee and until Report stage, there is no doubt that the matter touches a raw nerve and that more people are worried about it than are worried about almost any other part of the Bill. There are many areas of concern in the Bill, but many organisations, as well as the right hon. Members for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam), have highlighted examples of individuals who stand to lose substantial sums.

Of course, I am aware from discussions in Committee that those individuals will be safeguarded by some provisions, but a person in an identical position who develops a disability later will not receive the support that people get now. To that extent, the Bill is inevitably a major step backwards.

We are not talking about small sums. Examples have been quoted of reductions of between £10 and £50 a week. That makes all the difference between being able to care and not being able to care. Although the Government have an understandable commitment to the voluntary sector, I do not believe that they intend to move away from paid services for people who clearly need them to saying, "It will have to be done for free by volunteers."

Mr. Newton *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Wigley: The Minister shakes his head. I accept that that is not his intention, but that will be the effect of the Bill.

[Mr. Wigley]

In Committee and today we have heard about the Government's three proposals for making up the loss. Much emphasis was placed on the social fund. However, it is discretionary, inconsistent and uncertain. It will vary from area to area. It is cash-limited, and many local officers will not have the necessary expertise in profound handicap. That is one reason why the mobility allowance and attendance allowance schemes tend to be administered from centres, not from local offices. People who need reliable, consistent services will have to depend upon ad hoc, day-to-day, hand-to-mouth services according to the resources that are available. It is ironic that we are discussing this in the context of a Social Security Bill when the proposal is profoundly anti-social and provides insecurity for disabled people.

The evidence that we have received from many people points in the same direction. In its most recent memorandum to me, the Association of Directors of Social Services stated:

"The most unacceptable aspect of the premium for the sick and disabled is that those with the highest needs will be amongst the highest losers. Those with disabilities that may prevent them from working but have no extra costs related to ill-health will receive the same benefit as a severely disabled person with high costs . . . The combined lack of support to carers and restricted help to the most severely disabled of claimants will result in the breakdown of much home-based care. If the Government has a genuine commitment to community care, adequate incomes for those in the community is the first step."

That underlines the depth of feeling among the professionals in this area.

The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South mentioned the other two palliatives that the Government have suggested to help severely disabled people — mobility allowance and attendance allowance. The Minister mentioned this in Committee on 11 March. But those two benefits are geared specifically for functions — mobility allowance to the ability to get around, and attendance allowance, as the right hon. Gentleman graphically illustrated, to the profound needs of those who qualify for them. These should not be regarded as making up for the loss of the provisions in current enactments. Taking away those provisions will leave a group of people in considerable doubt and insecurity about their future.

The Government are showing a brazen and insensitive attitude to disabled people.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I seem to recall the Minister for Social Security talking about lump sum or intermittent payments being made to someone who leaves hospital with, say, severe brain damage or severe disablement. Surely there must be regular, adequate weekly payments.

Mr. Wigley: Absolutely. That is not to say that there is no need for lump sum payments, but they will not make up for the regular, consistent availability of resources. I know from personal experience and from the experience of many friends and associates who have faced disability that there is a need for a person who can help consistently and regularly. That can be ensured only when resources are available to pay that person so that he or she will be available for certain hours on certain days, come rain or shine. If the resources are not available, paid people will not be taken on to help with that work. No one would dare risk taking on those people and, therefore, the infrastructure that enables disabled people to remain in the community would be in danger of collapsing.

I do not think that the Minister intended having to defend that sort of possibility. I urge him to realise that if the Government's words about their commitment to care in the community are to mean anything, they must look again at this matter.

Mr. Galley: It must be clear from our debates in Committee and on Report that firm arrangements will have to be made for the small groups of severely disabled people who may be disadvantaged as a result of the withdrawal of single payments.

In Committee we spoke of groups of perhaps 2,000 or 4,000 people who can accumulate significant single payments, particularly those for domestic care and attendance. Those debates tended to concentrate on the social fund and not on an addition to income support.

However one approaches the matter, there may be difficulties of definition and interpretation of terms such as "community care" and other wide phrases such as those in the amendment, and, indeed, those in the amendment that I tabled to the social fund provision in Committee. It is abundantly clear that some method must be found to overcome the problem.

The social fund may be a better, more appropriate and flexible way of dealing with the problem. The right hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) is wrong to say that it is rubbish to suggest using the social fund. It may be an appropriate way of solving the problem flexibly and sensibly. However, we need — tonight, if possible — assurances from the Government about how the social fund will be operated to meet these needs.

From the Green Paper onwards, it has always been intended that an element for community care needs will be included in the social fund. The details have remained extremely sketchy, and perhaps there is still some thinking to be done, but I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security will come to a conclusion in the near future about how the community care element of the social fund will be operated to give some security and confidence to severely disabled people who would lose out under the system that is currently proposed. There must be consistency between local areas. I hope that we shall not have to use the appeals procedure every time to achieve that consistency.

The hon. Member for Caernarfon (Mr. Wigley) mentioned the problem of social fund officers having the medical or social work expertise to make the appropriate assessments for payments. One solution might be to set aside community care money within the social fund that could be operated voluntarily by experts who are somewhat independent of the Department. We need a firm, clear and secure arrangement, which involves regular, intermediate or instalment payments. I believe that my hon. Friend the Minister made some concessions to us on that point in Committee and that he is moving towards some regularity of payment. Indeed, there is an amendment that may take us in that direction and give us more flexibility.

I turn again to the problems of the terminally ill and to the difficulties that they often face when claiming, for example, attendance allowance. Hon. Members should

remember the 26-week rule and the bureaucratic difficulties of obtaining such aid. Community care must take the needs of the terminally ill into account. It would be counter-productive if my hon. Friend did not make arrangements to keep people in the community with security of funding. The alternative is institutionalisation, which is expensive, unnecessary, wrong for the person concerned and counter to Government policy. Therefore, some arrangements must be made for the sake of the individuals concerned and in the interest of the Government themselves.

Mr. Kennedy: On this crucial issue, the mood of the House during this short debate is reminiscent of the mood during the debate on the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill, or Tom Clarke Bill, which successfully passed through the House. Good sense and good will was apparent then, too, on both sides of the House. More importantly, generous, welcome and sensible commitments were made by the Minister.

I shall be brief. We have seen good sense and good will. Let us hope that, even if we cannot obtain an absolute commitment from the Government, they will at least say that they are aware of the difficulty and will take steps to remedy it, if not tonight, then in the other place. In an earlier debate, in which I spoke just about as briefly, we discussed some form of appeal mechanism or independent review for the social fund. Some of us strongly opposed the measure, while some Conservative Members, perhaps understandably, welcomed it. Nevertheless, they expressed the hope that the Minister would go further. The difficulty highlighted in that debate must be multiplied at least tenfold in this debate, given the category of citizen involved. A fit and healthy person who enjoys his independence and the things that perhaps we take for granted, will have difficulty with the social fund, how to appeal, and so on. How will people who see others enjoy independence and want to achieve it themselves react to the provisions? I find the thought distressing.

10 pm

As the hon. Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) said, the logic of the measure runs counter to Government policy. The amount of money to be spent in terms of the numbers involved cannot disrupt Government policy, because it will not significantly affect the amount of money allocated to income support.

I hope that the Minister will be as constructive, generous and correct as he was that Friday morning a few weeks ago when we debated and passed the disabled persons measure. That did much in terms of needs and rights for disabled people. The amendment seeks to preserve and protect the needs and rights of severely disabled people.

The Minister said that the social fund appeals mechanism conferred rights. The rights involved in this amendment are more fundamental than the right to an independent appeal. We are talking about the right to support under the legislation to give disabled people a sense of independence and security. I support the spirit and detail of what has been said about the amendment.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): I did not serve on the Committee on the Bill and so I am treading an area where other hon. Members spent many hours in discussion. I support the amendment. I hope that the Minister will address two crucial issues. Since we published the Green Paper concern has been expressed about those who are particularly dependent upon state benefit because of the multiplicity of their disabilities and their need for special support. The Government have said that they will consider the matter, which they recognise as important. We are now at the eleventh hour and we need a response. The Minister must make it clear that the Government intend to write greater safeguards into the Bill.

No one has suggested that the sums lost will involve the current holders of benefits. They are to be lost by people of like kind in future. It is not suggested that economies should be made at the expense of current recipients. It is not suggested that people in receipt of such benefits do not need them.

People have had benefits which we, by definition, agree that they need but which we know from the evidence are to be taken away from them and which the Government do not wish to take from them. We seem to be on all fours, but the Bill does not provide the security or knowledge that people require.

I doubt whether the measure serves the Government's purpose because the social fund was set up to sweep together the multiplicity of applications covering a range of social security needs and to provide a mechanism so that people could get into the fund from time to time as needs arise. We are talking about a group of people whose needs are known for a long period, where the payment is not an individual or periodic payment but a continuous payment. If we know now that those continuous payments are needed at the present level or at that which we can afford, why can we not provide a means in the Bill whereby a continuous payment is made in future?

It seems to me that, from the definition in the Green Paper, the social fund is not a sensible means by which to make the payment. It will complicate the administration of the social fund, which will not be to the benefit of the reform. We should provide a continuous means of income support for severely disabled people, administered by people who consider individual cases and know a lot of detail about disability, who will arrive at what they regard as a reasonable, continuous sum. We should use that highly concentrated and highly developed expertise for that purpose. I hope that the Government will find a way of providing an additional mechanism for continuous support outside the social fund that will give to the people concerned the sense of security that they so severely desire.

Mr. Tom Clarke (Monklands, West): The hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) was most reassuring, because I rise with some trepidation in the knowledge that not only has the House heard some informed speeches, including that of the hon. Gentleman and those of hon. Members who have served on the important Committee, but that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) and those of members of the all-party disablement group, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent, South (Mr. Ashley) and the hon. Member for Exeter (Mr. Hannam). They demonstrated to me during the passage of the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill that it is one of the most effective groups in the House. Certainly, it is the best informed group in the House. Without wishing to be patronising, I think that the Minister for Social Security would be well advised to listen to the advice of that group, especially when the advice is as unanimous as it would appear to be regarding the clause.

When the House discussed that Bill, hon. Members and I received correspondence which showed that the whole issue of community care, and how we as a society respond to it, is one of the most vital matters that disabled people face. This debate gives us an opportunity to ask the fundamental question: what does community care mean? What explanation do we offer when people ask about community care? How can we possibly have community

care in any meaningful sense if as the correspondence we all received suggests, we are not providing the resources which are essential if only to maintain the dignity of so many people who have given so much to our community. There is not the emphasis on care which the House would like to see.

I support the amendment. I support it in the knowledge that we are dealing with about 4,600 people, which is the tip of the iceberg. The problems run far more deeply than we realise, but that it is right to accept that if people have to face the problem and the reality of disability, not just day after day but hour after hour, and if the problem grows with age, we should not impose the worry of how to pay for the next laundry bill or whether their heating charges will be so high that they cannot turn up their heaters, and in so doing act in conflict with the medical advice that they have been given.

Additional community care recognition as advocated in the amendment represents a step forward. On the basis of representations that have been made to me and other hon. Members, I regret that such a facility has not existed before. It would be quite wrong to introduce any element of discretion into this Bill. Our method of dealing with these matters seems patchy in the extreme. Some of the people who did not agree that we should be doing a bit more than we are about carers seemed to come from parts of the country where carers were most in need of assistance, where ordinary domestic circumstances were so compelling that some of the information left us stunned. There is a challenge to try to do something as the amendment suggests.

I agree that the choice is often between a reasonable approach—giving a bit of assistance to people who have done a sterling job, usually without complaint — or opening the door to institutional care. We have two objections to the latter. First, it is wrong for people to be compelled to go to institutions when it can be avoided and, secondly, community care with real meaning is something that we want to encourage.

It seems insulting in the extreme to wave the banner of community care, knowing that it means that the House is washing its hands of the problem and saying that, if resources are necessary, they will have to be found elsewhere. There is a feeling of pride among the folks who we are discussing, and rightly so. It would be wrong for us to attempt to diminish that pride. I refer to pride in individual achievement and pride in spreading limited resources, and even spreading limited affection.

There is a dignity there which the House should be encouraging. I know of the Minister's interest in these matters and I do not want to be insulting about his role. My regret is that the ability that he displays is being spent on matters such as this. He is capable of a much more constructive and helpful contribution and I am sorry that he has been chained to such legislation.

With the amendment, however, the Minister has a chance to redeem himself, and I urge him to take that opportunity. Yesterday's *The Sunday Times* carried a profile of a very good friend of all of us—Mr. Brian Rix. It said that Mr. Rix will be advising the Prime Minister's advisers on Thursday on how the Government might be presented as more caring. I have not had an opportunity to have a word with Mr. Rix, but, knowing him, I suspect that he is likely to tell the Government that they could take a step in that direction by accepting the minor proposal in the amendment and by showing the House and the country that, for once, they will encourage a new approach and that they believe that there is a place in society for those who ignore the concept that we should consider the price of everything and the value of nothing.

Mr. Cohen: When I was at the shops this morning I saw a constituent of mine who is now in a wheelchair. I went over to speak to him, and he said "I'm finished". He meant that he would not walk again, but, chillingly, he meant much more than that. It was a sad assessment of his prospects in our current society.

10.15 pm

People with disabilities can be helped to gain independence and contribute to society. Their hopes and aspirations for a full life are much the same as the rest of us. A caring society helps them to overcome the obstacles put in their way. My constituent assessed that we do not have much of a caring society and that those obstacles will finish him off. That was his instinctive feeling.

Disabled people have a right to live a useful life in the community. They have a right to a decent income, which is essential for their dignity and independence. My constituent and others like him who are disabled have a right to say, "I shall carry on, despite my disability", not to be forced to say "I'm finished."

I welcomed the amendment to pay the community care addition as a weekly payment to the disabled. There is a clear correlation between poverty, low income and disability. The payment of this weekly benefit will help to tackle poverty and allow the disabled to build a life in the community with dignity.

In the amendment there is also recognition of the role of some of the carers. They pay a high cost in stress for the job that they do. A recent survey showed 68 per cent. suffering physical illness, 48 per cent. suffering mental stress and many of them living in poverty and social isolation. A caring state should be encouraging the carers. They are the real community carers. That same survey showed that if 5 per cent. of them stopped working, the cost to the health and social services budget would double. Therefore, it is in the state's interest that carers should be encouraged with benefits of this type.

Real community care does cost money. The Government want to do it on the cheap as an excuse for cuts. That is extremely short-sighted. If they do that, thousands of people will be thrust into the community without support. In those circumstances, many more of them will feel that they are finished, as does my constituent. I support the amendment.

Dr. Godman: I warmly support the amendment. I remind the Minister that in Committee I mentioned the plight of some of my constituents who are serverely disabled and pointed out to him that some of them receive upwards of £20 by way of clothing allowances, let alone other allowances. At one point during the Committee's deliberations the Minister replied that my constituents who are suffering from disabilities are covered by the transitional protection.

It seems that people already on supplementary benefit will have the existing benefit protected, but only in cash terms. That means it will become steadily more inadequate to meet their needs. That point was repeatedly raised in Committee, but to my mind no solution was ever offered. Worse still, anyone who stops drawing benefit, even for a week or two—for example, because of admission to

[Dr. Godman]

hospital—may well lose even that form of protection. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say about the threat of the loss of protection.

I should like to ask the Minister whether he and his officials have had time to reflect on his remarks about lump sums or intermittent sums given to those leaving hospital in a severely disabled condition. I recognise some of the problems associated with weekly additions, but what is needed is an adequate weekly income with, on occasion, some additional lump or intermittent sums, to use the Minister's words. I would welcome answers to those two questions when the Minister replies.

Mr. Newton: Once again, the importance of the debate has left me relatively little time to respond to all the points that have been made, but first I should like to acknowledge the importance that I and the Government attach to this subject, which has been reflected in the debate.

I should like to remind the House of something that could have been overlooked by anyone listening to the debate. Our proposals for the new income support scheme incorporate a significant number of improvements for the overwhelming majority of those classified as long-term sick and disabled, currently for supplementary benefit purposes, and under the Bill, under the income support scheme. People will receive the proposed disablement premium automatically where they are receiving a qualifying benefit such as attendance allowance or severe disablement allowance. Unlike the current position with the long-term rate, receipt by a partner of one of those benefits would passport the family as a whole to extra help.

In cases where we retain time on benefit rules to deal with cases of people who are unable to work because of ill health or disability but who do not, for whatever reason, receive one of the qualifying benefits, we have, in effect, halved the qualifying period to 28 weeks instead of one year before they receive the premium rate. Those arrangements are consistent with criteria that we already adopt in other long-term sickness and disability benefits.

It is also important to remember that our proposals on equal treatment should make it easier for a disabled partner to qualify the whole family for extra help. We are also proposing significant improvements in the treatment of part-time earnings of disabled people. This touches on the point raised by several hon. Members — we are committed to continuing the disregard of attendance and mobility allowance.

This is not a point that I wish to labour too much, because of the shortness of time, but I must remind the House that, on the figures that we have published in the technical annex, illustrative though they are, we estimate that there will be an increase in expenditure of over £50 million a year for those eligible for the disability premium —in other words, £50 million a year overall for those who are classified as long-term sick and disabled. It is clear to anyone who has studied those illustrative figures in the technical annex that, on that basis, the great majority of long-term sick and disabled people would gain or face no change as a result of the proposals. The average improvement across the group as a whole, after allowing for everything in the illustrative figures — the least favourable way of looking at the figures—would be an increase of £4·60 per week.

That is an important part of the background to the issue, but I would not want to minimise or dismiss the genuine concern that has been expressed about the relatively small numbers of people receiving relatively large amounts of supplementary benefit in the form of some of the present additional requirements, particularly the domestic assistance addition, which must be the basis of much of what has been said by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

From the debates in Committee, I think that the House, those who were members of the Committee and those who have studied the Committee proceedings, will know that from the information available the numbers involved with the specific problem on which the debate has focused are undoubtedly—and I emphasise that this does not dismiss the problem but puts it into perspective—quite small in comparison to the hundreds of thousands who receive supplementary benefits and the tens of thousands of long term sick and disabled people on supplementary benefit. From the latest information available—admittedly this is out of date—there were some 2,400 payments of the domestic assistance addition and the average payment was not at the level of £40, £50 or £60 a week that some hon. Members have referred to, rather there was an average payment of £3·59 a week. I accept that that information dates back to December 1983, but it shows the nature of the problem and the ease with which it can be exaggerated.

Whether or not that problem can be exaggerated, that does not mean that it is not an important problem for those affected by the arrangements. It does not minimise the extent to which the Government are concerned to find a solution. However, I cannot accept that the amendment is a solution to the problem, because, in effect, it would entail going away from the basic structure of the Government's income support proposals, with all the advantages that they bring to the great majority of long-term sick and disabled people. The amendment would lead us straight back to the present tangle of weekly additional rquirements. Under these, we try to assess, for example, how many baths people need to take a week, peoples' laundry needs and all the other details that come into these matters.

Those hon. Members who have spoken must recognise that we will either have the simpler and clearer structure of income support without the great tangle of additional requirements, with all the problems that that entails, or we will maintain that structure and have something similar to the present tangle. That would inescapably mean that many of the people that I have described as "gainers" would have their gains removed by the maintenance of the present structure.

I hope that the House would recognise that if I were to come forward and say that the Government were abandoning the proposed disability premium and the many important elements of the proposed new structure, I would receive no thanks. Those who would expect to gain from the proposals would suddenly find that they would not. It is inconsistent with the basic nature of the Government's proposals to start tacking back on to the simplified structure that we are proposing, the weekly additional requirements proposed in the amendment.

I hope that the House and my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, South (Mr. Yeo) will recognise that the notion that the amendment's proposal is in some way significantly different from a discretionary way of dealing

with the problem, whether through the social fund or in some other way, is far fetched if one considers the wording of the amendment. The amendment refers to

"The needs of a claimant in relation to his proper welfare and needs for care and attention."

That cannot be settled by a clerical officer in a DHSS local office on the basis of some handbook of regulations. That is essentially a discretionary assessment of the needs and requirements of a severely disabled person. That is a social work assessment. That is the kind of approach that we are trying to build into the system through the operation of the social fund and through the more trained staff that we would expect to have within the social fund.

I would ask hon. Members to accept that what they are proposing through the amendment is not a continued regulated entitlement, it is simply the writing of what purports to be a regulation which includes a discretionary social work decision within it. It would require discretionary social work or social fund assessments to make it work.

In response to the requests from my hon. Friends and others, I cannot tell the House that we have yet found a certain way of solving the problems that have been described. We will need to assess the implications of the more up to date information on the receipt of additional requirements as it becomes available.

The House will know that we have been asked by disability organisations to consider proposals for improving transitional protection. That picks up a point raised by the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman). We have said that we shall look at what some of those organisations have said about improving transitional protection. We shall also want to consider the extent to which the social fund has a role to play in that area, and at some aspects of the developing debate about the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill. Indeed, I must ask the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) to consider how far the principles and purposes of his Bill would be undermined by a proposal which enabled local authorities to pass all responsibility for——

It being half past Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 333.

Division No. 185] **[10.30 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Bray, Dr Jeremy
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Golding, John
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hardy, Peter
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ray Powell and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rippon, Rt Hon Geoffrey
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John

Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am now required to put the Question on the outstanding Government amendment in this group, namely, amendment No. 62.

Clause 21

INCOME SUPPORT

Amendment made: No. 62, in page 26, line 11, leave out subsection (4).—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 23

RECOVERY OF EXPENDITURE ON BENEFIT FROM PERSON LIABLE FOR MAINTENANCE

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 63, in page 29, line 32, leave out 'subsection' and insert 'subsections (2), (3) and

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider Government amendments Nos. 64 to 67 and 135.

Mr. Major: Amendment No. 63 and the related amendments in this particular grouping are consequential amendments stemming from the passage of the Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986. The effect of the Scottish Act is to remove the legal differences between legitimate and illegitimate children without conferring parental rights automatically on the fathers of all illegitimate children. I do not propose to deal with the contents of that Act. I shall say no more than that these amendments amend the Bill to take account of changes in the law in Scotland which deal with illegitimacy.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 64, in page 29, line 35, at end insert—

'(9) On an application under subsection (1) above a court in Scotland may make a finding as to the parentage of a child for the purpose of establishing whether a person is, for the purposes of this section and section 25 below, liable to maintain him.'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 24

AFFILIATION ORDERS

Amendment made: No. 65, in page 30, line 41, leave out subsection (6).—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 25

FAILURE TO MAINTAIN—GENERAL

Amendments made: No. 66, in page 32, line 9, leave out from 'father' to '; and' in line 10.

No. 67, in page 32, line 12, at end insert—

'(4A) Subsection (4) above does not apply to Scotland, and in the application of subsection (3) above to Scotland any reference to children shall be construed as a reference to children whether or not their parents have ever been married to one another.'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 27

PAYMENT AND RECOVERY OF FAMILY CREDIT

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I beg to move amendment No. 68, in page 34, line 4, leave from beginning to 'by' in line 5.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to consider the following amendments: No. 69, in page 34, line 4, after 'employer', insert

'at the request of the claimant and, if he is a member of a married or unmarried couple, the other member'.

No. 70, in page 34, line 7, leave out paragraph *(b)*.

Mr. Squire: The effect of these amendments is to return to the existing principle relating to those on family income supplement, namely that support for low income families is paid by the DHSS to the stay-at-home parent, who is usually the mother.

I have read about the Herculean labours of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) in Committee——

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What about the rest of us?

Mr. Squire: I take the hon. Gentleman's point. Other hon. Members also played their part. However, I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will readily concede that the labours of my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington of which I speak were indeed prodigious. They were well directed and my hon. Friend made his case in Committee. Unfortunately, he lost the amendment concerned by a single vote. I am grateful for the opportunity this evening further to put the case and I trust that this time we shall be more successful. I am urging the status quo upon my right hon. and hon. Friends. I can hardly think of a more Conservative principle than that.

To summarise my three main bones of contention, they are these. First, I believe that the Government's proposals, as drafted, will place a considerable administrative burden upon employers in general, particularly small employers. Secondly, as a direct consequence, particularly for small employers, there will be a reduced take-up, because some employers will not wish to become involved in benefit matters with their employers. Thirdly, I believe it to be a retrograde step to cease payments to the mother or caring parent. If we had had our expected debate on child benefit earlier this evening, I should have expected my hon. Friend the Minister forcefully defend the right for benefit to be paid to the caring parent. There is a more than strong argument that family credit should be treated in exactly the same way.

Let me illustrate first the effect on employers by quoting some of the many submissions which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has received. The Confederation of British Industry was clear. It said:

"The CBI does not consider that it is essential or appropriate for the proposed family credit to be paid by employers. Members do not believe the 'pay packet' is the proper vehicle for social security benefits; it is more appropriate for social security benefits be paid separately to wages and identified as money paid by the Government . . . Under this proposal there would be no

[Mr. Squire]

great administrative saving to the Government as the DHSS would undertake assessment of entitlement. Indeed, there would therefore be a duplication of effort."

The Institute of Directors said simply:

"Our one concern with the proposal for family credit to be paid through the employee's pay packet is the additional administrative burden this may place on employers."

The National Farmers Union said that it

"runs entirely contrary to initiatives from other Government departments to reduce the legislative and administrative burden imposed on business by the Government. The proposed family credit scheme will especially affect employers with small workforces, such as farmers, who do not have the time or personnel to spare to devote to such administrative tasks."

The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses said:

"From the employer's point of view, the fact that women do not receive the benefit and that child benefit may decrease will do nothing to increase the harmony of employee employer relationships when employers are responsible for meeting part of the needs of the family. In view of the above, we therefore see the proposed family credit benefit as a retrograde step for both employees and employers alike . . . it will just complicate the employment relationship."

Those are hardly ringing tones of endorsement.

As it happens, large employers will probably be able to handle the scheme, although I question whether they should be required to do so. More interesting comments, dealing with the effectiveness of the DHSS, have come from the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux which said:

"The proposal to involve both the DHSS and the employer in the payment of family credit will simply serve to exacerbate the very worst elements of the FIS scheme and of means-tested benefits generally. For example, employees will still be required to apply to the DHSS who will be responsible for the assessment of entitlement to family credit. The DHSS will then have to liaise with the employer over payment. The extra administration required will increase the burden on already overworked local DHSS office staff."

There can be few hon. Members who do not recall the problems in recent years—housing benefit being one obvious example—where a benefit or payment has been required to be linked up to two or more points of contact prior to payment. It was an interesting time. That is the fairest way that I can put it. I dread that we may be setting up here a repeat performance and I urge my hon. Friends to think carefully before they support it.

In a sense, an even worse comment came from the same quarter. The NACAB said:

"The scheme is open to substantial abuse by some unscrupulous employers who may be unwilling to administer it."

It gave an example from its Prescot office and I urge hon. Members to bear this in mind. That office approached a local shopkeeper to test his reactions to the family credit proposals and the following conversation was reported:

"I said employers would be asked to pay family credit to those entitled although the DHSS would work out the amounts to be paid. If that was the case, he said, without any prompting from me, he would enquire how old the children were if he was taking on new staff, and favour either young girls or older women to avoid the problem as he felt he had quite enough paperwork already and had no desire to probe into his employees' private lives. I discussed with him the possibility of discrimination against people with school-age children being illegal and he gave me an inscrutable look and said it would be difficult to prove if you worded your advert fairly broadly".

Thus, rather than helping to alleviate unemployment amongst people with family responsibilities, family credit could aggravate their employment problems.

The last quote on this subject is from the same source, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and it touches on the question of the confidentiality of employers and employees. The association said:

"The lack of confidentiality implied by the involvement of the employer in the payment of benefit, the additional strain which this would place on a sometimes tenuous employee/employer relationship, the stigma associated with being on benefit and everyone knowing about it, as well as a reluctance by loyal employees to place an additional burden on hard-pressed employers, will undoubtedly serve to limit the take up of the new family credit."

I now turn to the matter of the cessation of the payment of benefit to the mother which, in most cases, would flow from the proposals. This breaks virtually a 10-year cross party agreement on the payment of benefit. I regret that break. It also breaks what I see as the natural link with child benefit that we have rightfully confirmed and which my right hon. Friend regularly affirms will remain payable to the mother. On this issue equally hostile comments have come in. The National Council of Women of Great Britain said:

"We take great exception to the statement that a disincentive to work and self-help has been 'exacerbated by the way that child benefit and FIS are paid, normally to the wife, so that wage earners may not be fully aware of total income which their family is receiving.' We stress that in many cases it is the wives who are not aware of total income the family is receiving."

The National Federation of Women's Institutes said:

"The strongest feeling in this area was over the proposal to enclose family credit in the pay packet of the main wage-earner, usually the husband. A very large majority of members were adamant that family credit should be paid to the mother, either in her pay packet or through the Post Office if she is not working. This issue brought almost unanimous protest from our members. It is vital that family credit should be paid to the mother, as happens now with family income supplement."

Finally, the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux said:

"The payment of family credit through the wage packet to the chief breadwinner rather than by order book to the principal carer (usually the mother) has been greeted with shock by the bureaux. This move will mean the transfer of essential income from the woman to the man, and in many cases, the loss of benefit to the children. This will have dangerous consequences."

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I know that my hon. Friend has done a great deal of research into this and allied subjects. In order to present a balance in his argument, could he tell us if any body or organisation has made representations to him in support of the proposal contained in the Bill?

Mr. Squire: My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has asked a revealing question. I am led to believe that the one submission that unreservedly supports the Government on the subject is the Monday Club. That is a grouping which I can best describe as not always identified with a caring approach to social matters of this ilk. The important point that my hon. Friend rightly makes is that a wide range of organisations, many of which are traditionally seen as supporters or at least friendly to our party, are hostile to this proposal. Only last week nine of these organisations, including the CBI and the National Farmers Union and others consisting of what I would term our Government's traditional supporters, wrote to my right hon. Friend expressing their deep anxiety. Also last week, even the Scottish Conservative party conference passed a motion congratulating the Government on the social security proposals but asking them to reconsider those for the family credit scheme. From all sides comes the cry, "Think again." I move the

amendments in the fervent hope that the Government, my Government, will react to the red warning lights ahead before it is too late.

11 pm

Mr. Meacher: I support the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire), but I intend to widen the argument beyond the restrictive dimension of the impact on employers.

I endorse the argument so strongly and effectively put in Committee on an amendment that was lost by only one vote. I pay tribute to the general work done in Committee by the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) and to his support for the case.

First, there is a case against payment through the pay packet. That is a deviation from the principle that has been widely supported throughout the country and accepted within the Conservative party that benefits for children should be paid directly to the parent who has regular, day-to-day responsibility for looking after the child. In most cases where there are two-parent families, the change will mean payments being made to the father, which will undoubtedly lead to greater hidden porverty among children and mothers in families where the income is not shared fairly. We know that, regrettably, there are many such families. The change will also deprive women at home of an important source of independent income, as many surveys have repeatedly shown.

The Government's proposal is also likely to reduce take-up, because, contrary to what the Government have said, workers do not like their employers being involved in claims for means-tested benefits. Ministers tried to contest that argument in Committee, but it was widely felt by other members of the Committee that they were not convincing when they said that confidentiality should not be a problem.

Although employers will not receive personal information about their employees, they will inevitably know who is receiving the benefit and the amount that he is receiving. Even if the employees' fears are irrational, they are certainly real enough and could influence their willingness to claim.

The change will also create an administrative burden for employers, especially small employers.

Mr. Stern: Will the hon. Gentleman comment on a matter that was not raised in Committee? Every employer receives a PAYE code number for each employee and, following the simplification of PAYE in the past few years, it is not too difficult for an experienced employer to work out the make-up of any code number and ascertain, for example, how much maintenance an employee is paying his ex-wife.

Mr. Meacher: That is a very Jesuitical argument. I do not think that many employers will spend time and energy going through code numbers to detect payments that might be made for maintenance of a spouse or for any other similar purpose. If the hon. Gentleman is trying to suggest that because that can be done for other purposes there will be no disadvantage if family credit is paid through the pay packet, his argument does not succeed.

The CBI said in March that it could not see that any improvement in take-up was likely to result from the Govenment's proposals. We believe that they will certainly result in a lower take-up.

The change is not designed to cope with frequent job changes, which, unfortunately, are a characteristic of thelow-paid, or with frequently changing employment patterns. I am delighted that the hon. Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) asked about the responses to the Green Paper. An analysis undertaken by the Child Poverty Action Group revealed that only one organisation — the Monday Club — unequivocally supported the Government's proposal.

Employers are, I think, universally against the proposal. The Association of Independent Businesses called it

"an unwelcome development . . . Increasing the burden to an employer should not be the tool through which integration is achieved".

The National Federation of Self-Employed and Small Businesses—an organisation dear to the hearts of many Conservative Members — has dubbed it madness and argued that

"from the employer's point of view, the fact that women do not receive the benefit and that child benefit may decrease will do nothing to increase the harmony of employee-employer relationships when employers are responsible for meeting part of the needs of the family . . . We therefore see the proposed family credit benefit as a retrograde step for both employees and employers alike."

I shall take up briefly some of the arguments advanced by Ministers in Committee. I do not know whether the Secretary of State will repeat them, but I want to make it clear that we have not so far found any of the Ministers' arguments convincing. First, they said that family credit should be compared with supplementary benefit and that no one would suggest that children's supplementary benefit rates should be paid to the mother. Family credit and child benefit are alternative ways of assisting working families with children, and that is the relevant comparison. Even if comparison is made with supplementary benefit, family credit, unlike supplementary benefit, is confined to families with children. Surely it is valid to suppose that all of it is intended to meet children's needs. That is the distinction and that is why the comparison with supplementary benefit is not correct.

Secondly, Ministers have said that payment to the mother is patronising and denies that parenthood is a shared responsibility. The Opposition agree that parenthood is a shared responsibility, but the reality is still that primarily mothers take the main responsibility, and in two-parent families the family income supplement is essentially a benefit for families where the mother stays at home. It is no more patronising for the law to encourage payment to be made direct to the caring parent than for it to decree that payment must be made through the pay packet to help low-paid workers to be more aware of the total family income, which is the main motive behind the Government's move.

Thirdly, Ministers have said that mothers who work 24 hours or more a week will be able to receive the credit. That is so, but it will affect only about one in 10 of mothers in two-parent families. It is precisely in those families where the mother does not have a wage of her own that direct payment of benefit to her is most important.

Fourthly, Ministers argued that the Government's proposal is a step on the road towards integration of the tax and benefit system. The Green Paper on the reform of personal taxation makes it clear that there is no intention of wider integration of the tax and benefit systems. But even if tax and benefit were integrated, that would not be

[Mr. Meacher]

incompatible with direct payment of family credit to the mother. That argument was accepted by the Select Committee that considered tax credit and by the 1970 Conservative Government. Even if it were the intention eventually to pay family credit automatically through PAYE, there is no reason why payment through the pay packet should start now, with all the attendant disadvantages and none of the advantages of an integrated scheme. In so far as there will be an illusion of integration as family credit appears as an offset against national insurance and PAYE on the wage slip, it will reduce the likelihood of the money being earmarked for the children.

I turn to the real motive behind the Government's proposal, to which Ministers referred obliquely when they said that it would increase low-paid workers' awareness of total family income and therefore help tackle the unemployment trap. That is what it is all about. It is not a DHSS motive at all; it is a Treasury motive which the Government seek to impose for Treasury reasons. The aim is to make people accept work for low wages. It is nothing to do with family poverty and nothing to do with a policy of remedying the difficulties of low-paid workers. It has everything to do with pushing down wages even lower. That is why we oppose the proposal, why I hope that Government Members will support the hon. Member for Hornchurch—I give him credit for his amendment—and why we reject this retrograde step.

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Every time I think that I shall be persuaded by the Opposition, I have only to listen to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to find my faith in what I was about to say rudely shaken. However, I must say again that the small businesses and the people who do not have the time or cash to join the relevant organisations are distressed by the thought that yet another function formerly discharged by central bureaucracy is to be discharged at their own hand. It is ironic that the Government have rightly paraded as one of the great triumphs of policy the creation of hundreds of thousands of small companies in the last two years. Every 100 firms which began on the enterprise alliance created 99 new jobs.

Companies of that size not only do not want the additional paper work which would result from such schemes, but their perception is tharge if they make a mistake in the administration of the scheme they will lay themselves open not only to inspection but to the law. There are quite enough perceived and real impediments to setting up a small business for that to be an additional disincentive.

Many small firms are teetering on the brink each day. They might have to go in the end. They might employ two or three people and many in charge are at an age when it is not easy to adapt to change and they are frightened of additional burdens. They might decide to bring forward by three or four years the day when they put up the shutters with the consequent loss of employment which we cannot afford at this time.

I am practical enough to know that it is improbable that at this late state the Government will be able to reverse all that they said in Committee, although I hope that they will. At least may we have an assurance that the Government will look at the matter carefully and, if events turn out as I fear, that they will reverse the policy?

Mr. Kirkwood: I agree with the tone adopted by the hon. Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) because I think that hon. Members should pause and consider exactly what is happening to small business men. In Committee the Government relied heavily on the argument that statutory sick pay was a useful model, as was statutory maternity pay. They argued that businesses could cope, with no difficulty.

In my experience, that is wrong. My constituency contains a high proportion of small businesses. There is a fear and misgiving about the administrative burden that the proposal will impose upon their daily lives. Government Members should think carefully before they support the Government on this matter.

I have some sympathy with some of the family credit changes in other directions, but is irrelevant and unneccessary to pay it in the proposed fashion. It is not beyond the wit of man to retain the Government's family credit scheme—if that is what they are minded to do—without this method of payment. That point should be borne in mind by hon. Members opposite when they vote. They are inflicting agony and additional adminstrative burdens on many traditional supporters of the Conservative party, but they are not necessarily striking at the Government's main intention to introduce a family credit system.

My additional fear about the system that the Government propose is that it will necessarily, de facto and in principle, affect the take-up provisions. We were told by the Government that there is a 50 per cent. take-up of family income supplement. Hon. Members on both sides of the House agree that the level of take-up is too low. The Government estimate that family credit will have a take-up rate of 60 per cent. I think that that figure is still too low. The figure of 60 per cent. is an optimistic one.

I endorse what the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has said thus far about the problems of the employee-employer relationship—an employee and an employer discussing intimately the details of family credit—and confidentiality. In my part of the world—I do not know about other Members' areas; the position may be different in their part of the world—it is a anathema for many employees to discuss such details with their employer. Because of their pride they would rather do without. That may be wrong, but it is a fact. We are not talking about substantial sums of money. Often, family credit payments will be only £2·50 or thereabouts.

I ask hon. Members opposite to put themselves in the position of an employee having to approach his employer every 26 weeks and saying, "My assessment unit is so many people and my income is so much," and so on. I do not believe for one moment that take-up will not be affected. History will prove either me or the Government right. The Government will be lucky to achieve their target of 60 per cent. If they do not achieve it, the whole basis of their argument about family credit will be vitiated. Any benefit that the Government wish to accrue from the proposal will go straight out of the window. That is an important argument.

I served on the Standing Committee. I was deeply impressed by the number of organisations which responded to the proposal. The organisations, which included the Salvation Army where not those normally associated with political lobbying. The organisations

represented an unholy coalition of all sorts of people—from political lobbyists down, or up, depending on how one looks at it.

If the Conservative party intends to go down that road in the face of such opposition from people who are not necessarily involved in the day-to-day political process, it is making a sad mistake. For those reasons, I think that the Government should be forced to change their position—not that it will result in the Government losing the proposal, because that is not necessary. The Government could change the detail of implementing the proposal in a way that would satisfy everybody by accepting the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire).

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman I am very happy to support my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire).

I am the more uneasy about the proposals on family credit, because we were prevented earlier this evening from discussing the proposals for child benefit. We cannot therefore be sure that child benefit will not shrink. If it does, it will be all the more important for family credit to be paid to the mother or normally caring parent. The overwhelming majority — about 90 per cent. — of families that would receive the benefit depend on the single income of the father.

The Lancashire Federation of Women's Institute—down-to-earth women, sensible and exceedingly well informed—say firmly:

"at best, giving family credit to the father will be an inconvenience for mothers; at worst, it may mean she will not receive the money at all."

It would be tragic if women were deprived of an independent source of income.

Some years ago, when discussing a rather different system of taxation, we were astounded at the number of women in all walks of life, from professors' wives to the lowest income families, who had no independent income except family allowance, as it then was. It would be deeply regrettable if we degenerated to that again. I therefore hope that the House will consider carefully and support the amendment.

Mrs. Renée Short: The House will know that the Social Services Select Committee examined the Green Paper, the White Paper and then the Bill when it was published, and that we published our report in time for the work of the Standing Committee. It is a matter of great regret that so little attention was apparently paid to our recommendations.

The Select Committee supported an integrated system of tax and child credits, but said that there was no reason why family credit, which replaces family income supplement for low-income families, should not be paid direct to the caring parent. We also drew attention to the complexities inherent in payment through the employer. An employee might change jobs, be laid off because of a shortage of work, become redundant or be on strike. All of that was discussed, as was the potential effect on the level of wages of paying family credit through the employer.

I was pleased to see the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) propose an amendment in Committee to enable family credit to be paid direct to the person normally entitled to claim child benefit. That really means preserving the status quo. The amendment was defeated. I regret that that defeat was brought about by the defection of a member of the Standing Committee who is a member of the Select Committee and by a member of the Standing Committee who is a former member of the Select Committee. The Opposition would have carried the amendment if those two hon. Members who, needless to say they are Conservative Members, had remained constant and true to the decisions of the Select Committee, to which their names were attached.

In Standing Committee the Minister gave no indication that the Government would change their proposal to pay family credit through employers, but I understand that he gave an undertaking to look at the details, although I do not know how far that will take us. The Government's present proposal is deplorable. It is against women, against mothers and dismally retrograde in every respect. I hope that the House will throw it out and see that the Select Committee's proposal is supported.

Mr. Winterton: I am grateful to the hon. Lady, who is a distinguished member of the Social Services Select Committee, of which I also happen to be a member, for giving way. Perhaps she should emphasise the fact that the thoughts, considerations, recommendations and conclusions of the Select Committee were representative of all parties in the House. Perhaps she agrees that it would be better if Governments allowed Select Committees to put their conclusions and recommendations on major legislation such as this to the Government before they reach fixed conclusions which are widely opposed throughout the country, even by people who traditionally support the Conservative party.

Mrs. Short: I agree with the distinguished co-member of the Committee. All the members supported the Select Committee's recommendations. The House surely knows that there is a majority of Conservative Members on the Committee, and several parties are represented, but we were unanimous.

It is a matter of great regret that the Secretary of State and Ministers do not pay more attention to united and unanimous reports from Select Committees, especially when, as I say, there is a majority of Conservative Members on the Committee. It is nonsense that so much time and effort are wasted in this way, when Secretaries of State could make their jobs much easier if they would follow our proposals.

Mr. Keith Best (Ynys Môn): It sadly looks as though my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be standing all alone against the barrage of opposition from both sides of the House. I wondered whether I should rise to support him, but then I thought again. I thought again because, although I am always much persuaded by what my right hon. Friend has to say—I await with eager anticipation the words that I know that he will utter from the Dispatch Box in order to turn the barrage of dissension into a victory—I looked at the degree of opposition to this measure. My grave concern is that the good idea of family credit is likely to be hoisted on the petard of that opposition.

I can live with the opposition of the catholic bishop's conference. That does not bother me very much. I can even live with the opposition of the Commission for Racial Equality. I can certainly live with the opposition of the Equal Opportunities Commission. I find it a little more difficult to live with the opposition of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux. One may say that that is a constituency point because I have a citizens advice

[Mr. Keith Best]

bureau in my constituency. I wonder how many hon. Member do not have such a bureau in their constituency. I can live with the opposition of the Church of Scotland as that does not apply to me particularly. The Confederation of British Industry is not always regarded as the staunchest supporter of the Government in a somewhat confused way so perhaps one can discount that and I can certainly live with the opposition of the Institute of Directors.

However, I am in grave difficulty with the National Farmers Union because of all the farmers in my constituency and I am in grave difficulty with the opposition of the National Federation of Self-employed and Small Businesses Ltd and with the National Federation of Women's Institutes. *[Interruption.]* My hon. Friend the Member for Harlow (Mr. Hayes) obviously has knowledge of that institution. Finally, I speak as a member of the Bar. How could I possibly rail against the opposition of the Law Society, my very bread and butter in an alternative profession?

I am troubled by the sheer administrative burden that this is likely to bring about more than by all the opposition and all the points that have validly been made by hon. Members from both sides of the House. I shall put my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State out of his misery soon because I shall be sitting down so that he can rise. I hope that he will address his mind to that administrative burden when he comes to the Dispatch Box.

To have to employ a lot of extra civil servants to check whether the DHSS is assessing the matter correctly, to pass it on to the employers, and then check on the employers to see whether they are making the right calculations and see that the recalcitrant employers are brought to book, apart from all the burdens that are being placed on the employers, seems to be contrary to the concept that the Government have courageously entertained throughout the past seven years. That concept is to cut the administrative burden, particularly in areas of social welfare, to ensure that the benefits go to the recipient rather than being spent on the administration. The proposal will create a bureaucratic mess of unparalleled proportions, by creating two bodies responsible for the administration of one benefit rather than one.

I await my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State rising at the Dispatch Box and persuading me otherwise. He is a most persuasive speaker, but in the event of him not being able to do so, the general opposition of the bodies that I have mentioned, together with the views expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House, must be persuasive in a way that defies all opposition.

11.30 pm

Mr. Corbyn: It is surprising to find Conservative Members working themselves up into a lather in defence of small businesses, when they are not prepared to criticise the fundamental nature of the family credit proposals and the poverty that they will bring with them. They seem to be trying to cash in on a bit of compassion on the issue without being prepared to attack the basis of the proposals. My hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) was correct when he said that the proposals are, in effect, masking low wages. That is the issue that should be addressed.

It is important that the amendment be accepted, because if the proposals go through in their present form, there will be interference by employers in the social benefits that their employees get, which is serious. Much more serious is the proposal that the benefit should in most cases be paid to the man who is likely to be earning the money. Therefore, it is unlikely to get to the woman, and it is even less likely to get to the children at the end of the day—*[Interruption.]* If the hon. Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) wishes to speak, I am sure that he has a tongue in his head. There is no need to mumble. It is clear that the losers will be the children.

Dame Jill Knight (Birmingham, Edgbaston): I want to press the hon. Gentleman on one point. Does he really think that it is unlikely that the fathers would pass on the money? I can imagine that it would happen in some cases, but I am concerned that he feels that it is unlikely.

Mr. Corbyn: All the evidence in the past has been that when benefit is paid to the male parent, it is not passed on through the family network. I am saying not that all those men are particularly evil or greedy, but that all the other pressures of paying rent, rates and other bills will tend to take first place, and the children will lose out at the end of the day. If the hon. Lady looks at past evidence and representations that have been made by a wide range of organisations, she will be forced to agree that the Secretary of State's proposals in that respect are extremely bad.

There is a further area that I hope the Secretary of State will be prepared to consider, because he did not give a satisfactory answer in Committee. I refer to the administration of the system. As has been said, many small companies strongly object to having this piece of administration thrust upon them. I object because it is wrong that it should be done through the employer; it should be done by the Secretary of State. I object also because the sheer inefficiency of many small companies will mean that benefit is unlikely to be paid.

There is another serious aspect. Small businesses, particularly in industries such as the clothing industry, go out of business with monotonous regularity in areas such as mine. If the business goes bust on a Friday afternoon, and no wages can be paid to the workers, what happens to the family credit, which may not be paid until several weeks afterwards, when all the liquidation has been sorted out? That might seem a small point to some Conservative Members, but it is very important to people in my constituency. I hope that the Secretary of State will understand that the massive opposition to this proposal comes from those who are concerned about the cost of administration in this rather cock-eyed way and from those who are more fundamentally concerned that the benefit will not get through.

When the benefits were originally paid via women, to ensure that they reached the children, that was an important step forward. We are turning our backs on the past 20 years of social service legislation with this proposal, as with so much else in this particularly nasty Bill.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): I am sure that every sensible and reasonable person outside the House of Commons would believe that the best way of getting a benefit that is intended to help children is through the mother. Whether we like it or not, the majority of fathers would try to ensure that the benefit

reached the children. However, there are some families —for example, fathers in disadvantaged areas—where the father's self-discipline is modest. Often, this has to be said and we should not mince words about this, that money would go to the betting office or to the pub and would not get to the mother or the child. We must think very deeply about the operation of the benefit.

We cannot dismiss the fact that we are putting a further burden on small businesses. I belong to a party that has boasted, year in, year out, that it would take the burdens off businesses, that it would water down the paper work and make it easier for people to run a business without having the Government on their backs. However, we are here again proposing to put a further burden on business which will prevent people from earning a living and from giving other people a living within their companies. The amendment proposes another burden that businesses could do without.

I am sure that hon. Members have not received such large post bags from companies and the confederation of British industry, which is so opposed to this form of legislation. I do not disagree with the reform of the welfare state system. We would all agree that the system should no longer be universal. We should make it selective so that the benefit goes to those in most need. That is right and correct and all hon. Members would support that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I hope that the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the amendment. He is going very wide of it in his speech.

Mr. Dickens: If Beveridge had been sitting in the Chamber tonight, he would have agreed with my comments.

In conclusion, if we want to benefit the children, we should ensure that the money goes to the mother. By and large, the children will have more of a sporting chance of receiving that benefit if it goes through the mother than if it were paid through the father's pay packet where he has to tell the company all his business to achieve the benefit and where the company must do the paper work to ensure that the benefit at least starts from the right direction. That is my view of the matter.

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I, too, shall be brief, because this is a controversial clause and amendment in a controversial Bill, which we have been fighting in Committee almost day and night.

Many Conservative Back Bench Members have spoken about small business men, and I notice that we are talking about the effects not on small businesses but on small business men. I understand that there may be problems of administration and additional cost, but what about the families? We are interested in the problems that the provison is likely to cause families. We are not necessarily criticising men and saying that they are irresponsible. Obviously, problems are likely to arise because of the pressures put on them.

The most crucial point is the transfer of child benefit from women to men. The child benefit scheme will not compensate for the lack of school meals, and charges for school meals vary greatly. That will cause problems. If I am a good lad today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall no doubt be allowed to speak about school meals tomorrow.

Some individual employers but not all, are likely to pay low wages and top them up with benefits because of inducements. It will be difficult for some employees to work out whether their wages are as good as they should be compared with the national average because they must take those benefits into consideration. We need clarification. What happens to employees with two part-time jobs, to those who are laid off, to those whose marriages break up, and to those who have a succession of jobs? We need proper answers to those questions.

It has been said that the various circumstances which I have just described are a nightmare for administration, but we are worried that they will be a nightmare for many British families.

Mr. Kennedy: I support the amendment proposed by the hon. Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire).

It is an anomaly for the Government to argue the need to lift the burden from small businesses while introducing a move such as this with all its consequences of bureaucracy, paperwork, overheads and time for small businesses. That must be obvious to the Secretary of State.

Both sides of the House have pointed to the sense of ensuring that payments earmarked for children go specifically to the caring parent, which nine times of out 10 is the mother. That is surely overwhelmingly self evident and something which the Government should support.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman said that the only representation he was aware of in support of the Government's proposal was from the Monday Club, and that at the weekend the Scottish Tory party, a soon to be extinct species, had said in a debate on the social security reviews that while it welcomed the reviews, this was one point on which it would agree wih the hon. Gentleman.

Surely at this late hour Conservative Members can follow the advice of the Leader of the House and vote for a balanced ticket by supporting the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): I rise briefly to support the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire).

I understood a fundamental principle of Conservative thought on social security to be that child benefit should be paid directly to the parent with day-to-day care of the child, who more often than not is the mother. The proposal will mean that in two parent families, in particular, the payment will more often be paid to the father. That will result in considerable hidden poverty for children and mothers in families where the income is not shared fairly.

The other main reason why I object to the proposal relates to the additional administrative burden on employers. As chairman of the Conservative small business Back Bench committee, I am appalled at the proposal. I simply cannot support it. It is an administrative burden, which is a disincentive to the small business in particular. A recent study showed that the largest disincentive to new small businesses is not the lack of capital, or taxation but administrative burdens, particularly through Government legislation. The proposed change would be a classic example. Furthermore, it is a disincentive not just to smaller businesses but to all employers, and so a disincentive to employment in general.

I support my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in nearly all his main aims in social security and its revamping. I beg him to make a commitment that he will re-examine the mechanics of this proposed arrangement.

11.45 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): The one thing that the Government did not do in our debates in Committee, and have not done throughout the argument that has been going on since the Green and White Papers were produced, is to say why payments should be made through the pay packet instead of the way that they are paid now. The Government's arguments in Committee focused more on countering our case, and that of the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood), than on making a case for the change. This is mystifying.

On Second Reading the Minister said that it was an astonishing fact that so many organisations were against the change. It is not astonishing. Everybody is against it, except the Secretary of State, but he will not explain why he is taking away this bit of support for women in the family and giving it to the men. It is all the more mystifying because the Government have so frequently confirmed that they will not change the system of paying child benefit, and that they support and praise the system of payment that puts money into the pocket of the mother rather than of the father. If it is good enough for child benefit, why is it not good enough for family income?

Most of the speeches that have been made tonight have concentrated on the disadvantages and the worries that will come to employers, and we all accept that that will happen. There is a missing element, and we have to point to the fact that, let alone the woman as the mother, the woman as a woman should be regarded as a person in her own right. One of the points about her collecting the family credit is that not only will she direct it to where it is of most use in the family, but she will have a bit of financial independence by helping to redistribute the income within the family.

Several hon. Members have referred to the problem for far too many women who not only do not get the money for the housekeeping from their husbands, but very often do not know what the husband earns. If all the family credit goes through the pay packet, women will be in a much worse position. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) said that it would be a nightmare, and that sums up what will happen to women if this proposal goes through. I urge Conservative right hon. and hon. Members—I know that I have no need to do that to those on this side of the House—to support the amendment.

Mr. Fowler: This has been an important debate, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch (Mr. Squire) on the way in which he moved the amendment. I hope that what I say will meet his concerns and those expressed by my hon. Friends the Members for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe), for Lancaster (Mrs. Kellett-Bowman), for Littleborough and Saddleworth (Mr. Dickens) and for Winchester (Mr. Browne) and by the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) and for Barking (Ms. Richardson).

Mr. Best: What about Ynys Môn?

Mr. Fowler: And my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Mr. Best). My diffidence about the pronunciation was the only reason for leaving it out.

I begin by mentioning the background to the family credit proposals and highlighting one point that has not been made in the debate — the important areas of agreement that exist. There is widespread agreement with the Government's central proposition that we should direct more help to low-income families with children. That analysis of need was set out in the Green Paper. The Green Paper proposals, which have been carried through into the Bill, were to meet the evidence of need through several strategies — by the continuation of child benefit, by a new family premium in income support and by a new expanded and improved family credit.

There are three points of agreement. The first is that greater priority should be given to providing help for low-income families. Family credit will provide extra help. We estimate that it will reach about twice as many families as did family income supplement. More than 400,000 families will benefit, compared with about 200,000 now, and expenditure will, broadly, double.

Secondly, family credit will significantly help with another of the Government's objectives, which is to improve the poverty and unemployment traps. By calculating the entitlement on the basis of net income after tax and national insurance, we shall effectively end the absurd position where an increase in gross earnings can leave a family worse off overall. That cannot be justified. By closer structural alignment with income support, it tackles the unemployment trap and provides better incentives to take work. Those central objectives have been widely welcomed, and the Social Security Advisory Committee, in its response to the Green Paper, concluded:

> "We agree with the Government's decision to concentrate extra help for children on low-income families, and in principle we welcome the attempt to expand the assistance given to people in work and to eliminate the worst of the poverty trap."

Thirdly, there is widespread agreement on the inadequacies of the family income supplement. It was introduced about 15 years ago as a temporary stop-gap measure. It has served that purpose, and most people now agree that it should be replaced. The drawbacks of FIS are well established. There is poor take-up, its structure is not aligned with supplementary benefit, and it is assessed on gross rather than net income, which has created the more absurd examples of the poverty trap where families can be left worse off as a result of increased effort and higher pay.

Those are some of the deficiencies of the present system. Our broad aims and objectives have been widely welcomed. The disagreement that has been expressed in this debate relates to the mechanism of how we achieve those goals. My basic point is that this debate has been about the mechanism of achieving the goals. There is no dispute about the fact that we wish to achieve those goals.

One advantage that we wish to establish in proposing that family credit should be paid with wages is a link between the credit and work. Sometimes, it is too easy for someone considering taking a job, perhaps at relatively low wages, to consider simply the wages and the deductions from pay for tax and contributions.

Another advantage is that payment with wages represents a step towards a closer alignment of the tax and benefit systems, a step which I am urged constantly to take. One of the absurdities of family income supplement is that members of one and the same family can be paying tax and other contributions to the state with one hand, while receiving income-related help from the state with the other. By paying the credit with wages, this unnecessary roundabout can be ended. We estimate that in practice about 60 per cent. of family credit recipients would simply

have their tax and contributions offset, in whole or in part. In about 40 per cent. of cases they would receive a net payment.

Two further criticisms have been levelled against this mechanism during the debate: that payment with wages means payment to the man, and that it will mean additional work for employers and that will be unacceptable. I recognise those concerns and the depth of feeling, and I have no desire to minimise or to belittle them. However, I should remind the House that, even with payment with wages, many of the recipients of family credit will be women. About a quarter of the total will be working wives in two-parent families. In most cases, however, the partner in full-time work will be the husband. I appreciate the concern about whether he will hand over sufficient of the extra income to provide for the child. My personal view is the same as that of the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), that parenthood is a joint responsibility and, in all but exceptional cases, a joint activity. Mothers will continue to receive child benefit. I repeat that point, because sometimes it has been misunderstood.

The Government will do everything that they can to avoid placing unnecessary burdens on employers, and we shall seek to change the system. Nevertheless, I appreciate the worries and the anxieties about how family credit should be paid. I take them even more seriously when they are expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornchurch, who supports the family credit system. Therefore, I am prepared to reconsider the mechanism by which family credit is paid. I propose to invite to new discussions a number of organisations which are closely affected. They include the CBI, the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women's National Commission. My aim will be to examine whether we can agree a way forward. The discussions will take place speedily, so that time for amendment can be found in another place.

I am prepared to undertake to reconsider this question. I do so on the basis that the Government stand by the concept of giving extra help to the children of families on low incomes. That is the essential purpose of family credit. More money will be spent, and more families will be helped. That is essential, and I believe that it has the support of the House. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept my undertakings.

Mr. Squire: It would be churlish of me not to rise to thank my right hon. Friend for his comments and for the way in which he made them. I think that he will have carried with him virtually every right hon. and hon. Member. I was prepared to put the matter to a vote, but in the circumstances and in the interests of arriving at the right answer I believe that I ought to seek the leave of the House to withdraw the amendment.

Mr. Meacher: Before we complete the debate, will the Secretary of State clarify what he meant when he said that he proposed to review the matter? Will he review the fundamental point that we are all making, that family credit should be paid to the mother, or will he review whether it should be paid through the wage packet but in such a way as not to cause an administrative burden on the employer? Is it the first or the second?

Mr. Fowler: I am prepared to examine from the beginning the mechanism whereby family credit is paid. I understand and appreciate the point that it should be paid to the mother. There is also the point about whether there should be a choice, as the hon. Gentleman's amendment states, or whether no payment should be allowed through the wage packet at all——

It being Twelve midnight, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution this day, to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

Amendment made: No. 71, in page 35, line 22, at end insert

'and "employer", in relation to any person, means a person who under section 4 of the Social Security Act 1975 (liability to pay Class 1 contributions) is, or but for subsection (2)*(b)* of that section (exclusion of liability where earnings are below lower earnings limit) would be, liable to pay secondary Class 1 contributions in relation to any earnings (within the meaning of that Act) of the first-mentioned person'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Further consideration of the Bill adjourned.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

Bill, as amended (in the Standing Committee), to be further considered this day.

PETITIONS

Social Security Reform

12.1 am

Mr. Tom Pendry (Stalybridge and Hyde): I beg to ask leave formally to present a petition on behalf of some 1,000 people in my constituency who live on just one housing estate, Hattersley, in the borough of Tameside in Greater Manchester. They are profoundly disturbed at the prospect of changes in the social benefit scheme as a result of proposed legislation currently before the House of Commons.

The petition showeth

That legislation based on the "Reform of Social Security—Programme for Action" White Paper would be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of Social Security benefits. Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the "Reform of Social Security" White Paper. And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray etc.

To lie upon the Table.

12.2 am

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): I beg to present a petition which has been collected in my constituency of Oldham which includes 2,500 signatures. I also have a further batch of petitions which have been collected from all other parts of the country, totalling about 7,500 signatures, making 10,000 in all, from people who are equally concerned about the Social Security Bill. I repeat their words;

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the "Reform of Social Security" White Paper.

The grounds that the petitioners give for the collection of the signatures and the protest that it represents are that legislation based on the reform of the social security "Programme for Action" White Paper would be extremely detrimental to the residents of the United Kingdom who are in receipt of social security benefit. I would add that that includes those who are in receipt of pensions, housing benefit and child benefit, as well as supplementary benefit.

To lie upon the Table.

Sports Clubs (Rates)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Boscawen.]*

12.3 am

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I wish to raise the important matter of the burden of rates on Scottish amateur sports clubs. I want to begin by expressing my gratitude to Alex Kilgour of the Kirkcaldy rugby club, Alan Grosset, the chairman of the Scottish Sports Association, and Bill Mann of Glasgow Academicals and Western Baths. They have been tireless in providing help and assistance to me and I pay tribute to the way in which they have campaigned in the interests of small clubs throughout Scotland. Scottish clubs are being suffocated by the rating system. The burden on them exceeds £5 million and to put that in context, it compares with the total Government subvention to the Scottish Sports Council of £4·3 million. These rates are a tax on the development of the sporting potential and the recreation of young men and women in Scotland.

Clubs north of the border are disproportionately hit because of the valuation methods being used. It has been estimated that clubs in Scotland pay six to seven times as much as those in England and Wales. Perhaps I could give some examples. Kirkcaldy rugby club, a small club in the middle of a council park, is paying rates of £5,500 per annum. Bristol rugby club is England's largest with a ground capacity of 15,000 and it pays £4,500. Northampton and Leicester, which are major clubs by any standard, are paying £2,651 and £3,500 respectively. A comparable club to Kirkcaldy would be Keighley, and it pays £640 less a 50 per cent. rebate granted by the local authority.

It is worth noting that in England clubs enjoy derating regardless of whether they have licensed premises, and local authorities seem to take a more enlightened view. Kirkcaldy pays more in rates in one month than Keighley pays in a year. To put it further into context, Watford football club in the English first division pays only £1,000 more than Kirkcaldy amateur rugby club. The Perthshire cricket club is also in a council park and pays £18,500 per annum in rates. Lords cricket ground, the headquarters of the game, has a huge pavilion, a dining complex, an indoor cricket school, squash courts, a museum and seating for 25,000 spectators. It is located in a 15-acre site in central London and pays £25,700, a mere 30 per cent. more than Perthshire cricket club.

The Western Baths club in Glasgow is paying £19,500, yet the RAC in Pall Mall is 10 times as large and pays £35,000. Glasgow Academicals has three rugby pitches and pays £16,500. London Scottish in Richmond has seven pitches and premises twice the size of Glasgow Academicals and pays only £5,900 in rates. I am not speaking just about the well-known activities. Ardrossan indoor bowling club pays £16,500 while Darlington indoor bowling club which is approximately the same size pays £5,500. Abercorn tennis club in Edinburgh pays £6,500 and has five tennis courts, three squash courts and a pavilion. Winchester tennis and squash club has 19 tennis courts, eight squash courts and a pavilion and pays £3,000.

According to some sources in Scotland, there is little rental evidence and assessors are inclined to use the contractors' principle to determine valuations. An estimate is made of the capital value of property and a percentage

is taken to arrive at a rental value. The effect of the application of this principle in Scotland is devastating. In England, some weight is attached to revenue factors. For example, infrequent use because sport by its very nature is a part time activity, the effect of climate on use and the number of people who derive benefit from the facilities are all taken into account. In Scotland, no account is taken of these factors, nor is account taken of how the capital is raised, whether by fund raising, grants or donations. People making donations to sport do not look for a return on their capital, yet the assessors look at the assets with the view that they do.

So far I have quoted rates payable and no doubt my hon. Friend will point to the responsibility of high-spending Labour councils. As he knows, I share his view on that matter, but that cannot account for clubs having to pay five to six times as much as their counterparts in the south. Even if rateable values are considered and an adjustment made for the absence of a revaluation in England, the injustice is manifest. Troon tennis club has six courts and a rateable value of £2,250. Grove tennis club in Essex with five courts has a rateable value of £95. The indoor bowling club at Lanark has a rateable value of £22,500. The indoor bowling club in Carlisle, which is similar and which was built at the same time, has a rateable value of £2,000. Those examples show variations of 10 times and 20 times, where variations of four times might be expected as a result of the fact that there has been no revaluation in England.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will accept that the method of revaluation in Scotland has produced rateable values that are unfair, unrealistic and wholly out of line with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): The hon. Member makes a good case in relation to the grotesque inequalities between the rating valuation of sports grounds in Scotland and in England. No one can deny that fact, and the injustice has been perpetuated and possibly reinforced by this wicked Tory Government, but will the hon. Gentleman at least have the decency to congratulate some local authorities, including his own — Stirling district council—on using their income from the rating system to try to improve sports facilities in their areas? For example, Stirling council has supported the excellent Stirling district sports council and a range of sport facilities in the district.

Mr. Forsyth: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I should emphasise that there are no party divisions in this matter, which enjoys support across the board. I shall come on to the record of Central region.

My hon. Friend the Minister recognised the unfair nature of the methods of valuation in Scotland in section 19 of the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984, but, as he must know, the weight of opinion expressed by the Assessors Association, the Sports Council and professional advisers is that section 19 is ineffective. While my hon. Friend adopts a wait-and-see policy, clubs are reaching onerous settlements with valuers, making it harder for others to use section 19 which restricts the use of English comparators to circumstances where there is no comparative evidence in Scotland or where such evidence is not adequate — whatever that means.

While clubs run by volunteers and their professional advisers struggle to find meaningful comparisons with England and Wales, taking into account the effects of revaluations, they continue to suffer serious financial problems.

Wade Academy FP had loans from the Scottish rugby football union rescheduled. Its clubhouse consists of two cottages knocked together and its rates are £2,500. Strathmore rugby club has laid off staff and has not yet paid its rates. Many others are in the same boat, with staff being laid off and the energies of leaders being diverted to fund-raising rather than training our youngsters. Be in no doubt, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, if we lose these amateur clubs, the whole recreation structure in Scotland, which has already been damaged by the teachers' strike, will collapse and the burden will fall on local government and the state.

I welcome the commitment in the Green Paper, which I hope that my hon. Friend will reiterate, to eliminate cross-border anomalies, but our clubs cannot wait that long. Interim help is required. Discretion is given to local authorities to give relief up to 100 per cent. to amateur sports clubs, and in case my hon. Friend is worried about opening Pandora's box a clear definition of that term has been produced by the sports associations.

Unfortunately, few local authorities grant relief for sports clubs if they have a licence. In answer to the point made by the hon. Member for Falkirk, West (Mr. Canavan), that is particularly true in Lothian, Fife, Central and Strathclyde regions. Ironically, only miners' welfare clubs enjoy 50 per cent. derating as of right. The local authorities argue that they would be subsidising alcohol and that it would be unfair competition.

The clubs are in a Catch-22 situation. If they give up their bars they will upset their members who wish to have a social drink after a game and lose income that they need to pay the rates, even if those are reduced as a result of their sacrifice.

As for unfair competition, few, if any, clubs could be considered as competing with other licensed premises, especially following the Licensing (Scotland) Act 1976 which removed any advantage in opening hours. Most clubs probably open their bars only on training nights and after matches at weekends. In any case, clubs are rated far more highly per square foot per pound of turnover than are commercial licensed premises. Small wonder that the representatives of the licensed trade in Fife have expressed their support for derating. In England, where derating is common place, the clubs have an advantage when it comes to opening hours. In Northern Ireland, sports clubs are granted relief of 65 per cent. of the value of the property associated with the sporting element of the club, excluding the bar area. This might be a compromise for my hon. Friend to consider.

I ask my hon. Friend to meet COSLA to secure agreement from the local authorities to exercise their discretionary powers for 50 per cent. derating of sports clubs, or 65 per cent. if they wish to follow the Northern Ireland example. I am led to believe that the cost will be about £2 million, but the cost of inaction will be very much higher and will be met by the youth of our country. Given good will and flexibility on my hon. Friend's part in considering the rate support grant, I am sure that an interim solution could be found.

Mr. Roy Jenkins (Glasgow, Hillhead) *rose*——

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden) *rose*——

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Earlier in this Parliament Mr. Speaker established that any Member who seeks to contribute to an Adjournment debate should have the consent of the Member who initiated the debate and that of the Minister who was to reply. Does the right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) have the consent of the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and that of the Minister?

Mr. Michael Forsyth *indicated dissent.*

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram) *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Roy Jenkins: No, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) have their consent?

Mr. Dewar: I understand so, yes, but I shall pass, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Does the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) have the consent of the hon. Member for Stirling and that of the Minister?

Sir Hector Monro: Yes, I have, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Very well.

12.17 am

Sir Hector Monro (Dumfries): I am delighted to support the strong case that has been made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who has highlighted the major anomalies of clubs in Scotland, England and Wales. For over 20 years I have been pressing the case for mandatory derating of 50 per cent. in Scotland. There is derating in Northern Ireland and a voluntary system is frequently found to exist in England and Wales. I had great hopes that the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984 would remove the anomalies, but they appear still to exist.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling has referred to the enormous differences in rating between similar clubs in Scotland and England. We must accept that the hopes for the 1984 Act have not yet been realised, and I hope that tonight my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will try to explain why they have not. Rugby, cricket, bowls, tennis and other sports clubs are now in a desperate plight and facing a real financial crisis.

Where has the procedure failed? The assessors are entirely independent, but they must have guidance on the operation of the 1984 Act. Does the fault lie with the appeals procedure? Has anyone reached that procedure? Unless the Act is shown to work, our efforts in Committee —many Members on both sides of the Committee spoke in support of the intended change—will have been in vain and we shall all be very disappointed.

Even though there is an allowance of 10 per cent. while a case is being considered for appeal, 90 per cent. of the demand must be paid, and much of that percentage will be overdue by now. In the time that is left to him, I hope that my hon. Friend can explain in detail how the clubs should proceed if they are to obtain any benefit from the Act. I hope that he will tell us what advice the Government have been able to give to the assessors and local government generally, with local appeal courts being run by local authorities. Have the land courts been given advice on how the legislation should work? It has not worked yet and many of us are desperately concerned, as are those who represent sport and recreation. We know that sport and recreation do so much for Scotland and local authorities are absolved from providing the most excellent facilities that are presently provided by private enterprise.

12.19 am

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): First, I congratulate the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) on raising this important topic, which commands concern in every part of the House. The fact that many of my colleagues are in their places to listen to the debate underlines that concern. There is a long history to the matter. I have always felt that section 19 of the 1984 Act was a doubtful ally for sports clubs in Scotland. In a letter to me of 22 April the Minister took a cautious line about the prospects for that legislative innovation. The Minister said that it was largely untried and made it clear that it was up to the courts to decide. He ended his letter on a hopeful note—I stress this—by saying:

"If adjustments are shown to be needed further changes in the appeals system will be considered."

It is clear that there is no likelihood of redress for a number of reasons, which I cannot go into in the brief time at my disposal, but I hope that the Minister will look carefully at any changes which might be necessary, because a solution must be found to some grotesque anomalies.

I endorse the plea by the hon. Member for Stirling that negotiations be opened with COSLA about some form of immediate and short-term help, perhaps by using the discretionary powers open to local authorities for rating relief.

I hope that the Minister will not think that I am being partisan when I say that it is essential that further Government support be given in this climate of financial stringency. Some accommodation will have to be made in the rate support grant, or in some other form of Government aid. I hope that the Minister will look generously on any approaches.

The Opposition would offer the Government strong support if they tried to find a solution. The search for that solution should be pushed energetically, given the difficulties facing so many sports clubs at present.

12.22 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to representations about the valuation and rating of sports clubs in Scotland. This is of considerable concern to my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and I congratulate him on securing this debate. I am aware from personal discussions and from the numerous letters which my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland has received that hon. Members on both sides of the House are worried about the rates burden on some sports clubs.

It is important to remember that some of the smaller sports clubs, be they rugby, football, cricket, bowling, or whatever, have a significant social role to play in providing facilities which promote recreation in the communities which they serve. I wholeheartedly endorse that and applaud the efforts of the many ordinary club members who give voluntarily of their time, labour and money to help run amateur sports clubs. Their contribution to the well-being of local communities is not to be valued

lightly, and we in the Government have no wish to see these clubs hindered or prevented from functioning by an over-high burden of local taxation.

The Government's practical concern for ratepayers has been shown, apart from the emergency measures that we took last year to introduce revaluation rebates, by our commitment in the Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government" to a better, simpler and fairer system of local government finance.

The consultation period in which we invite responses to this Paper does not end until 31 July. I shall be particularly interested to see the comments which sports clubs submit. The fact that the present valuation and rating systems in Great Britain can lead to differences of the kind that my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling has highlighted today was one of the reasons why the Government have tackled the very difficult task of doing something about local taxation. I am confident that the Green Paper proposals will help sports clubs in Scotland, and we are moving as quickly as possible to bring them into effect. Although it may not be immediately apparent that the Green Paper addresses itself to the problems faced by sports clubs, it does address itself to the widespread complaints voiced by various groups of non-domestic ratepayers over recent months. In particular, the Scottish chapter of the paper explains that the Government see advantage in moving in time to a common non-domestic poundage in all areas and suggests that it may be desirable to harmonise valuation procedures to provide for a common standard, thereby meeting one of the sports clubs' complaints and the points raised by my hon. Friend tonight.

Inevitably this will take some time to achieve, but in the interim the Government propose to control increases in existing non-domestic rates by linking them to some general index of price movements. This will protect all non-domestic ratepayers by removing control of their rate poundage from high-spending local authorities and offering a guarantee of stability in the scale of future rate demands upon them.

I appreciate that there is a much more immediate problem. We are very concerned with the difficulties presently facing sports clubs. We are watching the situation closely and looking to see whether anything can be done. However, Government action would require primary legislation. Even were that possible, it would not provide an immediate solution. We must ask ourselves: what are the options available now?

The problem of rates on sporting facilities has been with us for some time. Hon. Members will recall that, during the passage of the Local Government and Planning (Scotland) Act 1982, the question arose of extending mandatory rating relief to genuine voluntary organisations. That initiative led to a thorough review of the provisions pertaining to mandatory and discretionary rating relief, with particular reference to the position of local clubs which provide facilities for participation in recreational activities.

Discussions took place at that time with bodies representative of sporting organisations, including the Scottish Sports Council. The review also involved the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and a working party of Scottish Office and local authority officials. The conclusion, which was accepted by my right hon. and learned Friend's predecessor in office, was that the provisions for discretionary relief worked reasonably satisfactorily and should not be altered. The decision was influenced by the advantages of leaving discretionary relief in the hands of local authorities, which are, after all, best qualified to administer it. Another strong argument against making the relief mandatory was the practical difficulty of turning a local discretion to favour some deserving clubs into a uniform obligation to relieve a whole class.

It is as well to be clear that the present provisions for discretionary rates relief are just as wide today as they were when the review was concluded in 1983. Section 4(5)*(c)* of the Local Government (Financial Provisions, Etc.) (Scotland) Act 1962 enables Scottish rating authorities to reduce or even to remit in full rates in respect of

"any lands and heritages occupied for the purpose of a club, society or other organisation not established or conducted for profit and which are wholly or mainly used for the purposes of recreation."

In simple language, that allows each Scottish regional and islands council to remit part or all of the rates paid by non-profit-making recreational clubs in their area.

Mr. Roy Jenkins *rose——*

Mr. Ancram: The right hon. Gentleman knows that I normally give way to him, but the debate is constrained in terms of time, and I have a lot of ground to cover. I shall not give way.

Rating authorities are already statutorily empowered to reduce or completely remit the rates payable by rugby, cricket, bowling, and other clubs. The authorities must simply satisfy themselves that the clubs are

"not established or conducted for profit"

and are

"wholly or mainly used for the purposes of recreation."

Each rating authority has total discretion as to how it applies the provision within its own area. It is hoped that the case for relief, which was so well made in the House tonight, and the good work done by local sports clubs, will be brought to the attention of rating authorities and that they will give the matter serious consideration.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling asked whether I would be prepared to talk to COSLA. I should be happy to talk to COSLA about the way in which authorities are operating their discretionary powers to grant rate relief, and the matter could be placed on the agenda for the next round of regular meetings to be held in about a month's time.

The Government consider it right that the rating authorities should retain the discretion to give this relief. The authorities are, after all, best placed to judge whether and how much relief should be given to individual clubs in their own areas. The legislation does not specifically disqualify from relief those clubs with licensed bars on their premises, although I understand that some rating authorities do not grant relief to such clubs.

It may be that rating authorities also feel that, as some clubs derive considerable income from their bars, the statutory requirement that relief be available only to premises

"wholly or mainly used for the purposes of recreation"

should persuade them not to offer such clubs relief. Certainly, if this local discretion were to be replaced by a prescribed level of mandatory relief, I have no doubt that the class of recreation club to qualify for it would have to be more strictly defined. No doubt the possibility of seeming to promote unfair competition for the local

[Mr. Ancram]

licensed trade would weigh heavily in hon. Members' minds. Also to be borne in mind in any considertion of changing from discretionary to mandatory rating relief is that any increase in the total amount of the relief is likely to increase other ratepayers' bills. Revenue lost through rating relief has, after all, to be made up in other ways.

During the past year or so, sports clubs of various kinds have expressed anxiety about rates burdens. For example, Scottish senior football clubs, under the able leadership of the late Mr. Desmond White, chairman of Celtic football club, publicised the level of their rates bills and compared them with those of English league clubs. The Government had in the meantime acted to help by means of section 19 of the Rating and Valuation (Amendment) (Scotland) Act 1984, which enabled Scottish ratepayer valuation appeals to make comparisons with subjects in England if inadequate rental evidence for the type of subject in question existed in Scotland.

Hon. Members who experienced the long and sometimes difficult passage of what is now the 1984 Act may remember that the main reason for section 19 was that a strong case had been made to the effect that premises valued other than by comparison with rental values were more harshly treated in Scotland than south of the border. My hon. Friend the Member for Stirling illustrated that again tonight. Ultimately, the relevance of section 19 to any appeal case must be for the appeals court to decide.

Any complacency that I might have been tempted into has been overtaken by the representations made by other sporting bodies. Rugby clubs have been particularly and understandably vociferous recently, and I am sure that many hon. Members will have been impressed, as I was, by the representations made by the Kirkcaldy rugby football club and Glasgow Academicals club. I am sorry that I was unable to attend a meeting organised by the Kirkcaldy club's treasurer, Mr. Alex Kilgour, in March. I sent my regrets.

There is one small note of caution that I should like to add about appeals which have yet to be heard. I understand that many of the sports clubs involved in representations to my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State or me, including Kirkcaldy RFC and Glasgow Academicals, have lodged appeals with the assessor against their rateable values. Clubs that have appealed will have an opportunity to argue their case fully before, in the first place, the local valuation appeal committee and, if they are still dissatisfied, the Lands Valuation Appeal Court.

It is important to maintain the essential independence of the appeal system, and since appeals which have not yet been heard are in effect sub judice, it would not be proper for me to comment on particular cases. Some clubs which have appealed have told me that it might be some time before their appeals are heard. I have advised them, and I do so again tonight, to use, if necessary, a provision which was introduced in 1984 to accelerate appeal hearings — regulation 5(3) of the Valuation Appeal Committee Procedure (Scotland) Regulations 1984.

The regulation enables an appellant to request the local appeal committee to hear his case within a specified period, which, for practical purposes, must be not less than 35 days from the date of the request. We expressly designed the regulation to help those who might suffer from a long delay. Until an appeal is determined, only 90 per cent. of rates are payable, but a rating authority is allowed to enter an agreement with a person bringing an appeal to pay less than 90 per cent., and appellant clubs under financial pressure might be advised to press their rating authority to exercise its discretion in that way.

I hope that rating authorities, in their desire to promote the well-being of communities in their area, will welcome the opportunity which the discretion gives them to encourage the activities which amateur sports clubs provide.

I welcome the debate because it has given us a chance to examine the position——

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Monday evening and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at twenty-seven minutes to One o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 20 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

ROYAL ASSENT

Mr. Speaker: I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Acts:

1. Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.
2. Industrial Training Act 1986.
3. Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Act 1986.
4. Ullapool Harbour Order Confirmation Act 1986.
5. Gull Island Protection Act 1986.
6. Isle of Wight Act 1986.

Oral Answers to Questions

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

1. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of persons unemployed at the latest available date; and what rate of unemployment this figure represents.

10. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Paymaster General what is the present number of people unemployed.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): On 10 April 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,325,058, which corresponds to an unemployment rate of 13·7 per cent.

Mr. Barnett: The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be all too aware of the acutely damaging situation that those figures imply and that they have already been added to by the 1,000 or so redundancies made by British Caledonian Airways. Is he aware that this is the tip of an iceberg and that the whole tourist industry is likely to be seriously affected—an industry which contains some of the lowest-paid workers in Britain? What will the right hon. and learned Gentleman's Department do to protect those workers from some of the consequences of the Government's actions and policies?

Mr. Clarke: The British Tourist Authority has been estimating that about 50,000 jobs a year will be generated by tourism. We are all worried about the implications of a quite unmerited response in America to recent incidents in Europe. A great deal of effort and money are now being put into reassuring Americans and informing them that they are much safer in British cities than in most American ones.

Mr. Flannery: Are not these horrifying figures becoming more horrifying daily? Redundancies at British Rail Engineering Ltd. workshops are now coming, following close on the heels of redundancies at British Shipbuilders. There seems to be nothing that the Government can do. They boast that inflation has come down, but if they remove nearly 4 million people and their families from the purchasing area, inflation is bound to come down. The Government can envisage no means of reducing unemployment without pouring some money into the economy. I venture to guess that that is what the Prime Minister is about to do.

Mr. Clarke: We are all desperately disappointed that there are continuing redundancies in some of our older, heavier industries. That is why we have to keep up our excellent record of creating new jobs. The hon. Gentleman will know that nearly 1 million new jobs have been created in the British economy since the spring of 1983.

Mr. Hill: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one major factor is the trade union movement's failure to realise what a scourge it would be in world competitive terms if it did not get its act in order in time to be able to compete with some of the emerging nations in shipbuilding, television assembly and many other industries?

Mr. Clarke: There is certainly a need to keep down the level of pay settlements, which I hope more trade union leaders realise. We must also carry on improving job flexibility and flexibility of trades to keep up our excellent record of improved productivity, which has been beaten only by Japan since the Government came to office. The great reduction in the number of industrial disputes is undoubtedly helping Britain's industrial competitiveness.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Although I regret the national unemployment figures, is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that, in my constituency, many people have benefited from the enterprise allowance scheme, which helps to bridge the gap between complete dependence on benefit and self sufficiency once the business is under way?

Mr. Clarke: Not only in my hon. Friend's constituency, where I am delighted to hear that things are going well, but all over the country, the enterprise allowance scheme is giving very useful support to many people who would otherwise be unemployed to go into business on their own.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Do the Government also intend to maintain their excellent record on finding ways to massage the figures, which they have done six times since they came to power? If so, does it mean that they will wipe out unemployment by the general election, apart from the 4 million plus who will be looking for jobs?

Mr. Clarke: That is rather a stale argument. The right hon. Gentleman knows that some of the changes to the figures have increased the total and that some have decreased it. They have all been attempts to make the figures reflect more accurately the position and to measure the number of claimants. He will know that if we take the labour force survey definition of the unemployed seeking work it is difficult to demonstrate that the figure ever rose as high as 3 million. It never appears to have done so.

Mr. Forman: Is it not likely that in the longer term one of the main contributions to alleviating and, perhaps,

solving unemployment will be made by much more vigorous efforts at training and retraining? Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept the recent warning of the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission that during the next five years between half and three quarters of the total labour force will require some measure of training and retraining? Should not the Government be giving an even higher priority to that?

Mr. Clarke: I certainly accept that the need for increased training is one of the key imperatives in improving the British economy and creating jobs. We have put a great deal of effort into the technical and vocational content of education in schools, and obviously we have an extremely successful youth training scheme in operation. Anything that we can do to improve the amount of adult training and retraining will be valuable.

Mr. Evans: Will the Paymaster General confirm that the obscene figures he has given do not include the thousands of redundancies announced last week at British Shipbuilders, British Caledonian and Kodak, nor the thousands of redundancies that are to be announced today by British Rail? Will he also confirm that those figures include about 1,400,000 people who have not had employment for over 12 months? Will he take this opportunity to denounce last week's story in *The Daily Telegraph* that the nine pilot schemes that he announced are being backed by the Department's fraud squad, and that the exercise is aimed more at getting people off the unemployment register than at assisting them?

Mr. Clarke: Obviously, the figures do not show the number of those who have become unemployed since the figures last appeared, nor do they show the number of people who have found jobs. The reality behind the figures is that each month a little under 500,000 people become unemployed and a little under 500,000 people find jobs. Half those who become unemployed find new jobs within three months. I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the number of long-term unemployed is worrying and seems to exceed 1 million. That is why the initiative to which he refers involves interviewing each and every one of the long-term unemployed and offering them personal help. It happens as a result of that that a certain number of the long-term unemployed cease to claim benefit. I assume that the hon. Gentleman is not objecting to that.

Tourism

2. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Paymaster General what is the latest estimate of the number of foreign tourists coming to Britain in the current year; and how this compares with the actual number in 1985.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. David Trippier): The British Tourist Authority has forecast that 15·1 million overseas visits will be made to the United Kingdom this year—4 per cent. more than last year's record figure of 14·5 million.

Mr. Chapman: As American visitors are important to the success of the British tourist industry and there is talk that this year fewer may come to the United Kingdom because of recent events, will my hon. Friend encourage an initiative for American television personalities who are respected in this country and work here to go on television services in the United States to point out the virtues of coming here, not least of which is the statistical fact that it is safer for anyone to walk the streets of any town or city in the United Kingdom, than it is to do so in any town or city in the United States?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend makes a good point. He will be pleased to hear that the British Tourist Authority is planning a major marketing drive in the United States using the slogan, "Britain speaks your language." It will feature well-known American personalities from entertainment and other spheres, as well as Americans living in or visiting the United Kingdom.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Does the Minister appreciate that any reduction in the number of American tourists coming here is a direct consequence of the Government's agreement to allow those American aeroplanes to bomb Libya? That is the reason for the reduction in the number of American tourists. Will he also concede that although the Government boast that this industry is growing, it represents the most underpaid and grossly exploited workers in Britain today?

Mr. Trippier: I could not disagree more with the hon. Gentleman's first point, because terrorism was running rife before the support that the Government gave to the American Federal Government over the bombing of Libya. There has not been a reaction as he is suggesting. As to his latter point, it is pretty clear to all hon. Members who closely analyse the facts that the 50,000 net increase in jobs in tourism represents real jobs. It is no good the hon. Gentleman seeking to rubbish the industry as he does.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my hon. Friend confirm that the decline in the number of American tourists has been grossly exaggerated by the media? It now appears that rather more people will be coming than was previously anticipated, and we hope that the royal wedding will attract even greater numbers.

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend is right—the figures are grossly exaggerated. It is important to get the matter in perspective. There are suggestions of a 15 per cent. downturn in visitors from America, but this will have an effect of only 3 per cent. on spending in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Minister investigate the likelihood that one major deterrent to trans-Atlantic visits this year is the persistent and depressing reports of the vile English weather? *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am not sure that there is Government responsibility for that.

Mr. Wainwright: Therefore, will he invite the various tourist boards to cease fostering the illusion of continuous British sunshine and instead emphasise this country's unrivalled facilities for indoor entertainment?

Mr. Trippier: The hon. Gentleman has an important point, although it would be stretching credulity to breaking point to think that anybody is attracted to this country because of the climate. I accept that point. However, the weather did not have a deterrent effect on those who came here last year and experienced what was a poor, or non-existent, summer, because figures for the first three months of this year are up on the figures for the same period last year, and we still expect an increase in inward tourism across the board, although I accept that there will be a downturn in the number of American tourists.

Mr. Harris: I accept my hon. Friend's remarks. Is he aware that in certain areas of the country, particularly the south-west, there has been a decline in bookings from America and a number of cancellations? In no way do I associate myself with remarks made by Opposition Members, but is my hon. Friend aware that some people feel a little disappointed that this country having stood by America, some American tourists are not standing by this country and their plans to visit it?

Mr. Trippier: My hon. Friend's first point is valid and is a fact, not a hypothesis, and I am prepared to accept that there have been the cancellations to which I referred. As to what the Government can do about it, I still think that my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) made the most useful and constructive suggestion. What matters is not what Ministers and the Government say to Americans over there, but what Americans living here, such as the ambassador, say to their fellow countrymen to impress on them that the United Kingdom is a safe destination.

Mr. Prescott: The House will be aware that in the past two Question Times for the Department of Employment, great play has been made of how the tourist industry has created jobs. Has the Minister seen the report this week in *The Economist* by Mr. Victor Middleton of Sussex university, who says that the boom conditions claimed for the tourist industry are little higher than they were in 1979, or his conclusion that the prediction of the creation of 100,000 jobs in the next four years is not only unrealistic but shown to be unfounded by the available evidence? Is this not a further example of the Government following their policy of massaging the unemployment figures downwards by talking jobs up?

Mr. Trippier: I do not know how the Government can be accused of massaging the figures when the article contains only predictions by a journalist, who I believe is a university academic. The figure we have used, and which was quoted earlier in Question Time by my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General was 50,000 jobs. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman arrives at the figure of 100,000 jobs over the next four years. The figure to which the Government constantly refer is 50,000 jobs. There is clear evidence that that is the number of jobs that have been created, year on year, for the last three years.

Health and Safety (Small Firms)

3. **Mr Stern** asked the Paymaster General if he will institute a review of the impact of health and safety legislation on small businesses.

The Parliamentary-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): In January this year my right hon. and noble Friend announced that he was setting up a study of employer attitudes towards health and safety legislation and the way in which it is enforced. The study team has now completed its report and my right hon. and noble Friend has asked the Health and Safety Commission for its advice.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reply. Given this Government's correct emphasis upon the removal of barriers to employment, will he confirm that with his right hon. and noble Friend he will continue to search for ways in which, while health and safety, particularly in small businesses, can be preserved, bureaucratic barriers to employment can be eliminated wherever possible?

Mr. Lang: I assure my hon. Friend that the thrust of the Government's intention to lift the burdens on small business will be reflected in the forthcoming White Paper. At the same time, the Government have no intention of downgrading the health and safety standards.

Mr. Litherland: Why was no provision made in the survey for consultation with the work force? In my trade union, SOGAT 82, which has 200,000 members, there are four to five fatalities each year. Does that not emphasise that this is an uncaring Government?

Mr. Lang: On the contrary, the purpose of the report demonstrates care on the part of the Government. I am glad to say that a strong commitment among small firms to health and safety at work was found by the study team. The Health and Safety Commission will have an opportunity to comment on the report, and Ministers will meet the commission to discuss it.

Mr. John Browne: Does my hon. Friend accept that the greatest disincentive to the start-up of new businesses is not the lack of capital, high interest rates or high taxation, but the bureaucracy that has been created by excessive legislation? Will he reassure the House, even more than when he replied to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern), that he will not only continue to stop excessive legislation in his Department, but that he will impress the need for such action upon other Government Departments?

Mr. Lang: I am happy to give that assurance to my hon. Friend. I hope that he will be further reassured by the publication of the White Paper.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the Minister understand that we are getting a little tired of the fact that the argument that small businesses might find the regulations to be burdensome is being used as an excuse constantly to reduce safety standards in British industry? The protection against unfair dismissal has been reduced. The same applies to maternity leave. The Wages Bill was introduced on the excuse that it was in the interests of small businesses, and it is now suggested that we should not have proper health and safety standards. Good, small businesses do not want all of that. They want proper regulations imposed on all businesses so that good businesses are not undermined by the bad.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Lady is quite wrong. Small firms welcome the simplification that will be proposed in the report. I think the hon. Lady will be pleased to hear that the report commends the Government's decision to repeal restrictive legislation on the working hours of women.

Youth Training Scheme

6. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Paymaster General what recent representations he has received on the operation of the two year YTS programme.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I regularly receive correspondence which indicates widespread support for the extension of YTS to a two-year programme from April of this year.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is the Paymaster General aware that a number of companies in Cumbria and

elsewhere in the country are abandoning the two-year scheme because of the cost? They have also cut the number of places on the scheme because of their second year obligations. In so far as there is cross-party support in the House for an effective two-year scheme, what does the Paymaster General intend to do if the numbers drop?

Mr. Clarke: I am glad to be able to tell the hon. Gentleman that nine out of 10 of the places required for this year have already been secured. That is much better than at the equivalent stage when YTS was introduced about three years ago. Obviously I regret it when some employers drop out, but we think that it is right that employers should make an increased contribution, given that in the second year the trainees usually are of considerable value to the company. That policy is widely supported, not least by the TUC and its representatives on the Manpower Services Commission.

Mr. Rowe: Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that the widespread support for the two-year YTS scheme is growing in my part of the world? The particularly commendable aspect is the way in which it is intended to mesh it with the national qualifications system. Can my right hon. and learned Friend say when the review will be completed?

Mr. Clarke: The results of the review are in the hands of Ministers, and we hope very early to announce decisions. This is an important issue, as it is very necessary to sort out the state of vocational qualifications. I am glad to say that we are well advanced with the process of providing certification for YTS trainees at the end of the two years. We intend that every trainee should receive good quality training, which will at least put them on the way to a recognised vocational qualification.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Paymaster General aware of the long series of exchanges between the Minister of State and me on the question of YTS and the voluntary sector? Can he give us hope that there will be a high number of premium places for those in the voluntary sector who are going on B1 schemes, which will otherwise be badly hit as they will be unable to cope with the administrative costs involved?

Mr. Clarke: There are already many premium places. Obviously it is important that we should provide those places when there is no alternative provision for more difficult-to-place youngsters with private employers. The changes made this year have largely resulted from the fact that we are now funding schemes on the basis of the amount of training that they deliver, and we are no longer funding for unfilled places. Things are now bedding down quite well, and I think that we will have the number of places, of all kinds, that we require.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that the overwhelming weight of evidence shows that by far the most efficient way of training to meet manpower needs in companies is for those companies to be actively involved in training? Is it not one of the most welcome parts of the new YTS that my right hon. and learned Friend's policy encourages firms to invest in their own training needs instead of expecting the state to do it all for them?

Mr. Clarke: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. I think that we must carry on trying to get the message through to those parts of British industry that do not train that the same principle must apply to adult training.

Ms. Clare Short: If the schemes are so popular, why is the Paymaster General taking powers under the Social Security Bill to cut the benefits available to those unemployed people who refuse places or leave for 13 weeks instead of six? Does that not represent yet another move towards forcing the unemployed on to schemes that they do not find acceptable?

Mr. Clarke: The rule for social benefit entitlement is long standing. First, people must be genuinely available for work. Secondly, they must not lose jobs through indiscipline or refusal. The hon. Lady knows full well that the reasons for the recent changes have been explained by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services. They are not particularly out of line with the policy that has been adopted ever since the beginning of the welfare state.

Departmental Leaflets

7. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Paymaster General if he will take steps to simplify the leaflets coming out of his Department.

Mr. Trippier: The first elements of the Department of Employment's simplification campaign were announced on 22 April. These consisted of a simple guide to employment legislation and an employment form.

Mr. Thurnham: I thank my hon. Friend for that reply. Can he do more to help potential employers, who are deterred by over-complicated leaflets that make them feel that taking on employees just means taking on many heavy legal responsibilities?

Mr. Trippier: It is because I accept that employers believe that by taking on more employees they are taking on heavy legal responsibilities and that the forms issued by the Department are too complicated that I announced the simplification drive. A pilot scheme is in operation in the Thames Valley area and in the north-west region. If we are successful in simplifying the message that we are trying to convey, the exercise will be replicated nationwide.

Mr. Wainwright: Will the Minister make some of his leaflets more meaningful and helpful to the growing army of long-term unemployed, by including in them new policies that offer retraining? Many of those people find that their job skills erode very quickly.

Mr. Trippier: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving me the opportunity to say that we only recently issued a new booklet entitled, "Action for Jobs", which has met with widespread approval, I understand, on both sides of the House. There is now increased awareness about what training schemes are available. Perhaps all that was long overdue, but it was held up as a result of the new responsibilities that the Department assumed in September 1985.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Will my hon. Friend arrange for his Department to produce a simple leaflet to explain to one of my constituents, a talented young lady who has been accepted at Harper Adams on a sandwich course,

how she might obtain employment on a farm where she needs to fulfil at least two years of the four-year course, bearing in mind that farmers are more inclined to employ young people on youth training schemes than the more qualified young people who are undertaking a course at Harper Adams agricultural college?

Mr. Trippier: I have every sympathy with the point raised by my hon. Friend. I should like to look in some detail at the point that he has drawn to my attention. I am sure he will forgive me if I say that I do not intend to produce a new leaflet. My task, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bolton, North-East (Mr. Thurnham) suggested, is to cut the number down.

Mr. Skinner: Is the Minister aware that they would not need any leaflets, simplifed or otherwise, if they used all their time and energy to create jobs and get down the mass unemployment total, which is well over 4 million? Why does the Minister not do that?

Mr. Trippier: It is interesting that the hon. Gentleman should use the term "they", when he has not made it clear whether he means the Government or the employers. The difference between the hon. Gentleman and myself is that he thinks that the Government create jobs, whereas all my hon. Friends know that employers create jobs. The purpose of producing simplified material is to make it easier for them to create wealth and work.

Mr. Adley: As leaflets help to create jobs and provide information, can my hon. Friend, who has responsibility for tourism, produce a leflet which shows that the number of American citizens killed in Europe this year is five, and that the number of American citizens killed in New York city so far this year is 464? Will he then send large quantities to the American embassy? If that does not work, will he concentrate, not on the United States, but on markets in the far east, whose tourists seem to be less fickle in their habits?

Mr. Trippier: I am glad that my hon. Friend had the opportunity to make that valid point. Again, I am sure that he will forgive me if I resist his suggestion that we should produce yet another leaflet.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister instruct his Department to produce a simple and straightforward leaflet making it clear that Employment Ministers are totally opposed to the monstrous proposition that the unemployed should have their mortgage relief reduced by 50 per cent.?

Mr. Trippier: As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Security. I am sure that the Minister in that Department will look at what he has said with interest. However, I would have thought that there is already widespread awareness of the point that the hon. Gentleman is seeking to make.

Rotherham

8. **Mr Hardy** asked the Paymaster General what is the proportion of the population of the Rotherham metropolitan district which is in full-time employment; and what is the comparable national proportion.

Mr. Lang: The 1981 census of population showed that 55·3 per cent. of the population of working age resident in Rotherham were in full-time employment in April 1981. The corresponding proportion for Great Britain as a whole was 58·1 per cent.

Mr. Hardy: The situation has changed dramatically since 1981. Would not the updated figures show quite startlingly, not only the appaling scale of need in the Rotherham metropolitan area, but the almost criminal misrepresentation of the official employment statistics published by the Government, which disguise the sheer scale of the waste of human resources and the enormous and rapidly growing economic need in south Yorkshire and many other industrial areas in England?

Mr. Lang: The Government recognise that Rotherham has special problems. That is why we are applying special measures to the area. The hon. Gentleman may like to know that the Rotherham and Mexborough travel-to-work area has had almost £17 million worth of regional assistance since 1979, which has helped to create 3,000 jobs and save another 1,900. It also has an enterprise zone which, over two years, has helped 58 new and established companies employing around 1,500 people.

Mr. Barron: Does the Minister not realise that the help given to the Rotherham area has done nothing to alleviate unemployment? We have had six years during which the main employers in south Yorkshire, steel and coal, have been massively run down under direction from the Government. The aid that has gone to the area has done nothing to stop the masses of young people going straight from school on to the dole. Rotherham needs a more caring attitude from the Government. It does not just need money. The Government should do something in real terms.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman is right to mention steel and coal as problem areas where jobs have been lost. However, the Government have invested some £55 million in the new company being established by BSC and GKN in the engineering steel sector. There is also considerable encouragement for NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., with the establishment of new funds, to encourage ex-miners to develop new industries. The adult training facilities have been substantially increased over the past year, and 6,500 people are on youth training schemes in the Rotherham and Doncaster areas.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim: Are not Opposition Members unconsciously admitting that Government spending does not create jobs?

Mr. Lang: My hon. Friend asks a broad philosophical question. The measures for which my Department is responsible are carefully prepared and costed, and are increasingly effective. I commend to my hon. Friend the booklet "Action for Jobs", which sets them all out in detail.

Mr. Crowther: Does the Minister accept from me, in reply to what his hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) has just said, that what Opposition Members are saying is that until there is a dramatic change in the Government's economic policies, all the so-called assistance that is going into Rotherham and other areas with high unemployment will not solve the problem? Merely to produce artificial, cosmetic schemes is not getting at the root of the trouble. We need a complete change in the Government's total economic policy before we see a real cut in the level of unemployment.

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman underrates the success in job generation of the Government's policies. Over the past three years we have generated around 1 million additional new jobs. Although the problems at Rotherham remain substantial, the hon. Gentleman might like to know that job placings there have risen by 16 per cent. over the past year.

Basildon

9. **Mr. Amess** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on his visit to Basildon on Tuesday 6 May.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I visited Basildon at the invitation of my hon. Friend the Member for Basildon (Mr. Amess), and was very glad to have the opportunity to see some of the encouraging employment and training initiatives that are taking place in the area. I visited St. Martin's community care trust, which is a community programme agency, a youth training scheme at GEC Avionics, and Basildon skillcentre. I also addressed Abilities '86, a presentation organised by the Manpower Services Commission to encourage employers in south-east Essex to think positively about employing disabled people.

Mr. Amess: Following the visit of my right hon. and learned Friend to my constituency, for which I thank him, is he aware that unemployment in Basildon fell by 5·8 per cent. over the past year, and fell again this month? Does he agree that that is due to the hard work of local businesses, the success of the development corporation and the Commission for the New Towns, and the success of the various Government-sponsored and funded employment initiatives?

Mr. Clarke: I was encouraged by everything that I saw and heard in Basildon. The number of people placed in jobs by our jobcentre went up by 16 per cent. over the past year. There are still a greater number of unfilled vacancies than there were a year ago. It is obvious that everything is well on the way to recovery in Basildon. I am glad to say that employment prospects are continually improving.

Disabled People

12. **Mr. Ashley** asked the Paymaster General what is the current rate of unemployment for registered disabled people.

Mr. Lang: There were 26,396 unemployed registered disabled people registered for employment at jobcentres and careers offices on 4 April 1986. It is not possible to convert that figure into an unemployment percentage rate because the number of registered disabled people in employment is not available.

Mr. Ashley: Does the Minister agree that a figure of over 26,000 is very disturbing and damaging to disabled people? Will he ensure that the current Manpower Services Commission study on our quota system takes full account of the successful West German quota and levy system, which has been warmly welcomed by the EEC Commissioners?

Mr. Lang: We look forward to receiving the MSC research proposals following the working group's inquiry into the operation of the quota scheme. My Department takes seriously its responsibilities for helping disabled people into employment. The right hon. Gentleman might like to know that disabled participants on the community programme represent 6 per cent. of that programme. We have special eligibility criteria to help them into the programme.

Mr. Watts: Does my hon. Friend share my disappointment at the fact that thus far only one contract has been placed under the MSC pilot employment initiative for disabled people? Will he undertake to have a close look at the proposal from the Chalvey trust in my constituency, on which matter I have written to his right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State?

Mr. Lang: I shall look forward to consulting my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State on that letter and the reply to it.

Mr. Pavitt: With regard to the figure of over 26,000 unemployed disabled people, will the Minister look at the anomaly between the physically disabled and the blind? Whereas disabled people can go back to sheltered workshops, once the blind leave, they go straight to the unemployment queue. Will the Minister ask the Select Committee on Legislation to consider amending the Act?

Mr. Lang: I shall take full note of that point. We have expanded the sheltered employment programme. The number of severely disabled people on the programme increased from 14,900 in 1983-84 to 16,300 last year.

Self-employment

13. **Mr. Kenneth Carlisle** asked the Paymaster General by how much the number of people in self-employment has increased since 1980.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Between December 1980 and December 1985, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of self-employed in Great Britain increased by 600,000, or 29·9 per cent.

Mr. Carlisle: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, in understanding unemployment, one must analyse the employment figures in great detail? Do the figures not show that our efforts to encourage self-employment have been successful? On the other hand, the analyses show also that there are considerable skill shortages. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that if all those involved in industry increased their skill training substantially more jobs would be created?

Mr. Clarke: I readily agree with my hon. Friend. At a time when many new jobs are being created in the economy, it is frustrating to find that vacancies cannot be filled because of skill shortages. I hope that more will be done to improve that. We are combining the two programmes. In our adult training programme for next year we are including 60,000 places under a training for enterprise programme The programme actually trains people so that they are able to go into businesses of their own.

Mr. Hickmet: I welcome the figures that my right hon. and learned Friend has given the House. Does he accept that there is still a need for a balanced regional aid policy as well as for the establishment of enterprise zones in various parts of the country? Is there not a lesson to be learnt from such schemes in the number of jobs created in the areas that have them?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. I am delighted to be able to say to my hon. Friend that, between April 1984 and April 1986, the absolute fall in the number of unemployed in Glanford and Scunthorpe, at 568, was the greatest in any constituency.

Mr. Hardy: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman agree that, although we should commend all those who are starting small businesses for their aspiration and courage, we should recognise that the growth is an illustration of hope triumphing over experience?

Mr. Clarke: I do not agree. The vast majority of small businesses are successful and many of them provide employment for other people. That so many people can now thrive in their own businesses shows how rapidly the economy is expanding and what room there is for successful entrepreneurship.

Mr. Yeo: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that among the many reasons for welcoming the increase in self-employment is the fact that it is usually one of the most satisfying ways of being occupied from the point of view of the person concerned, leaving him free to pursue his own initiatives, rather than being bossed about by other people?

Mr. Clarke: I agree. Many people nurse the ambition to be their own boss and run their own business.

Mr. Prescott: Does the Paymaster General accept that the figure of 600,000 self-employed is based on a 2 per cent. survey by his Department? Does he recognise that there is a substantial difference, of a quarter of a million, between the estimates of the number of self-employed in the census and those of his Department? Have not the self-employed figure been inflated to introduce them into the full labour force employment survey so that the Paymaster General can reduce the figure by 1 per cent. when he next announces the unemployment figures? That represents just another fiddle on the unemployment figures.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman is foolish to try to reject the accuracy of figures that were compiled by our statisticians on the same basis as they have always been compiled. The hon. Gentleman is extremely reckless in wishing to use the census as the absolute bench-mark. Of course the census will give the most precise figure, but it is as likely to show that we have underestimated the number of self-employed as overestimated it.

Enterprise Agencies

14. **Mr. Dickens** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies have applied for grants since October 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Sixty one applications have been received from local enterprise agencies for funding under the new local enterprise agency grant scheme, which came into operation on 1 April this year. Prior to this date, and during the financial year 1985-86, 55 local enterprise agencies were given modest financial support under a pump-priming scheme run by my Department.

Mr. Dickens: I very much welcome that news. Will my hon. Friend be more specific about Rochdale and Oldham in my constituency?

Mr. Trippier: I can be specific. The local enterprise agencies that are operating in the Rochdale and Oldham area would certainly qualify for the new local enterprise agency grant scheme. I shall be happy to receive the applications when they are put together in the form of a business plan.

Unemployment (Demographic Factors)

15. **Mr. Teddy Taylor** asked the Paymaster General when he expects that demographic factors will have a favourable impact on the level of unemployment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Our policies have contributed to the creation of nearly a million additional jobs between March 1983 and December 1985. This success has yet to be translated into a fall in unemployment, largely because of the rapid increase in the population of working age. The population of working age is projected to continue increasing, although at a slower rate, until 1989. Between 1989 and 1994 it should fall slightly.

Mr. Taylor: Has not the substantial increase in the number of school leavers and the small number of retirals contributed several hundred thousand unemployed to the additional unemployment? What net improvement will there be next year compared with the position three years ago, which was worse?

Mr. Clarke: It is always notoriously difficult to predict these changes. The best measure of where we are going is provided by the 985,000 net additional jobs created since March 1983. As the answer to my hon. Friend's question reveals, if we continue expanding the economy at that rate, we shall certainly get on top of the unemployment problem between now and the end of the decade.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Strang** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an Audience of Her Majesty The Queen.

Mr. Strang: Will the Prime Minister take time today to read the record in the *Official Report* of statements made last year by the Secretaries of State for Energy and for Scotland, urging those miners who were dismissed during the strike to take their case to the industrial tribunals? Is the right hon. Lady aware that today, in the House of Commons, there are 40 miners who took that advice and whom the tribunals recommended should be re-engaged, yet the National Coal Board is refusing to re-engage them? Is that not unjust? As a minimum, will the right hon. Lady give an undertaking that she or the Secretary of State for Energy will take an early opportunity to discuss the matter with the new chairman of the National Coal Board?

The Prime Minister: No. As the hon. Gentleman is well aware, management of the NCB's activites resides not in the Government but, by Act of Parliament, in the board of the NCB.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend: Although I welcome my right hon. Friend's visit to Israel and her interest in trying

to get some sort of international peace process going, will she confirm that she will not visit the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza? What arrangements is she making to meet the leaders of the Palestinians, bearing in mind that their future is the core issue in the middle east?

The Prime Minister: I expect to be meeting leaders of the Palestinians via an arrangement which has already been made. As at present advised, I do not expect to go into the occupied territories.

Mr. Kinnock: I am sure that the Prime Minister will want to join me and many other hon. Members in condemning the South African attack on Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana—three Commonwealth countries — in an act of state terrorism which was clearly designed to damage the Commonwealth initiative. In view of that outrage, will the right hon. Lady give us an undertaking, first, that Britain will not use its veto in the event of mandatory sanctions being sought at the United Nations Security Council, and, secondly, that she will either initiate or support additional sanctions by the Commonwealth against South Africa?

The Prime Minister: I totally and utterly condemn the raid by South Africa into the three countries to which the hon. Gentleman referred in detail. As he is aware, we have called in the chargé d'affaires from the South African embassy and expressed our views and how strongly we feel about the raids. After the raids and in the knowledge of them, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group had a meeting with eight South African Ministers and discussed the way ahead. The group left its proposals with those South African Ministers. As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the group has now left South Africa because the members of the group thought that that stage of their proceedings was over. It is just possible that they may continue their work. Even in view of what has happened, and in view of the violence on both sides, it is worth making every effort to stop South Africa dissolving into a cauldron of violence.

Mr. Kinnock: I sincerely hope that persistence by the Eminent Persons Group will be rewarded by significant change within South Africa. Does the Prime Minister not accept that ticking off the South African chargé does not constitute effective action? The efforts of the Eminent Persons Group would be immensely strengthened, as would the efforts of the Commonwealth in general, if the Prime Minister demonstrated here and now that she is prepared to initiate and develop effective sanctions against South Africa.

The Prime Minister: I do not believe that sanctions and the isolation of South Africa are any more likely to achieve the desired negotiations after the raid than they were before. The group of Heads of Government of the Commonwealth charged with duties in relation to the Eminent Persons Group will meet again in London at the beginning of August under the chairmanship of Sir Lynden Pindling. No doubt the stage reached by the Eminent Persons Group will be discussed then. I repeat, it is our great desire to prevent the terrible violence that could take place in South Africa and to do everything possible to assist the Eminent Persons Group in carrying out its role.

Mr. Kinnock: With that earnest desire by the Prime Minister in mind, may I ask whether she will accept that the isolation of South Africa is the only plausible means remaining to pursue the possibility of a non-violent resolution and a non-violent removal of apartheid? If she accepts that, does she not recognise the significance of the British Government, even in anticipation of the findings of the Eminent Persons Group, taking a firm stand in line with the original propositions of the Nassau agreement in order to demonstrate to South Africa that we will not appease apartheid nor tolerate its warfare against other African states and, consequently we will implement effective sanctions against South Africa?

The Prime Minister: No, because sanctions would not help to achieve the objective that we seek. They did not do that in Rhodesia. It is right to do as we have done, to deny South Africa defence weapons. That is done under a mandatory Security Council resolution. We must keep in mind the objectives of discussion and dialogue and the prevention of violence on both sides.

Mr. John Carlisle: Will my right hon. Friend accept that since the African National Congress declared an escalation of violence at the weekend, in the interests of self-defence the South African Government had no alternative but to prevent further bloodshed by the attack? Will the Prime Minister accept, as the former Australian Prime Minister Mr. Malcolm Fraser who is a member of the Eminent Persons Group accepted on today's lunchtime news, that all is not lost and that now is the time to redouble the efforts of the EPG to find a peaceful solution?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend heard me say earlier, we totally and utterly condemn the raids conducted by South Africa on the three countries. Together with the Commonwealth we still believe that it is right—and I shall quote from the Commonwealth communiqué—to

> "Initiate, in the context of a suspension of violence on all sides, a process of dialogue across lines of colour, politics and religion, with a view to establishing a non-racial and representive government."

For that purpose it is vital to secure the ending of violence on all sides. That was and will remain our objective. If we had given up on Rhodesia every time there was a terrible raid across the border or violence within that country, we should never have reached the settlement that we ultimately obtained.

Mr. Steel: Has the British ambassador in Pretoria yet met the South African Foreign Minister, and, if so, what was the outcome? Will the right hon. Lady give the House an undertaking that once the Commonwealth Heads of Government have heard the report from the Eminent Persons Group she will not leave Britain isolated in the Commonwealth as being willing to utter words against apartheid but to take no action?

The Prime Minister: I have told the right hon. Gentleman of the action that the Commonwealth countries together took with the formation of the Eminent Persons Group. I have said that the morning after the raids the group met eight Ministers, still determined to carry on with its task, if it possibly could, of achieving discussion and dialogue, because that is the most important thing. I am not aware whether our ambassador in South Africa has seen the President, but we are continuing our efforts to try to secure dialogue and discussion.

Mr. Amery: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the South African raids in themselves are not so very different from those undertaken by Israel or, more recently, by the United States, with my right hon. Friend's co-operation?

'Does she further agree that the cause of anxiety is the timing of those raids, when the eminent persons were in Cape Town? Had we not better wait for clarification of why the South Africans reacted as they did, and how the eminent persons have reacted, before we decide on any course of action?

The Prime Minister: I hope my right hon. Friend will agree that the South African case is different from any other. Different, different, different in its apartheid; different in the degree of violence on all sides. It is our objective to end that violence and to secure dialogue and discussion. The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group has undoubtedly suffered a setback as a result of what has happened, but I hope that it will continue its work as long as there is a possibility of its coming to a successful conclusion.

Q2. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Prime Minister today acknowledge that the British people want the Government to give top priority to finding alternative energy sources to nuclear power, and will she recognise that to do so would be much more beneficial to Britain's trade than importing unwanted pressurised water reactors from the United States?

The Prime Minister: We must be realistic. Alternative energy sources such as harnessing the wind and the tides could meet only a tiny proportion of the great demand for power to keep the wheels of industry turning. There is a future for nuclear power in Britain and our record shows that we can go on and build nuclear power stations in the future, subject to the necessary planning permission.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: In view of the statements by the Secretary of State for Employment about the need for continuing wage restraint, does my right hon. Friend agree that any recommendations coming from the Top Salaries Review Body should be implemented in such a way that those earning most in the public sector are seen to be giving a lead to the country in terms of that restraint?

The Prime Minister: I hear my hon. Friend's message. The reports of all the review bodies are now with the Government. We are considering them and hope to be in a position to make an early statement.

Q3. **Mr. Garrett** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Garrett: The Prime Minister may not have time today, but will she, perhaps in the next day or two, look at the redundancy plan that British Shipbuilders has imposed on the shipbuilding industry? Will she recognise that most Members of the House are deeply concerned about the decline in the British maritime fleet, in shipbuilding and in marine engineering? We recognise that there is a world surplus of shipping and that ships are being laid up, but it is the Government's overall responsibility to ensure that during the next three years the fleet is maintained and that shipbuilding and marine engineering are maintained at a level to ensure survival. I recognise that that will mean Government intervention at an early stage.

The Prime Minister: I appreciate the realistic but concerned way in which the hon. Gentleman approaches the problem. As he knows, the size of the industry depends ultimately on the ability of the industry to sell its product in world markets and on the orders that we can achieve. I am afraid that the industry is much too large at the moment for the orders that could possibly be achieved. Even after the closures, we still have five British merchant shipbuilding yards, Harland and Wolff and seven private yards, and he is right to say that the race is on to secure the orders that are available in world markets. There are not many public orders to be brought forward, apart from the naval shipyard orders that are coming forward. There is one protection vessel for fisheries and some ferry boats, but these are small compared with what is needed, so we have managed to arrange a line of soft credit to try to secure such orders as are available.

4. **Mr. Butterfill** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Butterfill: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it remains the policy of her Government to replace the Polaris system with the Trident missile submarine system? Does she agree with me that any political party that had a policy of refusing to replace Polaris would be playing Russian roulette with the defence of the nation and would be unfit to put itself forward as ready to participate in any future Government?

The Prime Minister: Yes. A deterrent, to be effective, cannot be allowed to become obsolete. It must be modernised and kept up to date, and that is why we are going for the Trident deterrent. I would also point out that Trident will, of course, keep going 6,000 jobs in British shipyards.

University Funding

3.31 pm

The Secretary of State for Education and Science (Sir Keith Joseph): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about university funding.

The University Grants Committee is today writing to the universities to inform them of their grants for the 1986-87 academic year in the context of their planning to the end of the decade. This announcement represents the allocation between individual universities of the recurrent grant for 1986-87 that I announced on 12 November last. The committee will also inform the universities next week of the detailed outcome of the important initiative it has taken to encourage and reward excellence in university departments by selective reallocation of the funds available.

The detailed results of this exercise will be conveyed to the universities by the UGC. In plain language, they mean the following: more funds for the better research departments and less for the less good; a greater incentive to all universities and departments to improve both their academic standards and their management and use of resources.

This is a landmark in university funding which the Government strongly support. I am particularly grateful the UGC for the commitment, skill and energy it has shown in pressing forward in the interests of excellence this initiative directed towards greater effectiveness and value for money at a time when all budgets are under pressure.

If we are to continue to improve the quality and effectiveness of our universities, we must provide positive incentives to individual institutions for better management and better teaching and research. This is what the new selective arrangements for grant allocation are designed to achieve. Instead of basing future funding simply on the accumulation of decisions of the past, the UGC has started afresh and devised a method of distributing grant based on positive judgments about the needs of teaching, the quality of research in all disciplines, and the rewarding of institutional enterprise. In this task the UGC and its sub-committees have been helped by advice from the research councils, the Royal Society and other bodies.

The Government are under no illusions about the difficulties of restructuring and rationalisation involved. As some departments gain, others may have to be reduced and even closed. Universities will have to grasp every opportunity for greater efficiency and effectiveness in using the resources available to them. Decisions about future levels of funding are normally considered in the public expenditure survey. Precise amounts are for consideration then. But, in these exceptional circumstances, and in order to give the universities a reasonable chance to adapt to the changes needed in the national interest, I am telling the UGC today that the Government will be ready to consider with it some further financial provision in 1987-88 and the following financial years.

The Government's willingness to make such additional provision will, however, depend crucially on evidence of real progress in implementing and building upon the changes that are needed. They will include, as well as the development of the policy of selectivity and the rationalisation and where appropriate closure of small departments, better financial management and improved standards of teaching. If there is to be a new structure for academic pay, Ministers will need to be satisfied that it will provide the necessary flexibility to enable institutions to recruit and retain staff of the required quality.

I shall be discussing the way forward with the UGC and with the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals.

The general letter of guidance that the chairman of the UGC is sending to all universities will be placed in the Library of the House tomorrow, and the grants to individual universities for 1986-87 will be published in the *Official Report* of tomorrow's proceedings. The chairman's letter will be followed in about a week's time by institutional annexes relating to the student numbers and research funding of each university, which will also be placed in the Library.

Mr. Giles Radice (Durham, North): Is the Secretary of State aware, particularly after all the weekend publicity, that his statement today will be a bitter disappointment to all who are concerned about the state of higher education? Will he confirm that, coming on top of the £23 million cuts in 1987-88 announced by the National Advisory Body, today's UGC letter, of which I have a copy, shows that the universities' recurrent grant was cut by 5 per cent. in real terms in 1985-86, and is being cut by over 2 per cent. in the coming year? We did not hear anything about that.

Is it not the case that 18 universities, including Aston, Durham, Hull, Keele, Newcastle, Cardiff, and Aberdeen, face actual cash cuts? Is it not the case that many departments will close and that the UGC is planning for cuts in student numbers in physical sciences, mathematics and statistics and biological sciences, all of which the Secretary of State has said are vital to the nation?

Is not today's statement, with its support for cuts and half-hearted promises of talks some time in the future, a savage indictment of the Secretary of State's period in office? It is bad news for universities, bad news for students, and bad news for industry. We are the only major country in western Europe cutting back on higher education, and it is a shame for the country.

Sir Keith Joseph: The reaction of the hon. Gentleman, as the representative of the official Opposition, will not be the reaction of the world of universities, nor of the world of science. It is a landmark for the country that the UGC, with the Government's encouragement, is for the first time providing tangible evidence of the encouragement of excellence in universities in terms of the research quality of all departments, be they in the arts and humanities or in the sciences.

The hon. Gentleman's comments about the National Advisory Body were to misunderstand totally the pure mischief-making which that unjustified prediction represented and are, anyway, irrelevant to this afternoon's statement about universities. The allocation of the already announced money that will be distributed by the UGC today, tomorrow and next week will recognise for the first time the differential quality of departments in universities so as to encourage excellence. That is a landmark which the House would be wise to recognise.

Mr. J. F. Pawsey (Rugby and Kenilworth): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the proposals will be widely regarded as a watershed in the funding of universities? Does he further accept that the idea of funding those

departments which are demonstrably better is to be encouraged and in itself will do much to improve standards throughout higher education?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend has precisely the right reaction. In an attempt to assist universities, especially those that might otherwise be hard hit by the changes, the Government have expressed themselves ready, subject to the compliance of the universities with the conditions laid down, to consider allocating more money for 1987-88 and subsequent years.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is fundamental to the idea of a university that each department of the institution should combine research and teaching functions? Although it is necessary to be discriminating in the allocation of grant between departments and universities, and although it may be necessary to encourage structural change, will my right hon. Friend assure the House that each department emerging from the changes will continue to combine teaching and research functions?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend has touched on a point which is generally recognised to be true, but it is subject to some disagreement among academics. The decision will be for the UGC, the university and the department. I cannot give the guarantee which my hon. Friend requests.

Mr. A. J. Beith (Berwick-upon-Tweed): Is it not an insult to the UGC and universities to suggest that they have never before sought selectively to promote excellence in their activities? In plain figures, is not the truth that the universities have been cut by 10 per cent. during the past five years, will be cut by 2 per cent. next year and that the promises which the Secretary of state is making now relate to a time when he will not be the Secretary of State and even to a time when the Government will not be in power any more?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman fails to recognise that, although it is true that universities and departments have striven to improve excellence, this is the first time that the UGC has sought, in distributing taxpayers' money, to recognise the differences of quality.

As for the reductions in expenditure by the taxpayer, the universities have contributed to constraints on public spending. This year, for which I am making the announcement, that is also true, but the universities have said—the Government have listened carefully—that it will be necessary to change the prospects for future years if the consequences of redistribution and rationalisation are not to endanger the existence of some universities. In recognition of the reallocation to recognise the qualities of different departments and the warnings that we have received from universities, the Government have undertaken to consider the provision of more money for 1987-88 and future years, provided that the universities comply with the conditions laid down.

Mr. Martin J. O'Neill (Clackmannan): Does the Secretary of State appreciate that there is little confidence in British universities in the capability of the UGC to carry out the exercise in pursuit of excellence that he has suggested? If he had confidence in the UGC, would he not have been more specific about the impact on many institutions that have had to put up with repeated attacks on their funding during the past five or six years? Would he be specific about Stirling university and say to what extent its funding will be affected by the consequences of his statement?

Sir Keith Joseph: I cannot go into the individual circumstances of universities. That is for them to learn from the UGC. I am not at all surprised by the hon. Gentleman's expression of doubt about the confidence of anybody to make the judgments, but the UGC has about 100 academics on its sub-committees. They have contributed their judgment, as have the research councils, the Royal Society and some people who are eminent in their fields. The UGC has taken great trouble to gather peer voices which will be respected in their areas.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a little difficult to follow and evaluate a statement without the figures and the details? Will he give some thought to that for the future? Can he tell us whether the UGC has expressed complete satisfaction with what it has done?

Sir Keith Joseph: The UGC has taken a bold and pioneering step. No doubt there will be some discussion between it and the universities. It is for the UGC to announce the figures. They will be placed in the Library and in the hands of universities later today, if the universities catch them, or tomorrow, with a supplementary letter from the UGC next week.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): The Secretary of State must accept that he has made a dismal statement today. Scholarship, research and education will suffer far more than they already have under the Government.

As for the UGC letter, can the right hon. Gentleman tell me why universities mainly in the leafy south-east such as Bath, Bristol, Exeter, Kent, Loughborough, Southampton, Sussex and Warwick have been protected the most and have had cash increases during the past year whereas nearly every university and college in Scotland and Wales and most universities in the north of England are experiencing cash cuts in 1986-87? This is a disgraceful statement, and the Secretary of State ought to resign.

Sir Keith Joseph: As I tried to explain in my statement, the UGC has attempted to rectify the overfunding and underfunding that has occurred during the past few years as the basis for allocation between universities and to build into that redistribution a recognition of quality of research, which includes, as I understand it, in brief, scholarship that breaks new ground in knowledge and understanding, between different departments of different universities.

Lord James Douglas-Hamilton (Edinburgh, West): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that it will be the Government's policy to prevent the brain drain and to ensure that the best scientists are glad to work in British universities?

Sir Keith Joseph: My hon. Friend is on to a most important subject. As part of the remedy for the brain drain, it is crucial that salary structures in higher education should give some discretion and flexibility to the institutions concerned and not have as little flexibility as now.

Mr. George Park (Coventry, North-East): When the Secretary of State recently required the universities to

[Mr. George Park]

reduce the number of staff, the UGC felt unable, because it did not have sufficient expertise, to guide the universities on how the job reductions should be done. How has the UGC suddenly acquired the expertise necessary to advise on degrees of excellence?

Sir Keith Joseph: I believe that the UGC has respected the autonomous decision-making processes of universities. The problem about staff changes under the constraints of the early 1980s was that the time available for universities was relatively brief.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): I warmly welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Does it have any implications for the Open University which, although not funded through the UGC, still has a substantial research element?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, Sir. The Open University is one of three related institutions which are directly funded by the Department of Education and Science.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Clackmannan (Mr. O'Neill), did I understand the Secretary of State to say that, in the mechanism of shrinkage of universities, the Royal Society, sub-committees of the UGC and other bodies such as research councils agreed to take part? Has Sir George Porter, for example, the President of the Royal Society, been consulted? Who is to make these positive judgments about the needs of teaching, the quality of research and rewarding institutional enterprise because, on the basis of those criteria, the first place to go is All Souls college, Oxford?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman has misunderstood. The exercise that I explained in my statement is connected not with the shrinkage of universities but with the redistribution of taxpayers' money to recognise more or less excellence in research. The effectiveness of teaching cannot be identified from the outside while, to some extent, the quality of research can be recognised. The quality and effectiveness of teaching remain overwhelmingly the responsibility of the individual university and department. The committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals has assured us that it proposes to set up staff training functions, and will do whatever it can in every way to improve the effectiveness of teaching.

On Sir George Porter, I said that in exercising its judgment on research the UGC has turned not only to its sub-committees, but to experts from the Royal Society, from related bodies, from the research councils and from eminent recognised authorities in the peer groups.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have to take account of the fact that following this statement there is a further statement, three applications under Standing Order No. 10, a ten-minute Bill and the Social Security Bill under the guillotine. Therefore, I shall allow questions on this statement to continue until 4 pm. Then we must move on.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Can my right hon. Friend be more forthcoming about how better teaching will be rewarded? Will there be appraisal systems; and, if so, who will conduct them? Is the implication of his statement, which is welcome in so many ways, that no university is destined for closure?

Sir Keith Joseph: Stories in the press about possible closures are not remotely justified by the picture that I have presented this afternoon. As for the encouragement of teaching, I understand that the universities and, indeed, the Association of University Teachers, recognise that appraisal might be relevant in universities. For the first time the UGC has recognised the needs of certain subjects for a larger allocation of public money for teaching. That will emerge from the statement.

Mr. Derek Fatchett (Leeds, Central): Will the Secretary of State confirm that this, his final statement in the House as Secretary of State, will lead during the next four years to a planned reduction in the number of undergraduate places at British universities, thereby making it more difficult for highly qualified young people to find places at universities? Will he take this opportunity to answer an earlier question about why the Government intend to cut the physical sciences, the biological sciences and mathematics—the very subjects that are supposed to be at the heart of future economic development?

Sir Keith Joseph: The answer to the first question is no, Sir. The answer to the second is that the hon. Gentleman must not confuse reduction with redistribution. Redistribution is what is involved.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): Does my hon. Friend accept that universities such as Lancaster which have demonstrated their ability to attract outside funding and are led by a dynamic vice-chancellor will welcome the challenge put to them by my right hon. Friend and the UGC, and will continue to play a full part in the national and international scene of higher education?

Sir Keith Joseph: I would have expected my hon. Friend and Lancaster university to respond as robustly as she has. I should like to emphasise that the scope of those departments which have not been identified as excellent in this particular survey will remain for improvement, if it is so decided.

Mr. Michael Hancock (Portsmouth, South): Will the Secretary of State say how many places will be created or saved by these proposals, and whether the sum matches the £30 million that the UGC has said is needed to protect university places now? Will next year's allocation exceed the £60 million which it estimates will be needed to protect the ongoing commitment to university education?

Sir Keith Joseph: There is no implication in my statement for student numbers this year, either up or down. The Government take pride in the fact that students in higher education are a record proportion of a record age vintage.

As for the financial figures to which the hon. Gentleman referred, any financial improvement agreed by the Government will be considered against the performance of the university's compliance with the conditions that I am laying down at the normal time of the public expenditure survey, in the autumn. I invite the House to recognise, as the Government do, that universities and polytechinics have moved substantially nearer to industry, business and commerce in recent years, and we recognise and are grateful for this.

Mr. Alan Howarth (Stratford-on-Avon): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Government's initiatives to encourage charitable giving open up the possibility of

worthwhile additional funding from industry and grant-giving bodies for academic institutions, of demonstrable value? Does he accept that the limitations on what can be afforded from taxation are not necessarily the ultimate constraint on academic funding?

Sir Keith Joseph: I agree with my hon. Friend, and would emphasise that universities need to follow up the initiative of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Budget to get the benefits that my hon. Friend rightly says might be available.

Mr. Ernie Ross (Dundee, West): Does the Secretary of State accept that, whether or not it is in the leaked letter, what he is really saying is that there will be fewer teachers, courses and students as a direct result of the statement?

Sir Keith Joseph: No, Sir. That is not remotely justified.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Does not the courageous and proper decision by the UGC reflect a widespread feeling among universities, particularly the scientific ones, that it is essential to concentrate resources on excellence and phase out the weaker elements? Are not certain of the figures bandied about this afternoon put into perspective when one remembers that one small university adjacent to my constituency, Cranfield, raises no less than £35 million a year from industry and private contract sources?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, Sir, subject only to remembering that there is scope for departments that need to improve themselves in quality.

Mr. John Maxton (Glasgow, Cathcart): Is the Secretary of State aware that the statement confirms the view of Scottish people that the universities of Scotland are not safe in the hands of the Department of Education and Science and the UGC? Therefore, will the right hon. Gentleman consult the Secretary of State for Scotland to implement immediately the view of the Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council that there should be a separate UGC to take account of the separate nature of Scottish universities?

Sir Keith Joseph: Successive Governments have relied on the UGC to make decisions about the allocation of public money, and the Government have no intention of departing from that practice.

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): My right hon. Friend's statement has not been welcomed by the Opposition, but it will be welcomed on the campus of Stirling university if it means that resources will be allocated to the departments according to performance and success. Will my right hon. Friend go further and consider allocating resources according to student preference as the measure of a department's success, and accept congratulations on ending the horse trading that has gone on within the UGC to allocate resources?

Sir Keith Joseph: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, and agree with much of what he has said. To some extent, the fact that public money follows student choice already recognises that student choices have a large contribution to make. Nevertheless, we want to ensure, as I am sure my hon. Friend does, that the quality of teaching and research in the chosen universities is excellent.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): Is it not true that the universities need at least a 5 per cent. increase this year to maintain their present capacity, so that the 0·3 per cent. that the Secretary of State is knocking off the allocation to Hull university amounts to a cut in real terms of 5·3 per cent? Hull has suffered more than any university under this Secretary of State. Why does he have it in especially for Hull and Humberside? Last week he announced that a further 500 places were to go at the college of higher education. What have we done wrong to be treated in this way?

Sir Keith Joseph: There is bound to be some satisfaction and some dissatisfaction in different departments, resulting from the judgment of the UGC in what I repeat is a landmark set of decisions.

Mr. Martin M. Brandon-Bravo (Nottingham, South): Notwithstanding proper allowance being made for the different types of course on offer at universities, is it not true that there is a substantial difference in the cost per student as between one institution and another and that therefore past spending is a measure neither of need nor of excellence? Is the Secretary of State saying that nuclear magnetic resonance and other medical research at Nottingham is precisely the kind of excellence to which public funds should be directed?

Sir Keith Joseph: I cannot go into individual judgments, because that is the province of the UGC. However, I think that my hon. Friend has the right end of the stick.

Mr. D. E. Thomas (Meirionnydd Nant Conwy): How can the Secretary of State describe these changes as being in the national interest when his policies cannot result in a substantial increase in the number of graduates and undergraduates at levels equivalent to those in Europe or North America? Will he specify exactly how many redundancies in both teaching and non-teaching staff will be created throughout the system by his statement?

Sir Keith Joseph: No change in student numbers or employment in universities is, in aggregate, presaged by today's statement. A redistribution may result. One of the main contributions to excellence is quality of research and effectiveness of teaching. That is precisely what the UGC with the Government's encouragement, has now pioneered.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Was there not a key phrase in my right hon. Friend's welcome statement, namely, that further financial provision would be conditional upon selectivity? In the light of that, does he pay due regard in his discussions with the Treasury and other Government Ministers to the figures in, I believe, volume 2 of the public expenditure White Paper which make it clear that the social rate of return on higher education in this country is between 5 and 8 per cent., which is much better than the return on almost any other category of public spending?

Sir Keith Joseph: I must say yes to my hon. Friend. I hope that hon. Members on both sides of the House will read the details of what I have announced today. We are offering to the university system the possibility of further funding, depending upon the negotiations on the public expenditure survey this year, if it builds on the announcements that have been made today.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): Will the Secretary of State give a clear undertaking that the

[Mr. Max Madden]

university of Bradford, which, with Aston and Salford, suffered savage cuts in 1981 and which recently announced the closure of its physics department, is to receive under his proposals a net real increase in resources, or the reverse?

Sir Keith Joseph: The hon. Gentleman will have to look at the details in the letters. But the former chairman of the UGC who presided over the allocations in 1981 recently wrote to *The Times* to say that, in his view, thanks to the presence of two very vigorous vice-chancellors, Salford and Aston are both better universities now than they were in 1981.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome the announcement and I bear in mind that Leicester university will benefit from today's announcement, but will my right hon. Friend confirm that no blank cheque is available, that university results must be improved, and that the unnecessary courses in some universities should be done away with and excellence maintained?

Sir Keith Joseph: Yes, Sir.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Will the Secretary of State explain why he has not put the UGC letter before the House today so that right hon. and hon. Members could see for themselves the extent of the real term cuts both in resources for the universities and in student numbers? Will he also tell us why the Government believe that higher education should be cut? Does he not agree that this is only one of three attacks on higher education — the universities, the public sector, and student grants? Does he not agree also that his statement is blackmailing the universities: that if they go along with this reallocation of smaller levels of resources and allow major cuts in research at places like Aston, Hull, Keele, Newcastle, Aberystwyth, Bangor, Swansea, Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling they might get a few extra resources? Does he not agree that rather than being a landmark his statement puts a landmine under higher education in this country?

Sir Keith Joseph: Categorically, no. This is not an attack on universities but a stimulus to excellence.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry that I am unable to call everyone today, but I remind those right hon. and hon. Members whom I have not called that there will be education questions on 10 June. I shall keep a careful list of those who were not called today.

British Rail Engineering

4.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Nicholas Ridley): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the announcement British Rail is making to its trades unions at the Rail Council today about its future arrangements for the manufacture and maintenance of rolling stock.

We have set British Rail the objective of modernising the railway. To that end, we have agreed a massive investment programme. Over £400 million of new rolling stock has been approved over the last two years, and some £700 million is planned to come forward over the next five years.

As the House must realise, new modern designs of rolling stock require less maintenance and repair. For example, on average, two of the new Sprinter vehicles are able to replace three of the old DMUs, and each one requires 30 to 40 per cent. less maintenance than its predecessor. So overall there is a reduction of 50 to 60 per cent. in the British Rail Engineering Ltd. maintenance work load for that service.

Similarly the new class 87 electric locomotives have much higher availability than the designs of the 1960s which they will replace. Again, two new vehicles will replace three old ones, each requiring less maintenance, so again there is a dramatic fall in work load.

As a result, capacity reductions within BREL have been occurring for a number of years. I regret to have to tell the House that the same factors of work load reduction are the major reason for BR's announcement to its unions this morning that it expects further job losses over the next three years. These are the subject of the normal processes of consultation with the unions.

British Rail announced in January that a new build and heavy repair group would be set up and separated from maintenance and repair and that the latter would be brought closer to the operation of the railway.

The main elements of the new build and repair group are Crewe, York and the two works at Derby. Here the numbers employed will to some extent vary with the orders obtained — and some export orders are coming through — but there is expected to be some decline in employment as lighter maintenance work is transferred elsewhere.

In the maintenance group of works, BR's proposals are as follows. At Eastleigh BR believes that productivity can be improved and overheads reduced sufficiently to enable the works to continue with its present job of refurbishment and heavy overhaul of Southern region third rail electric stock, but over the next three years up to 500 jobs may go.

Doncaster will continue to carry out wagon manufacture and wagon overhauls, and will also become a major maintenance depot for locomotives and other rolling stock. Doncaster will also become the site for BR's new national store for supplying spare parts to BR depots. Together, these proposals mean lower levels of employment at Doncaster — down over the next three years from the present level of 3,100 to between 1,430 and 1,690.

Wolverton will become a major maintenance depot for a wide range of coaching stock, and as an interim measure

will complete its programme of electric train refurbishment. But over the next three years employment there will decline from the present level of 1,900 to between 650 and 850.

Glasgow Springburn will become a regional maintenance depot for ScotRail with jobs for about 200 people.

Job losses in regional depots will amount to about 300 a year, as was envisaged in BR's 1985 plan.

Thus, BR's new estimate of manpower requirements points to reductions of between 4,200 and 5,000 jobs in BREL over the next three years, together with the 1,750 previously notified to the trade unions.

Both the Government and British Rail are deeply conscious of the consequences of these changes for a large number of staff and their families. The board intends to appoint a senior director to co-ordinate measures to help those affected by the changes. He will work with BREL in redoubling its efforts to find alternative employment both within and outside the industry for those displaced, and to develop retraining programmes. British Rail will be recruiting some 20,000 people over the next three years to jobs in all departments of the railway. BR will also be approaching the local authorities with a view to setting up, or supporting, in each area a suitable development agency on the lines that BREL has done with considerable success at Shildon, Horwich and Swindon. They will provide financial and other support through these agencies for job creation schemes.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The Secretary of State's announcement makes yet another savage cut in BREL's manning levels and represents a further betrayal of the work force, which has been promised time and again that each round of cuts was the last and would provide job security and stability. Given last May's announcement, this means that there will be cuts of between 6,000 and 7,000 in the work force over the next three years. Moreover, the total cuts package in BREL since 1979 amounts to over 19,000.

Despite the Secretary of State's protestation that less maintenance is now needed, the fact is that cancellations and problems still seem to be the order of the day, and the promised better rail service simply does not materialise. Southern region contains the largest passenger sector, yet maintenance is down by 33 per cent. despite the fact that the vast majority of its stock is more than 25 years old.

The workshops most savagely hit are at Springburn, where the number of jobs is to be reduced from 1,000 to 150 to 200; at Wolverton, where the number of jobs is to be reduced from 1,850 to 650 or 800; at Doncaster, where the number is to be reduced from 1,912 to 780 or 1,040, and at Eastleigh where the number of jobs will fall from 2,122 to either 1,650 or 1,850.

No workshop or depot escapes. It would have been far better to invest more in new rolling stock—passenger and freight—and to ensure that British Rail builds in-house. There is, of course, an element of truth in the claim that maintenance needs have fallen. But maintenance engineers could be switched to new build. We know, for example, that the freightliner wagon fleet needs completely rebuilding. We also know that British Rail is losing freight because locomotives are unavailable. Indeed, British Rail should go further, and should invest in making BREL the showcase of British engineering internationally. There should be a sustained export drive, especially as currently BR obtains only 13 per cent. of the orders that it goes for.

Last year, BREL struck out a £25 million profit, because it had set £102 million aside for redundancies and closures. That is absolute nonsense. The statement said that BREL is to appoint a senior director to help those seeking redeployment. Presumably he is to compete with the senior personnel of British Shipbuilders, who will be looking for jobs for their staff. Last week my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said that the Government were investing in sticking plaster for British shipbuilding. Now they are investing in splints to try to bind the shattered limbs.

The Secretary of State has totally failed to address himself to dealing with the problems of BREL, British Rail and our nation's transport needs. There is no point in the Prime Minister speaking at Perth last week about slaying the dragon of unemployment, when the Secretary of State, through his short-sighted rail policies, is feeding that same dragon. We demand a categorical assurance from him that there will be a debate on this issue, so that alternatives can be put forward and so that his paucity of thought can be totally exposed.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman almost accepted something that he must accept, which is that the modern rolling stock being built for BR requires far less repair and maintenance than before. If he does not believe me, he should ask the chairman of British Rail whether it is true. He will have to accept the answer from BR's management, even if he will not accept it from me. He himself said that the maintenance requirement of Southern region was down 33 per cent. What does he expect British Rail to do to keep its work force, especially when the hon. Gentleman himself admits that some of the workshops are suffering a 33 per cent. drop in repair and maintenance work?

I think that the hon. Gentleman misunderstood the difference between repair and maintenance, and the new build activities at the four core works. I believe that the future for the four core works is much better than that for the repair works. A major export drive is going on. Indeed, the hon. Gentleman will have seen that an order has been won for the international coach to be sold to China. If I may say so, that was achieved with my help. Every effort is being made to ensure the greatest number of export orders for the new build part of BREL. But the hon. Gentleman must also recognise that that can be of no help to the repair and maintenance part of BREL, which is in business only to repair and maintain BR's stock.

The hon. Gentleman seemed to question the efficacy of the job creation efforts of BR. He should know that Shildon was closed in 1984, but that 710 new jobs have already been found, with the potential for that number to rise to 1,900 during the next two or three years. At Horwich, 374 jobs have been found, with the potential for that number to rise to 500 during the next two or three years. Those are no mean achievements, and the hon. Gentleman should not belittle the great effort BR has made to find replacement work for those whom it so unfortunately has had to displace.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Given the present controversy over whether there should be tax cuts or more expenditure on the infrastructure, does not my right hon. Friend's reference to a massive increase in investment in

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

British Rail show that we are achieving both? I tried to follow closely the figures that my right hon. Friend gave, including those for increased recruitment in British Rail. Am I right to think that, at the end of the three-year period, he expects total employment in British Rail to increase?

Mr. Ridley: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for that question. Investment in British Rail is on an upward path, and it is forecast that that will continue. The Opposition have frequently pressed us to increase investment, and we have willingly done so whenever BR has brought forward projects that it considers viable.

The massive increase in the amount of rolling stock ordered will, I think, lead to improved standards of service and to greater punctuality. In addition, approval was given for electrification of the east coast main line, which has produced many jobs in other industries. Moreover, it has produced orders for the new class 91 locomotive. That massive order is going jointly to Crewe and GEC.

As a result of normal wastage, BR expects that it will have to recruit a further 20,000 people. That does not mean that the total will be increased by that number at the end of the period. They will be recruited for new jobs as BR takes on people to replace those who leave.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): Does the Secretary of State agree that this is yet another very sad day for a loyal work force? Does he further agree that Glasgow Springburn has come off particularly badly? In his second paragraph, the right hon. Gentleman spoke about £700 million extra being available to British Rail. Does that include the £800 million to which he referred when answering questions yesterday in relation to the Channel tunnel project? I thank him for the fact that Eastleigh will remain a main repair depot. That is at least one consolation. But when those 20,000 extra jobs come up, will first refusal be given to those who will lose their jobs as a result of today's announcement? I do not know whether they will be qualified for those jobs, but they should at least have the chance to take them, if they so wish.

Mr. Ridley: I could not agree more that this is a very sad day indeed for many people who have been loyal, hard-working and highly skilled operatives. But the change in industrial technology has made this announcement necessary, and that is a matter of great sadness to all hon. Members, including the hon. Gentleman and me.

I entirely agree with what the hon. Gentleman said about Springburn——

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): We do not want the Secretary of State's sympathy.

Mr. Ridley: I also entirely agree with the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) that it is good that Eastleigh can remain a workshop. Indeed I have not announced the closure of any workshops, and I wish Eastleigh a prosperous future. The extra orders which might derive from the Channel tunnel, through the order for the shuttle trains placed by Eurotunnel and by the extra stock and investment required by British Rail to run through train services, are not included in these calculations because the orders will not come through during the three-year period that this covers. Of course, if those orders do not come through because the Channel tunnel does not proceed, it will put many jobs in BREL under threat in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I am sure that the House will recognise the importance of that.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Will my right hon. Friend accept that any job loss today is a personal tragedy? Do I gather from what my right hon. Friend said about Eastleigh that the 500 jobs we shall lose over three years include the 200 that we knew we would lose in asbestos stripping or are they additional? I and my colleagues from the works made representations to my hon. Friend the Minister of State and the board of British Rail that Eastleigh is a special works dedicated to Southern region with its separate third rail propulsion. Have those arguments been accepted? What would have been the redundancies if those arguments had not been taken on board and put into the strategy of British Rail for future maintenance workshop deployment?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely agree about the individual tragedy which every man made unemployed represents. I share my hon. Friend's sadness at the unfortunate news that I have had to announce to the House today. The delegation he brought to see my hon. Friend was very helpful, and its arguments did prevail, as the statement shows. The number employed at Eastleigh at the end of this year is likely to be 2,122 and by the end of 1989 it is likely to be between 1,650 and 1,850. I am sure that the chairman of British Rail will write with more detailed information for the benefit of my hon. Friend.

Mr. Martin: The Minister is misleading the House. When he talks about a work force of 150 at Springburn, he is really talking about a complete closure. The Minister is instructing British Rail to create a tidy little package for privatisation to sell off to his pals who gave him aid at the general election. It is legalised graft, and it is time that the Minister faced his responsibilities and learnt a bit about engineering. If he knew anything about engineering, he would know that a maintenance workshop of the nature of Springburn could easily switch to new build. He is not prepared to help Springburn, and, once again, we are being punished because we did not support the Tory party.

Mr. Ridley: I have every sympathy for the hon. Gentleman's constituents. Springburn is going into British Rail and will not be a part of Core & BREL. Therefore, in no sense is it being packaged ready for privatisation. It is being hived into British Rail instead and there is no plan to privatise Core & BREL. The chairman of British Rail has not reported to me on what he sees to be the future for the heavy repair and new build section of British Rail. The hon. Gentleman's suggestions are quite wrong.

I think that I am one of the few qualified engineers in the House, and I fully understand that any works can be altered to almost any type of manufacturing business. The hon. Gentleman will recognise that it must be for British Rail to decide where to put its orders and how to organise its own business. He will know that the hon. Member for Crewe and Nantwich (Mrs. Dunwoody) has been the main beneficiary of the large engine orders.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that there has been no shortage of investment for British Rail and that the Labour party is shedding crocodile tears today on an almost unbelievable scale? Furthermore, under the new scheme announced today there will be greater design potential, not only for the export market in

the way that has been shown for China but, with a privatised bus company, there will be the opportunity for bus and coach maintenance on the engineering side of BREL rather than keeping it exclusively as a rail company. Finally, what effect will the announcement have on York, where there is a marvellous work force?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend will be glad to know that he is one of the lucky ones and that there is to be a marginal increase in employment in York. We are talking about new build to a large extent. However, when we concentrate on the much more difficult question of repair and maintenance, it is totally wrong for any hon. Member to believe that, when the work load for the repair work shops has fallen, as it has, due to much greater investment, British Rail should continue to employ people when there is no work for them. It is wrong to think that this is the action of the Government. Indeed, in some measure it may be due to the Government's action because, in sanctioning so much investment for British Rail there is a much lower repair load in the workshops. It is in response to that that the unfortunate redundancies have had to be declared.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have already mentioned the business before the House today. May I ask for brief questions because that will lead to briefer answers? I shall try to call everybody, but we must stop questions on this statement at 20 minutes to five.

Mr. Michael Welsh (Doncaster, North): Is the Minister aware of what he is doing to Doncaster? The jobs of 1,600 people will go. The pits are closing, the workshops are closing, and the plants are now being attacked and will close. One in four is unemployed, and 90 per cent. of the kiddies who left school could not find a job. What will be done for Doncaster and what investment is going into the area? When will the Government invest in order to find jobs for our lads and lasses?

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman knows that general employment is not a matter to which I can respond on this statement. This is a statement of what British Rail, in its managerial capacity, has decided to do. The hon. Gentleman will know that massive investment is going into British Rail including the electrification of the line through Doncaster. The unfortunate consequences of the very thing that he has asked me for, investment, are what we are discussing today.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Am I right in thinking that in the past two years the Government have approved more than £600 million worth of new contracts for railway stock and works, many of which have been won by my constituents working at BREL in Derby? Does that not carry with it the inevitability of the changes announced today? As new rolling stock which is lightweight in construction and deliberately designed for low maintenance is brought on stream, will there not have to be less spent on maintenance? Does not every railwayman in the country know that?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend is right. As she said, I believe that the railwaymen know that that is the case. It is always sad to have to discuss the results of industrial change, but a nation which cannot face up to the results of industrial change will earn industrial stagnation.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Is the Secretary of State aware that, as a result of the abolition of the Springburn works, there will be great resentment that the heavy diesel locomotive maintenance and even the refurbishment of rolling stock from the Scottish region will not be carried out in that workshop or even in Scotland? That resentment will be fuelled by the announcement that the four core works are all to be placed in England.

Mr. Ridley: All the repair and maintenance work of ScotRail will be done at Springburn. It is possible that the number employed will be between 150 and 200, which is more than the right hon. Gentleman said. Due to the concentration of repairs and maintenance in ScotRail, maintenance work in Scotland will therefore find its way into Springburn.

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement of new investment in British Rail, but is he aware that his announcement of job losses at Springburn will be greeted with profound dismay by my constituents who work there? Can he tell me what it was that prompted BREL to designate Springburn as a maintenance works rather than a core works, in view of the decades of experience of heavy engineering there? Will he give me an assurance on the enterprise package? Will it be sufficient to produce jobs for those who will lose their jobs at Springburn? Will British Rail give priority in its new job creation to those who lose their jobs at Springburn?

Mr. Ridley: As I said to the right hon. Member for Western Isles (Mr. Stewart), the repair and maintenance works for ScotRail will be concentrated on Springburn. The heavy maintenance will go to one of the heavy maintenance works, which will be suitably equipped—one of the four core works that I mentioned. That makes for much more efficient working, which is why the move has been made. I ask my hon. Friend to get further reasons from British Rail on why it has chosen various works in its allocation of orders.

My hon. Friend referred to the new enterprise company or authority that will be set up. I shall take into account my hon. Friend's remarks about making sure that the needs of Springburn and district are well looked after. I can make it clear that British Rail has allocated a first tranche of money—£3 million. If further money is required, I have no doubt that it will be forthcoming, if it is available, to provide jobs for those who, unfortunately, have lost their jobs today.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Secretary of State aware that his stewardship of BREL, through British Rail, has demonstrated a long history of hypocrisy and cant, and that his statement today will be met with disbelief and anger? Those of us with workshops in our constituencies, which we are told are safe, have only one thing to say to him. The long history of his control has meant a loss of 150 jobs today and tomorrow will mean a complete break of faith and no employment. The privatisation package is unacceptable, and the electorate will make that very clear.

Mr. Ridley: It ill behoves the hon. Lady to say that when, on present plans, her constituency of Crewe will have 3,624 employees in 1989 and has been the main beneficiary of the very large locomotive orders that have

[Mr. Ridley]

been placed by British Rail. She is one of the few who have railway workshops in their constituency who might, on this occasion, have kept quiet.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): Does my right hon. Friend accept that it is no more necessary or, indeed, desirable for British Rail to build its own trains than it is for British Airways to build its own planes or any other nationalised industry to build its own plant and equipment? Does he further accept that the size of British Rail Engineering is a product of history and that, by contrast, modern railways abroad rely on competitive tendering? Will he note that, for example, the Hong Kong railway relied on competitive tendering, and the contracts came to Britain to private enterprise, and not to British Rail?

Mr. Ridley: I am sure that my hon. Friend is right that we should go to competitive tendering for the supply of railway stock to British Rail. That has been the policy for some time. I congratulate British Rail Engineering—that is the manufacturing new build part of it—on the orders that it has obtained. Since 1983, it has obtained orders for 270 Sprinter DMUs, 178 railbus DMUs, 530 EMUs, including 184 for the Snow hill tunnel scheme, and 120 for Bournemouth-Weymouth, 25 class 87 electric locos and 31 class 91 electric locos, the last two with the help of GEC. That is a massive number of rolling stock orders, which have all been won in open competition by BREL. That is why the new build part of BREL is looking very much rosier than it might have done otherwise.

Mr. Martin Redmond (Don Valley): When will the Secretary of State and the Government stop behaving like Pontius Pilate? They can do something. Some 1,570 jobs are to be lost under the latest cut. Will the Secretary of State issue a directive to British Rail to stop the proposed closures and reductions? The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the ability of the new agency to promote jobs. How much cash will it have in its pocket, because the announcement about that was conspicuous by its absence from the statement?

Mr. Ridley: With regard to his final point, the hon. Gentleman cannot have heard me say that the agency would have an initial funding of £3 million, and more would be available if demand so required. Let me point out to the hon. Gentleman how absurd his request is that I should issue a directive to the railways not to release people from work, for whom there is no work, and when there is not likely to be work for them in the next three years. Does he wish them to be sitting in the railway workshops with nothing to do, or would he rather that they were allowed to at least seek more lucrative opportunities by looking for other jobs? His failure to face up to the reality of this tragic situation does no service to his constituents.

Mr. W. Benyon (Milton Keynes): Does my right hon. Friend accept that this is a sad day for Wolverton, which has a long and successful record in the development of British rolling stock, including building the Royal train? Can he give me an assurance that there will be adequate funding, first, for retraining, and, secondly, for the alternative employment package? Will he assure me that we shall have no nonsense about Wolverton being part of the dynamic south-east?

Mr. Ridley: I entirely share my hon. Friend's deep concern about the jobs lost at Wolverton. I add my tribute to the skill, loyalty, perseverance and hard work that the workers have shown over the years. That is why I am particularly sad. I assure my hon. Friend that British Rail will take all steps possible to provide the retraining facilities, as well as seeking extra jobs in his area through the new agency that it proposes to set up.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South): Will the Secretary of State confirm that, despite his passing remarks about Derby being a new build works, almost 1,000 jobs are to go from the two workshops in my constituency? Does he understand that, unlike his hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), the people of Derby will be outraged by the proposal, which is further evidence of the Government creating an industrial wasteland where there was once prosperity?

Mr. Ridley: Sadly, I confirm what the hon. Lady says, that about one quarter of the jobs in the two works at Derby will be lost, but those are the works to which most of the export orders will go. If we can get a much better export performance, there is an opportunity for expansion, which is more than can be said for the repair and maintenance workshops, where the real problem lies.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if they are to survive and prosper, public sector industries must operate in as similar a way as possible to those in the private sector, and respond to changing situations? If many of the private sector companies had not made difficult decisions to contract their work force in the past, many of them would have gone to the wall and fewer jobs would be available today. Does not the same apply to British Rail? Should we not welcome the fact that both British Rail and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State are willing to grasp the nettle in this situation, which bodes well for the future?

Mr. Ridley: There is a great deal in what my hon. Friend says, but I should like to make a further point. The redundancies are expected to take place over the next three years. The fact that they are lumped together and presented in that global fashion dramatises them much more. British Rail and I have sought to be totally frank with the House. Many private sector companies might have dribbled the redundancies over those three years, and they would not have looked so dramatic, but in order to be totally frank and honest with the House, I have no objection whatsoever to giving all the information from Britsh Rail that is known.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Was No. 10 consulted? Does the Minister recall that, as a direct result of bus deregulation, there have been major cuts in our domestic bus manufacturing industry? In preparation for privatisation, much of our rail manufacturing industry has been destroyed. Were those job losses foreseen and intended when the Government embarked on their deregulation and privatisation policy?

Mr. Ridley: I do not think that there is any connection between the statement I made today and the deregulation of buses. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman, who always welcomes good news, would like to know that there are now 3,000 mini-buses on our roads as a result of the Transport Act, which would not have been there before. However, that is another subject.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): Although the loss of jobs is a matter of regret, will my right hon. Friend take time today to re-emphasise that, over the years, under both Conservative and Labour Governments, maintenance work has been continually in decline due to advances in technology? Despite my hon. Friend's announcement today about the future, is it not the case that the new build currently taking place, and especially the international coach, is good news not only for BREL but for Derby?

Mr. Ridley: It is absolutely true that increased investment, much of which was started by our predecessors, has caused reductions in repair and maintenance work on an increasing scale over the years, irrespective of which party formed the Government. That is an inevitable consequence of new design, knowledge and skills in building stock. My hon. Friend is quite right; the international coach has attracted a great deal of attention and interest. We know that one order has come through, and several others are possible. All hon. Gentlemen should concentrate on helping to sell the products of British industry whenever they go abroad. There is a real market for BREL overseas. I hope that BREL secures an ever greater proportion of it.

Mr. Gavin Strang (Edinburgh, East): Is there no limit to the destruction of skilled engineering jobs in the public sector by the Government? Surely the Government recognise that there is not only a social case but an economic case, against the background of mass unemployment, for maintaining employment in such work places, albeit with some public subsidy.

Mr. Ridley: If the Government were to accept the hon. Gentleman's advice, they would be paying money to keep people in BREL repair and maintenance shops for whom there was no work and never could be work. He must accept that that is not an activity where exporting is possible. No foreign railway would send its rolling stock here for us to repair, with all the transport difficulties that that would involve. The hon. Gentleman suggests that prosperous enterprises, employing people and creating jobs, should be taxed so that they can shed labour, so that others with no work to do can be kept in the BREL workshops. If that is the Labour party's policy, it will only lead to further unemployment.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): If everything was black and white, some of my hon. Friends would soon be advocating that we should privatise the armed forces. I turn my right hon. Friend's mind to the nation's infrastructure, of which the railways form a part, and ask him to contemplate the difference between roads and railways. The taxpayer funds all expenditure on roads, including the driver and vehicle licensing centre at Swansea. The railways are expected to provide all their own investment as part of the nation's infrastructure.

Will my right hon. Friend look at the new American diesels imported by Foster Yeoman, because no manufacturer in this country, such as GEC, is willing to provide British Rail prototypes? Would it not be a suitable proposition for the Government to fund the cost of prototypes for BREL or GEC to produce to see whether in future the vehicles can be manufactured in this country?

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend knows that, since I have been the Secretary of State for Transport, of all the many investment applications that the railways have made, they have been refused only one. That was for a small piece of electrification in Cambridgeshire, which we judged to be completely unviable. My hon. Friend cannot say that the railways have been starved of opportunities to invest.

The railways have never ordered foreign engines. A great deal of work is being done by BREL and GEC to develop the new class 91 engine, which will stay in this country and which will, I believe, be a great success. What my hon. Friend requested has been done. I cannot say what a private firm, such as Foster Yeoman, will decide to buy for its power car.

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): Is the Secretary of State aware that his depressing announcement this afternoon of threatened and announced closures means that 20,000 jobs will be lost? Will he be more precise about the 20,000 job opportunities which will be available in British Rail? How many of those jobs will be available to those who will be made redundant as a result of this afternoon's announcement? Will the Secretary of State be more precise about the support that the Government will give to British Rail Engineering in making overseas export sales? Will soft loans be available? What other assistance will be given to get further orders?

Mr. Ridley: The figures for expected recruiting and manpower are in the latest report of the British Railways Board. I have said nothing new. If the hon. Gentleman studies the report, he will find all the facts and the figures. The board believes that, over the next three years, a further 20,000 people must be recruited for a varied number of activities on the railway. I am sure that preference will be given to BREL employees if they wish to take up jobs on the railway. I shall ensure, through the chairman of the board, that that is done.

I took the chairman of BREL on a long trip around the far east. There was an encouraging response and there were many chances to tender for work. The Chinese order came as a result of that visit. As the hon. Gentleman knows, we have a large soft credit facility from China. If any export potentials arise in other countries, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry is always willing to try to switch resources to assist our exports. Indeed, there is a lot of business which we might win in south-east Asia.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Will the Secretary of State accept that his announcement this afternoon was due entirely to his Department's philosophy of tight resourcing so far as the railway industry is concerned, which guarantees that the industry cannot plan for any expansion that might take place? The policy has given us the present appalling inter-city punctuality record that condemns commuters every day to a journey of misery. It means that freight trains, on many railway lines, are but a bitter memory. During the period that the Secretary of State has held the transport portfolio, investment has been paid for out of BR's internal sources, and financed entirely by redundancies among other railway men. The arbitrary split between new build and maintenance has condemned skilled men at Doncaster and Glasgow, to name but two areas that are capable of making locomotives and railway wagons for the future, to a maintenance function that is being deliberately run down as a forerunner to privatisation. Over the past few weeks the Secretary of State has announced redundancies in our railways, a rundown of our bus network and further

[Mr. Peter Snape]

redundancies in the airline industry. Does he accept that, as Secretary of State, he has been an unmitigated disaster and he ought to do a courtesy to the House by tendering his resignation sooner rather than later?

Mr. Ridley: It is extraordinary that an NUR-sponsored Member of the House should use such strident and critical words of his colleagues on the railways who are trying to run the best railway they can. If that is his view of those he represents in the unions, he will not be thanked the next time he attends a union branch meeting. I have never heard such a disgraceful criticism of union workers.

Mr. Snape: You are an old Etonian twerp——

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Ridley: The hon. Gentleman should keep his temper. He is in real trouble in trying to get his facts right.

Mr. Snape: You are a hypocrite.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not want such anger in a statement like this. Will the hon. Member withdraw the word "hypocrite"?

Mr. Snape: Mr. Speaker, when we are talking about further redundancies in an industry in which both myself and my father worked, I shall not be sneered at by an old Etonian twerp like the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Speaker: I ask the hon. Member to withdraw the word "hypocrite".

Mr. Snape: Purely out of deference to you, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw.

Mr. Ridley: I have never known such an extraordinary demonstration. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) has got it wrong. The reduction in employment which we are discussing will occur in maintenance and repair which are to be re-integrated into the railways, in my opinion, correctly. The suggestion that the railways are being slimmed down for privatisation is misleading and I make it entirely clear that that is not the case.

NATO (Chemical Weapons)

4.50 pm

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"NATO's controversial plan to modernise American chemical weapons."

The matter is specific because today or tomorrow a Defence Minister representing the Government will leave for Brussels for a meeting of NATO Defence Ministers. That meeting is likely to give approval to NATO's controversial plan to modernise NATO's chemical weapons.

The matter is important because production of these weapons has been delayed by the United States Congress until at least 1 October. One of the conditions is that NATO should formally ask for those weapons by making modernisation and production of them part of NATO's strategy. We still have an opportunity to influence and reject such a proposal. Today, more than 100 Labour and Liberal Members of Parliament have written to the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and the *International Herald Tribune* and to senators and congressmen to voice their opposition to the production, possession and use of chemical weapons.

Conflicting statements have been made on this issue by United Kingdom Ministers. On 28 April, in the House the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said that there would be no deployment of the new chemical weapons in the United Kingdom in peacetime. But, speaking on "Weekend World", the same Minister said that he did not rule out the possibility of the United Kingdom agreeing to the deployment of United States chemical weapons in peacetime. What is the Government's precise position? We have a right to know.

The issue requires urgent consideration because, unlike the Parliaments of other European countries and the United States Congress, which has debated this issue at great length, we at Westminster have had no such debate. I believe that the issue meets all the criteria laid down in Standing Order No. 10 and that such a debate should take place immediately.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Lady asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that she believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the forthcoming discussions between the NATO Defence Ministers of the proposal to give approval to the modernisation of chemical weapons held by the United States Government."

As the hon. Lady knows, the only decision I have to take is whether to give this matter precedence over the Orders set down for consideration today or tomorrow. I regret that I do not consider that the matter she has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit her application to the House.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, arising from your decision. I am not dissenting——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sorry, but no point can arise from my decision.

British Rail Engineering Ltd., Springburn

4.53 pm

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the severe rundown of the BREL works at Springburn."

Two years ago, that workshop employed 3,000 people. The Secretary of State for Transport told us that the best we can expect is between 150 and 200 people employed there. They include—I mean no disrespect to them—canteen workers, cleaners, security men and the like. That means that, if we are lucky, there will be about 100 skilled jobs in a community which used to have 10,000 railway engineering workers. That is a scandal. It is a blow to my community where one in four people are out of work. I ask that consideration be given to this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the redundancies at Springburn railworks."

I have listened carefully to the exchanges and I fully appreciate the impact of the redundancies on the hon. Member's constituents. I regret that I do not consider that the matter the hon. Member has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10. I cannot, therefore, submit his application to the House. However, I hope that he will find other ways of raising the matter in the Chamber.

Pilkington Insulation Ltd., Stirling

4.55 pm

Mr. Michael Forsyth (Stirling): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House, under Standing Order No. 10, for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure by Pilkington Insulation Ltd. of the Cape works in Stirling, with the resultant loss of 257 jobs."

The factory was acquired by Pilkington only last year and considerable improvements in performance and cost reduction have been achieved by the work force. As Pilkington is the major industrial employer, located in the heart of the town, the proposed closure represents a devastating blow and a cruel rebuke to the employees and their trade union representatives who have done everything possible to avoid it.

A debate would give the House the opportunity to raise the wider question of the responsibilities of large private employers to their work forces and the communities in which they operate. Although the chief executive of Pilkington has stated that the company will commit resources to job creation in Stirling, no indication of the sums involved has been given. They will have to be substantial. A debate would give the Minister the opportunity to reassure the House and my constituents that his Department and the Scottish Development Agency will contact the company with a view to ensuring that every help and assistance are given in relocating and retraining employees and in getting on with a job creation and development programme on that site. The factory occupies an important location in the town. If Pilkington decides to give the site to an enterprise trust, as I hope it will, it would be helpful to know the Minister's view on how his Department could assist.

I make no apology for raising this matter this afternoon. It is vital to my constituency. A debate on the wider implications would help to focus the attentions of the private and public sectors alike on their responsibilities in managing the effects of change.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he believes should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the proposed closure by Pilkington Insulation Ltd. of the Cape works in Stirling, with the resultant loss of 257 jobs."

Again, I must say that I have listened carefully to what the hon. Member has said. I realise the impact that the closure is likely to have on his constituency. However, I have to say that I do not consider that the matter he has raised is appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10, and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Written Answers

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I know that you place great emphasis on protecting hon. Members on both sides of the House from the Executive, and that you are less than enthusiastic about the Government's use of procedures that have the effect of devaluing the House. Today, the Government have been at it again. The Home Secretary has shown his contempt for the House by using a written answer to make

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

a major statement on police resources and numbers—a statement at variance with the policy expressed only last year by the Prime Minister. The House has a right to question the Home Secretary on such major statements.

The Government keep acting in this fashion. What they have done today is significant. I appreciate that, technically, the Government can argue that there is a Standing Order that allows them to do it, but the effect of the Government's actions is to bring the House into contempt, to devalue it and to make your task, Mr. Speaker, more difficult. Will you stop the Government acting like this and make them face the House on major statements of policy?

Mr. Speaker: Question 105 was a written question on today's Order Paper and it was answered. This is frequently done, and it is not a matter of order for me.

Co-ownership of Flats

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to enable residents in flats in privately-owned mansion blocks and substantial conversions to form companies with powers in stated circumstances to acquire and manage the properties in common ownership; to make provision for the residents in such a property in stated circumstances to apply to the courts for the appointment of a receiver and manager for it; to confer other rights on residents and to make further provision as to the management of such properties; and for related purposes.

In 1978 with support from both sides of the House I first sought leave, successfully I may say, to introduce a Bill on the co-ownership of flats. Since the last time I introduced such a Bill in June last year, we have received the report of the committee of inquiry on the management of privately owned blocks of flats. That was welcomed in all parts of the House. I should like to quote briefly from the press notice that was issued by the Nugee committee in November 1985, because it is an excellent summary of the position.

"Clear evidence of widespread dissatisfaction with the management of privately owned blocks of flats is described in a Report published today.

The Report produced by a Committee chaired by Mr. Edward Nugee QC, says that the criticisms are not confined to particular locations or types or age of block; and that there are serious problems, which call for action.

The Committee, set up to examine the problems of management in privately owned blocks of flats, proposes measures to redress the balance for tenants who find that their landlord or managing agent is persistently unresponsive or unhelpful."

This matter affects not only many thousands of my constituents in Kensington but many other people living in privately owned mansion blocks or substantial conversions in inner London and in many other parts of the country. I should like to repeat the main features of my earlier Bills and also to adopt the main Nugee recommendations. However, in some respects I should like to go further than the Nugee recommendations and to explore the possibility that in certain circumstances tenants may have the right not only to apply to the courts for the appointment of a receiver, but also, in stated circumstances, should have the right to acquire the full ownership rights in the property.

The right of pre-emption when the block is on the market is not very controversial, but great care must be taken if the owner is not a willing seller. The circumstances must be clearly defined and the procedure for valuation must be clearly laid down. All the signatories to my Bill insist that the valuation must be fair and that there must be no element of confiscation.

It is relatively easy to legislate for properties that are held entirely on long leases, but it is more difficult to deal with mixed regimes or with properties that are wholly occupied by residents with short tenancies. I should like to try to find a formula which overcomes these difficulties for consideration by the House.

The House should also consider the risk that residents who acquire their properties may not always have the funds or the management know-how to run them properly and to maintain them in good order. My recommendation is that, in order to qualify for the court's approval, the residents should be required to form themselves into a

company with an appropriate memorandum and articles. I aim to provide a model form as a schedule to the Bill as I have done on previous occasions.

I believe it would be useful for the House to look at concrete proposals on this matter in the form of a parliamentary Bill. I hope that such a Bill will attract the attention of proprietors and residents and their advisers, and I hope that the fact that I once again have all-party support will prove that the House has welcomed the Nugee report, is determined to act on it, and in some respects will be willing to go further than its recommendations. I therefore trust that the House will permit me once again to introduce my Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Sir Brandon Rhys Williams, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mr. Hugh Dykes, Sir Geoffrey Finsberg, Mr. Reg Freeson, Mr. Stephen Ross, Sir Hugh Rossi, and Mr. John Wheeler.

CO-OWNERSHIP OF FLATS

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams accordingly presented a Bill to enable residents in flats in privately-owned mansion blocks and substantial conversions to form companies with powers in stated circumstances to acquire and manage the properties in common ownership; to make provision for the residents in such a property in stated circumstances to apply to the courts for the appointment of a receiver and manager for it; to confer other rights on residents and to make further provision as to the management of such properties; and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 23 May and to be printed. [Bill 164.]

Orders of the Day

Social Security Bill

[2ND ALLOTTED DAY]

As amended (in the Standing Committee), further considered.

Mr. Michael Meacher (Oldham, West): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just before midnight last night the Secretary of State for Social Services said that he was prepared to reconsider the mechanism for the payment of family credit. The Government resisted that change in Committee so this is a major change of direction and a major victory against the Government forced on them at the last moment by the unanimous opposition of women's organisations and employers and a full-scale Back-Bench revolt. The Secretary of State made the statement just a few minutes before the guillotine fell and there was no chance for the House to question him about his intention, especially about the terms of reference of the new consultative exercise. Have the Government unequivocally abandoned their universally rejected plans to pay family credit through the pay packet, and, if so, why are the CBI and the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses included in the organisations consulted?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Harold Walker): I thought that the hon. Gentleman was addressing me on a point of order and not the Minister on matters arising from the Bill.

Mr. Meacher: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. In view of the uncertainties, I ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to use your good offices to ensure that the Secretary of State makes a further statement to the House at the earliest opportunity in order to clarify his intentions and to answer questions about a matter that significantly affects the standard of living of millions of women.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order or something that I should deal with. The Secretary of State and the Minister are both present, and I see that they are nodding to show that they take account of what the hon. Gentleman has said. In the course of the day's proceedings there may be an opportunity for the Minister to comment. We ought to deal with the matters before us.

Clause 28

ARRANGEMENTS FOR HOUSING BENEFIT

Mr. Meacher: I beg to move amendment No. 209, in page 35, line 26, at end insert

'in the case of benefit payable to an owner-occupier is to be in the form of an owner-occupier allowance covering prescribed housing costs including mortgage interest and the full amount which he is liable to pay by way of rates, and in any other case.'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider amendment No. 152 in page 35, line 27, after 'Rebate', insert

'of 100 per cent. of the total rates bill payable if the recipient is also in receipt of income support.'.

Mr. Meacher: I turn first to the Government's proposal announced last weekend to cut by half the

[Mr. Meacher]

mortgage interest payments of the unemployed during the first six months on supplementary benefit. We object to the way in which the announcement was made, sneaked out by written answer at the last minute after a Green Paper, after a six-month consultation period, after the White Paper and after the three-month Committee stage on the Bill without reference to this matter. We object even more to the content of the statement. It will sentence thousands of people to eviction and homelessness as a penalty for being unemployed. Government policy has already robbed thousands of people of jobs and now they will begin to rob those people of their homes as well. It will be the last straw that finally ditches thousands of people who exercise their right to buy.

We know that the Tory party has made great play of people's rights to be able to buy their homes. Apparently that applies to everyone except the jobless and the poor. It seems that the Prime Minister is quite willing to accept £35 a week in mortgage interest tax relief on her new £500,000 Dulwich home while at the same time denying much smaller sums for people who cannot keep a roof over their heads without mortgage interest cover.

The justification given by the Government for this proposal is that in some cases the help given is so generous that people are better off out of work. That assertion is based on figures so absurd that it is surprising that even this Government takes them seriously. A table in the note supplied to the SSAC compares in-work and out-of-work incomes for married men with earnings between £80 and £150 a week and with a £16,000 mortgage. We are told that that is the average mortgage for a two-child family. The table shows that where earnings are between £80 and £120 a week the man is better off out of work. That is the Government's justification. The table does not show how many people with £16,000 mortgages have earnings as low as this. I submit that the answer is virtually nobody. Irrespective of that, is it not typical of the Government that, when faced with a situation where the low paid in work receive little or no more help with housing costs than the unemployed because low income prevents them getting much mortgage interest tax relief, the Government prefer to put the knife further in to the unemployed rather than to take the other option of extending housing benefit to owner-occupiers on low incomes?

A report in *The Guardian* on Saturday said:

"Senior ministers knew that the proposals were in the wind, but they knew nothing about the timing of the announcement. It was seen as especially inept and insensitive that the news should have been given immediately after the unemployment figures showing a further increase, after 3,500 job losses in the shipyards and cuts of 1,000 jobs at British Caledonian. The announcement had originally been scheduled a few weeks ago, but was postponed on the grounds that it would be inopportune in the run-up to last week's local elections."

The documents relating to this were finally released, but without the promised copies of the inspectorate's report. However, they have been subsequently placed in the Library.

The reasons for not distributing the report more widely are plain enough. It simply does not support the Government's case. For example, it shows that in the Government's sample of over 300 claimants, the average mortgage payment was £72 a month but one in four were paying between £100 and £250 a month. The implications of the Government's proposal for those at the upper end of that range are appalling. Eighty-seven of those claimants had approached the lender for a reduction in their mortgage payments. Only 69 per cent. of them had been able to negotiate a reduction, usually for only three months at a time. All that they were asking for was to be allowed to pay their mortgage interest only, not the principal. One wonders what the lenders would have said if they had wanted to pay only half the interest. Even under the present rules, in the inspectorate's sample that the Government have produced, one claimant had been forced to put his home up for sale and two others were under pressure to do so.

The Government's proposal is that only half the interest should be paid for the first six months, but that means the first six months on supplementary benefit. In many cases, those concerned will already have been living on a low income for many months before they claim supplementary benefit. Worse still, some people will be caught in what will no doubt be known as the mortgage trap. Because only half their mortgage interest will be taken into account, they will not qualify for supplementary benefit at all. Therefore, they will be unable to clock up the six months on benefit necessary to qualify for having the whole of their mortgage interest met.

Take, for example, a family with two children when the father is on invalidity benefit. His total income will be £99·40 a week. If he has to pay mortgage interest of £20 a week, under the present rules he will qualify for supplementary benefit after 12 months of sickness. But if only half his mortgage interest is taken into account he will not qualify and he will go on not qualifying indefinitely. Such a family will find themselves in the deepest trouble.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire) *rose*——

5.15 pm

Mr. Meacher: I would rather that the hon. Gentleman made his speech. There is great pressure on time because of earlier statements and I intend to be as brief as I can.

The SSAC's words are worth quoting in full. It said:

"If mortgage interest is not met in full for an initial period on benefit, but instead an arrangement is made to reschedule the loan at a higher amount once the period is over, an owner-occupier claimant could well have less incentive to return to work."

That is important because the Government's argument is that people should have a greater incentive to return to work. The committee went on:

"After a given period, income support would begin to pick up the bill, but if a claimant got a job (or recovered from sickness) after any lengthy break, the rescheduled payments could have risen to a level difficult to manage on low wages. In such circumstances there would be a strong temptation to remain on income support until a better-paid job came along."

For those reasons we unequivocally reject this last nasty, vicious kick at the unemployed, right at the end of the Committee and Report stage of the Social Security Bill.

Let me now deal briefly with amendment No. 152. The Bill seeks to take general powers to vary housing benefit levels by means of regulations, powers which potentially embrace the 20 per cent. cut, and, indeed, a lot more. It would be possible for the Government to use those powers to render an even larger proportion of rates ineligible for benefit and it would be helpful today if we could be told that the Government will not do that. I ask explicitly that, in replying, the Minister gives a guarantee that the Government will not make a larger proportion even than

20 per cent. ineligible for benefit. They manifestly intend to extend the thinking behind this sort of cut to the proposed community charge.

The Government would not only have powers to increase the proportion of rates or community charge which is ineligible for benefit, but the community charge would be levied upon a range of low income non-householders, who currently do not pay rates. They will be victims of the clause.

The extent of hardship which will be brought about on present figures alone is considerable. There will be some 7 million losers on the housing benefit side as the result of the clause and some three quarters of the £450 million which will be taken from claimants is accounted for by the cut in eligible rates.

Even if an average amount were to be incorporated into the income support rates as compensation, as some have suggested, for the loss of rate rebate from the measure, hardship would still be inflicted because of the wide variations in rate levels in different parts of the country. It is incredible that the Government have refused to compensate income support claimants even to that extent. There is to be no compensation in income support and that means that money which at present is given for food, clothing and fuel will now have to be used to pay for rates. Hardship will not be confined to the purely financial. Rate arrears will undoubtedly rise as a result of the proposal and increasing numbers of poor people will find the bailiff knocking at the door and find themselves in court.

The Government justify this measure on grounds of local accountability. That excuse is incredible. First, it suggests that those who currently receive part of their income by way of full rate rebate are therefore lesser citizens—a sort of local tier of voter—than those who are better off financially. That may well appeal to those Conservative Members who hanker nostalgically for the days when people on low incomes did not have the vote at all. But to the rest of us it is another depressing manifestation of the neo-19th century outlook which informs so much of the Bill.

Secondly, it is clear that the proposal has nothing whatever to do with the principles of social security. The idea is that the financial hardship inflicted on claimants will cause pressure to be exerted on local councils. In other words, families on some of the lowest incomes in the land are being used by the Government as cannon fodder in their obsessional quarrel with those local authorities whose standards of service are too high for the Government's liking.

One of the supposed advantages of the current housing benefits scheme, as it was introduced in 1982, is that in large numbers of cases the local authority does not need to operate any collection procedures in respect of council tenants or direct ratepayers. The proposed cut in eligible rates would require the collection of some payment in virtually all cases, thus wiping out the administrative advantages which are supposed up to now to have been one of the main attractions.

Collection will have to be recommenced in respect of over 4 million ratepayers and often the amount to be collected, while a significant loss for a claimant on a low income, will cost more to collect than the amount recovered. As I say, there will be an inevitable growth in rate and rent arrears resulting from other aspects of housing benefit cuts and at the same time the Government are proposing to cut local authorities' administrative costs subsidy in relation to housing benefit.

The proposal to make the cut in rates which are eligible for rebate flies in the face of the advice clearly and explicitly given by the housing benefit review team, of the overwhelming majority of submissions to the review, of the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Select Committee on Social Services. It is a combination of a desire to extract savings from some of the poorest households and a desire to wage a political offensive against local authorities using claimants as ammunition. Both amendments reflect some of the nastiest and most distateful measures in the Bill, and I ask hon. Members on both sides of the House to accept them.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I endorse much of the sentiment expressed by the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher), if not the way in which it was presented. On mortgage interest for the unemployed, I should be interested to hear the results of the consultations that were promised in Committee and which have led to the decision. The Minister said that he would consider the matter carefully and that a decision would be made in due course. A decision has been made, but we do not know much about the consultations. It is staggering that those who were consulted consented willingly to the proposal announced by the Minister last week. I cannot support the way in which it was done or the results that it will produce.

Conservative Members should consider carefully what is proposed in amendment No. 152. Like the family credit proposal which we discussed last night, the 20 per cent. rates contribution has little if anything to do with the Bill. If it was excised from the Bill, the social security reform that the Government propose would proceed almost unaltered, and they need not face the severe test at the next election of defending the proposals, which will necessarily involve people in receipt of supplementary pensions and benefits making contributions of at least 20 per cent. to their rates bills. That will inevitably, as night follows day, push people below the subsistence level. We struggled to force the Government to define the true level of subsistence, but, whatever it is, the proposal will push those people well below it.

As the hon. Member for Oldham, West said, although we have heard that the 20 per cent. contribution will be introduced, in Committee the Government said that the matter was still under consideration. In addition, we were told that the proposal should be seen in the context of the Green Paper on the financing of local government. That paper has been published, but it gives me no cause for consolation on the 20 per cent. rate contribution. It is silent on the subject. Recently, the Scottish Grand Committee debated the rates reform that will be visited on Scotland a year before it will be visited on England. When the Secretary of State for Scotland was asked about the 20 per cent. rate contribution, he said, "It has nothing to do with me. My Department has nothing to do with this." The Government cannot hide behind the fact that some solace and consolation will be found in the introduction of the new system of local government finance.

In Committee, I accepted—I still accept it—that an argument exists for accountability in local government. I offer the Government a way round that difficulty. If they wish to enhance accountability in local government, the

[Mr. Archy Kirkwood]

way forward is staring them in the face. It is to introduce proportional representation into local government, which will enhance the quality of votes so that the electorate will decide what sort of local administration they have. Their local votes will be of a much higher quality, and we would not need so many central Government powers to clobber local authorities. That is how the alliance would enhance local accountability. The Minister of State frowns. That is by far the best way to get accountability back into local government.

The Government's proposals will inevitably hurt pensioners, especially those in my part of the world. I do not know how at the general election the Government and Conservative Back-Bench Members will defend the proposals in the context of the Social Security Bill, in which they have no place.

If the Government are looking for more savings—they should drop the fallacious argument about accountability because the only argument they could use is one of cost—the £450 million that they are taking out of housing benefit in other parts of the Bill should be enough. They cannot justify imposing further financial agony on the elderly and claimants by making them pay 20 per cent. towards their rates for the spurious reason of increasing local democracy. It is a ridiculous proposal, and I hope that the Government, even at the 11th hour, will reconsider it.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): This is the first opportunity that the House has had to reflect upon and consider last week's announcement, which caused a considerable furore at the weekend. I do not support the solution proposed in either amendment. I should tell the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) that his remarks on amendment No. 209 went far beyond legitimate comment even among those of us who are worried about the content of last week's announcement. I tell him well in advance that I shall not go into the Division Lobby with him should he press the amendment to a vote. However, I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister that the proposal to cut by half the mortgage interest payment assistance for the first six months of unemployment has come at a signally unfortunate moment. To make the announcement in the same week as the announcement of a further increase in unemployment and the fact that long-term unemployment shows no sign of being alleviated was, to say the least, unfortunate.

There is an underlying assumption in what the Government appear to propose that jobs are lost voluntarily and that there must be a continuing incentive for people to go back to work. That may be the case in the prosperous south-east and some other areas, but it is certainly not so in those areas where jobs are not only difficult but almost impossible to obtain. To that extent, there is an element of insensitivity in making the recommendation now.

It is said that there is a disincentive to work. Sometimes we are told that there is an incentive towards industrial action for as long as the present assistance with mortgage payments should continue. I still await proof that that is the case. In areas of high unemployment, it simply does not apply.

I have one overriding objection to last week's proposal. It seems to discriminate in a way which the Minister and I would not wish to discriminate against the owner-occupier and in favour of the person in rented accommodation. If we are talking about disincentives to find work, I cannot understand why we should reduce the assistance that we give to owner-occupiers but continue the assistance that we give to those in rented accommodation. If there is a disincentive, it must apply irrespective of the accommodation that one occupies. At a time when the Government and the Conservative party are recommending the movement into owner-occupation of people who have not considered it previously, and when we have argued strongly for the purchase of council houses and encouraged their occupants to move over to owner-occupation, the proposal will be seen as discriminating against those who have believed our suggestion that owner-occupation is a good thing.

I say to the Minister, as gently as I can, that the timing of the announcement was wrong and that its direction, to say the least, is not proven. I think it was a wise move to refer it to the SSAC for its recommendations and its reaction. We have, of course, already been treated to an indication of what the SSAC will say.

All I will say at this stage is that, strictly as a personal opinion, I believe that we should all be mindful of the need to cut the very substantial bill that social security runs up for the taxpayer, but I am not as yet persuaded that this is the right way to do it. Neither am I persuaded that the amendment and proposal to which I am speaking is the right way to solve the problem.

I therefore hope that my hon. Friend the Minister in replying to the debate will give further consideration to this. I know that in the Department officials have long been mulling over whether this is the only way to go, and whether, it it were to proceed, we might be doing what we have all along tried to resist, that is, providing a disincentive to ordinary people owning their own homes. Because I genuinely believe that those who have purchased council houses could arguably be most adversely affected by the measure announced last week, I hope that my hon. Friend will reconsider his intention.

5.30 pm

Mr. Hugh Brown (Glasgow, Provan): I wish to begin with a complaint that I think is a matter for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is most unfortunate that the two important subjects of mortgate payments and the 20 per cent. rate charge have been allotted less than an hour for discussion. These matters by some chance—I do not say that it was engineered — seem not to have been adequately discussed in Committee. Perhaps you can consider this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the interests of some of our Back Benchers who have been trying to speak. There was a change in business last night, and we are now confronted with this situation in which it is impossible to do justice to some of the points that I wish to raise.

While my party is responsible for tabling the amendment dealing with owner-occupation, which amendment I support, I am in the curious position of wanting to support the Liberal amendment. I have no choice in this—it is the only one that is open to me because of the way this place works.

As to the whole issue of a 20 per cent. rates charge on every single adult, I think that this is one of the worst things that the Government have produced—and they have produced many. The Minister will recollect that some of my hon. Friends raised this in Committee. It was a most

disappointing debate. The Minister was expected to cover about 20 amendments, which he obviously could not do. May I remind him what he said in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) and, indeed, to my hon. Friends the Members for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) and for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett):

"bearing in mind the great uncertainties that surround the issue of rates in relation to the consultative proposals on rates reform which have been submitted".

I repeat what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) stated, that Ministers with responsibility for social security say, "It is nothing to do with us because the Government are in the middle of consultations about changes in rates proposals." The Minister emphasised this again when he said:

"It is foolish for any of us to try to draw final conclusions from any of those matters in relation to rates and the 20 per cent. proposal at the moment." — [*Official Report*, Standing Committee B, 4 March 1986; c. 632-44.]

I do not know that there is anything foolish about it. It is high time that the Government gave some indication of their intentions.

I am one of those irritating practical people who like to be able to say to constituents, "I'm sorry, you're getting £40 at the moment, but after all this comes into being either you will get only £38 or you will get £42, as the case may be". In regard to income support, I know that the Government cannot give the levels of support, but the Minister is an able Minister, he has been in the job a long while and he must know what we are driving at. We are accusing him of being a little vague in this respect.

Although my next point is not a Scottish Office point, I observe that there is no Minister from the Scottish Office present, and there should be, because it is rates that we are discussing. The Secretary of State for Scotland, if nothing else, is a slick debater, but that does not win votes in Scotland — we are a bit too long in the tooth and politically crude for that. Let me tell the Minister what he said about this in the Scottish Grand Committee. In reply to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), he said:

"First of all, the hon. Gentleman knows that the 20 per cent. proposal is nothing to do with the Green Paper. We can have a debate on other matters if the hon. Gentleman wishes, but he knows that certain proposals are irrespective of whether we keep domestic rates or have a community charge. I am speaking today on the proposals in the Green Paper".

He went on to repeat that in reply to the same question asked by the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson):

"The suggestion arises out of the social security proposals. I shall not deal with them now, because they do not arise out of the Green Paper."—[*Official Report*, Scottish Grand Comittee, 28 April 1986; c. 2-9.]

This is not good enough. I hope that the Minister will recognise that, and give some more specific information than we have had up to now.

How does the timetable fit into this? In the Green Paper on rates it is made clear at paragraph 8.48 that there could be a change in the domestic rate system, but with effect from April, 1989. This is not a Scottish point just because circumstances have compelled the Government to do something in Scotland sooner than they might otherwise have liked.

I suggest that the Government have not even thought about the rates proposals. It is still not clear to us in Scotland who will be ahead of the field in the so-called reform of rates and how the 20 per cent. social security imposition will work. It is not good enough to say, as the Scottish Office has said in its official reply:

"Who will be eligible for rebates? Assistance will be given through Social Security to those on low incomes, but all will have to pay a contribution to their local tax, as the Government has already proposed in the White Paper on Social Security reform." Is this a tax on the poor? I do not want to embarrass the Secretary of State for social services.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): He is beyond embarrassment.

Mr. Brown: I appeal to my hon. Friend — the Secretary of State made a significant concession last night, and I am a reasonable man. I have been in Parliament long enough to recognise that there is a great deal of argument going on currently in the Conservative party; its members do not know what is wrong and I have some sympathy with them. When a party does now know where it is going, it can hardly come up with solutions.

I do not know where the Secretary of State stands in this. May I refer the Minister to what his right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) said as chairman of the Conservative party as reported in *The Guardian*. The headline reads:

"Tebbit blames the poor for anti-Tory slant".

That was before the local elections. He was challenged about the accountability argument to which the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire referred. What did the chairman of the Conservative party say? *The Guardian* report says:

"He said they would be fair to the extent that everyone had the opportunity to vote. 'But the result will be slanted in that some people vote secure in the knowledge that they won't have to pay for what they will vote for,' he said."

Unfortunately that is true, but his great eloquence of phrase suggests that he wants to put the boot into the poor. There is no other justification for what he said.

How can it be justifiable to say to people who, through no fault of their own, are on supplementary benefit, "We will clobber you. The only section guaranteed to come out of the social security review worse will be you, the poorest section of the community"? I probably have more of those people in my constituency than anyone else in the country. How can it be right for the Government to make this imposition on them?

I echo what the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire said, apart from his comments on proportional representation, the bad part of his speech. There is a genuine problem. In areas of deprivation people are full of hopelessness. They will not be encouraged to have dignity and to take a responsible attitude to the cost of running local government unless there are signs of improvement for their future.

I have not got time to go into all the evils of poverty caused by unemployment, but we will not make people more responsible by attacking them in this way. Even at this late stage, I hope that the Minister will co-operate and will consider the matter again in the interests of all hon. Members who are concerned about looking after their constituents.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): It will not surprise anyone in the House when I say that I do not intend to support the amendment, although the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has raised a most important question about the proposals which were suddenly sprung upon us last week. My hon. Friend the

[Mr. Ralph Howell]

Minister for Social Security should tell us whether the proposed cut will apply to the first six months of social security payments rather than the first six months of unemployment. That would be a different proposition.

It is a pity that there was not more discussion before the announcement was made so suddenly. I agree very much with my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle), although there is no satisfactory time to make such an announcement. It might have been sensible for the Government to have taken note of the new clause which I tabled, proposing to limit the amount of mortgage interest relief to, say, £30,000. Huge amounts of money are being squandered on payments to wealthy people when things go wrong. A case which has come to my notice was reported in the *Daily Mail* of 27 March; the state was paying £1,200 a month in mortgage interest relief for a person whose business had failed and whose house was mortgaged for £100,000. That is unacceptable and totally wrong. It would have been much more sensible for the Secretary of State to have discussed the matter and to have put a limit on the amount of mortgage interest relief which would be paid.

I also take the point of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar that we have been persuading people to buy council houses and have been issuing leaflets saying that in the event of unemployment their mortgage interest relief would be paid. Therefore, we ought not to spring such a change suddenly on them. The matter should be thought through carefully. There is scope for great savings to be made. There should not be an open-ended commitment. In due course, there should be a cut-off point when a house would have to be sold if the person was unable to fulfil his commitments. I urge my right hon. Friend to think more carefully about how such announcements are made.

5.45 pm

Mr. Winnick: Time is brief, but I want to make some comments because I represent a constituency in a borough with high unemployment, as the Secretary of State knows full well. The official rate of unemployment locally is 17·5 per cent. A large number of people of working age are on supplementary benefit. It is no credit to the Government, as I said yesterday, that people should be forced to live on sums of money that are totally inadequate, with the prospect of finding another job being very remote indeed.

It is difficult to imagine any measure more determined to penalise the poorest in the community than the proposal to ensure the payment of at least 20 per cent. of rates. As my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) has rightly said, it will mean that much less money will be available for the basic essentials of life. We are dealing with people for whom every single penny counts. If this sum of money has to be paid in rates, there will obviously be less money for food and other essentials. Therefore, this measure penalises the poorest. There can be no justification for it.

Even in the present Parliament it is beyond my understanding that any Back-Bench Conservative Member can bring himself to support such a measure. Any Conservative Member who votes for a measure which penalises the poorest cannot complain if such action is well publicised in his or her constituency. It is a vindictive proposal that clearly comes from No. 10 Downing street. I do not blame the Secretary of State for it. I do not think that he dreamed up the proposal. Whatever differences I have with the right hon. Gentleman, I do not think that he would bring forward such a measure on his own initiative. I think that it has come from the Prime Minister. I also believe that the Secretary of State humiliates himself by introducing the measure. The same applies to the Minister for Social Security who always likes to present himself as a reasonable person. There is nothing reasonable in what he is about to try to justify to the House today.

As for reducing the amount payable for mortgage interest relief, how can this be justified? Does it not to a large extent explain the current unpopularity of the Government? If the Government are worried, as they obviously are, about losing by-elections, about all the reverses in the local elections, and about why their standing is so poor in the opinion polls, it should not be difficult for them to understand the reason. It is because of the cuts in housing, education and so on which have been mentioned many times during the past week. It is also because of such measures as this, for example, to reduce assistance for payment of mortgage interest relief in the first six months for those who are unemployed.

What is that supposed to prove? What is the rationale behind the move? Are the Government saying that those who are unemployed for less than six months are not genuinely seeking work? Do they want to spread the poisonous lie that many of our fellow citizens who are unemployed, and who have been unable to find another job in the first six months of unemployment, do not want to work? Is that the kind of lie that the Government want to demonstrate to justify the present level of unemployment? My constituents dread being made redundant and the Secretary of State must be aware of the position as his constituency is in the west midlands. My constituents who are in their forties and fifties especially dread being made jobless because their chances of finding another job are so remote.

Many of my constituents, and this is perfectly understandable in view of the position that prevails in the west midlands, have a daily fear that they will lose their jobs. If my constituents are made jobless and so suffer all the difficulties that will accompany that, why should they be further penalised by these proposals? It is strange and hypocritical that these proposals should come from a Government who say that they are in favour of home ownership. That is a strange way of demonstrating that belief in home ownership. The Government are taking measures to penalise people who are made jobless.

I said that I would keep my remarks brief. I believe that the two measures that we are debating are contemptible and are worthy of a contemptible Administration.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): The amendments raise two major subjects and in the relatively short time available to me I will try to make some comment on these. I would like to start by considering some of the points that have been raised about the mortgage interest proposals which were sent for consultation to the Social Security Advisory Committee last week.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the House that the proposal was clearly contained as a possibility in the social security Green Paper published almost a year ago. The proposal can be found in paragraph 2.92 of that Green Paper, which concluded:

"The Government intend to discuss with building societies and other interested bodies arrangements whereby less of the burden—particularly for people on benefit for a short time—falls immediately and directly on the social security system."

I must also emphasise that that was echoed in the White Paper published last December. Paragraph 3.41 of that White Paper states:

"The Government will continue to discuss with the building societies and other major lenders what changes might be appropriate, including the possibility of a limit on the proportion of mortgage interest which would be met during an initial period in receipt of benefit."

While I acknowledge the points that my hon. Friends have made, it is fair for me to make clear that, far from suddenly emerging last week, this proposal had been clearly signalled for some time.

Mrs. Margaret Beckett (Derby, South) *rose*——

Mr. Newton: I will give way when I have finished my next point.

Two of my hon. Friends referred to the leaflets which dealt with the right to buy. I must stress that, in an issue published in September of last year, the proposal was specifically signalled to anyone reading the leaflets. In parenthesis, page 8 of the leaflet published in September, after describing the current position, states:

"However, current proposals may mean that help is not generally available during the first six months of eligibility for supplementary benefit."

That was revealed in September in a leaflet specifically published for that purpose. In an addendum in January, a passage referred to, and quoted from, the same extract that I quoted from the White Paper. Whatever else I may be told, it is wrong to suggest that these proposals were unexpected, unheralded and unheard of. That is manifestly not the case.

Mrs. Beckett: Would the Minister accept that perhaps many people did not believe that the Government meant what they were proposing? How can the Minister square what he has just told the House with the Prime Minister's comments the other day?

Mr. Newton: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister did not suggest that the proposal had not been in the Green Paper or the White Paper. The facts are stated clearly in the documents to which I have referred.

There is no mystery about the fact that the Government believed that the matter needed consideration and it is obvious from the documents that I have quoted that we were considering the matter. The proposals that we put forward last week represent the view that we have had formed on what should be put to the Social Security Advisory Committee for full consultation in the normal way for which social security legislation provides.

The hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) referred to the figures in a document sent to the Social Security Advisory Committee about the position of those in and out of work in specific circumstances. The figures were based on a family with two children and a £16,000 mortgage. Although I note that the hon. Gentleman suggests that there are very few people in that position, it is unarguable that, on figures that relate to a net income of £120 a week and a £16,000 mortgage, the income after meeting housing costs for a family in work would be £68·50 and for someone out of work, in receipt of supplementary benefit, the income would be £74. I would have thought my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) would have attached some importance to that point.

Some hon. Members questioned whether that position is fair, especially when one compares the position of those in work with those on benefits but not on supplementary benefits who have relatively low incomes. Those people do not receive comparable help. There is an obvious issue in relation to incentives and that is clearly a factor in what is known as the unemployment trap. There is widespread agreement in the House that we need to tackle that and many of the Bill's proposals, including the family credit proposals, are designed to tackle that problem by helping families in work.

Besides those problems, which must be considered and which cannot be dismissed, there is the wider issue whether it is correct that, even for short periods of difficulty that cause someone to be on supplementary benefit, it is right to expect the taxpayer immediately to pick up the bill. Part of that bill will be met by people who are meeting their own mortgages out of relatively modest incomes derived from some other source rather than supplementary benefit.

It is well known, and is a credit to the building societies, that building societies try to help those who find themselves in short-term difficulty. Such difficulties can occur for a variety of reasons and these by no means affect only those who may be in receipt of supplementary benefit. The notion that the building societies will rush into foreclosure is wide of the mark. In its formal response to the Green Paper, the Building Societies Association assured us that it would handle any change in arrangements sympathetically and would continue with its basic aim to help as many people as possible to achieve home ownership.

Having weighed all the issues, we brought forward the proposals that were published in detail last week. The first of those states that the amount of mortgage interest payable with supplementary benefit should be limited to half for the first six months on benefit for all claimants aged under 60.

The second proposal is that those remaining on benefit after that period would, as now, have their mortgage interest payments met in full.

The third major proposal, which is also highly relevant to the balance of the consideration of these proposals, is that we would allow interest on arrears which have accumulated in those cases where the six-month limitation to qualify for benefit causes such arrears to attract specific assistance and give encouragement to lending organisations to re-schedule loans in appropriate cases where the interruption of earnings turned out to be longer term.

The fourth proposal is a smaller point but is one which the House should consider. We propose a further change in the regulations to enable home owners who take out mortgage protection policies to benefit from them through a special supplementary benefit disregard of the income from such policies. In other words, we are trying to encourage and assist the provision of insurance against the risks that a home owner may sometimes incur.

We estimate that about 90,000 people might be affected by these proposals, whereas there are 6 million borrowers from building societies. We also estimate that the average benefit involved for people on benefit for six months or more would be about £200. That helps to put the matter into perspective.

[Mr. Newton]

This is a reasonable and fair way in which to strike a balance between the taxpayer, the borrower and the lender. The regime in Britain is known to be more generous than that in any other country in the world. The Government are trying to ensure through the Bill and other social security——

It being Six o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution [19 May], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 193, Noes 321.

Division No. 186] **[6.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Maddon, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Chris Smith and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter

Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Donald Thompson.

Question accordingly negatived.

MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *then proceeded to put forthwith the Question on amendments moved by a member of the Government up to the end of clause 33.*

Clause 32

THE SOCIAL FUND AND SOCIAL FUND OFFICERS

Amendment made: No. 72, in page 40, line 21, at end insert—

'(3A) The Secretary of State may allocate an amount, or allocate different amounts for different purposes, for awards by a particular social fund officer or group of officers in a financial year.'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 33

AWARDS ETC.

Amendments made: No. 73, in page 41, line 1, leave out subsection (3).

No. 74, in page 41, line, 4, at end insert—

'(3A) A social fund officer may direct that an award shall be payable in specified instalments at specified times.'

No. 75, in page 41, line 9, leave out subsection (6) and insert—

'(6) If a social fund officer directs that an award under section 32(1)*(b)* above is to be repayable, it may be recovered out of the estate of the deceased, and by no other means.'.

No. 77, in page 41, line 28, leave out 'applicant's'.

No. 78, in page 41, line 29, leave out from first 'the' to 'may' in line 30 and insert

'existence of resources from which the need'.

No. 79, in page 41, line 35, leave out 'subsection (3)' and insert 'section 32(3A)'.

No. 162, in page 42, line 1, leave out subsection (12).

No. 81, in page 42, line 3, at end insert—

'(13) In this section "married couple" and "unmarried couple" are to be construed in accordance with Part II of this Act and regulations made under it.'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Schedule 3

INDUSTRIAL INJURIES AND DISEASES

Mrs. Beckett: I beg to move amendment No. 82, in page 93, leave out lines 20 to 23 and insert—

'3.—(1) After subsection (1) of section 57 (disablement benefit) the following subsection shall be inserted—'.

The amendment seeks to do what we were unable to do in Committee because of the lateness of the hour at which the Government's proposals on industrial injuries were tabled. It seeks to remove the provision that the cut-off point for entitlement to industrial injury benefit should be at a 14 per cent. degree of disability.

It is a remarkably unfortunate coincidence that, as the Government confirmed in Committee, a cut-off point at that level will mean that about 90 per cent. of people who now gain awards under the industrial injury scheme will no longer receive a reward of any kind. Hon. Members who have experience of working in manufacturing industry or other industries where work may incur the possibility of an accident or hon. Members with constituency experience of the damage that is done to people who spend their working lives in heavy manufacturing or heavy engineeering will be alarmed at these proposals.

6.15 pm

Both in my constituency and outside it I have an extensive acquaintance with people who earn their living in heavy engineering. I cannot recall a single person of my acquaintance who has worked most of his or her life in such an industry and in jobs where there is a risk of physical injury who is not in some way damaged. Some have lost small joints and many suffer from debilitating back injuries which attract less sympathy because they are invisible but which are extremely painful. There are many ways in which people are damaged by such work. Those of us who number such individuals among our friends and acquaintances have seen them dragging themselves about because their bodies have been damaged by heavy work.

When we discussed this matter in Committee the Minister said that there might be a problem of resources. He argued, as the Government have so often argued during the Bill's passage, that they wished to simplify the schemes that are being put forward. It is unfortunate that, whenever the Government propose simplification, it always removes a more beneficial scheme and rarely gives an advantage to others which has been enjoyed only by a few.

My union, the Transport and General Workers Union, has sent me examples of the types of people who will lose out under these proposals unless our amendment is passed. This year a person was awarded £2,700 in compensation for the amputation of his third finger, but under these proposals he would not receive a penny. This year a person who lost his ring finger was awarded more than £1,500, but under the proposals he would not receive a penny. This year a person lost four toes on one foot—a disabling and painful injury—and was awarded £2,075, but under these proposals he would not receive a penny.

Injuries not involving amputation will also be affected. A person who had scaffolding fall on his neck and spinal column and who suffered injuries to his neck, shoulders and back received an award of a 4 per cent. payment for life and more than £1,000. Again, under these proposals he would not receive a penny. A conductress who was thrown against a hand rail when a bus braked sharply and suffered chest and neck injuries—the type of injuries which are likely to lead to increased pain and suffering later in life—received an award of £1,600, but she would not receive a penny under these proposals. A further case, which may appeal particularly to Conservative Members, is of a security express driver who was shot in the leg. He will suffer permanently from the effects of this wound and he received an award of a 7 per cent. payment for life and £1,660. Again, he would not receive a penny under the provisions of the Bill.

In Committee the Minister explained that the total savings expected under the proposals would be between £46 million and £56 million, and that net of any improvements it would be between £40 million and £50 million. This is a particularly unfortunate example of the way in which the Government seek to remove at the stroke of a pen arrangements for which people have contributed, and which have been negotiated, fought for and won with considerable difficulty.

It is not only those with injuries who will lose, but 200 to 300 widows are likely to lose their pension entitlement, and there will be other corresponding losses under the proposals. The Government have made some small amendments in the light of comments made in Committee, but they are insufficient to persuade us that the amendment should not be pressed to a vote. Ninety per cent. who receive benefit under the existing system will lose out under this provision. The Government's proposals are wholly indefensible.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I shall deal with widows and their allowances and payments. The National Associaton of Widows has written to me, and my hon. Friend the Minister was good enough to have a meeting with the director of the association, Mrs. June Hemer, a few weeks ago. My hon. Friend kindly wrote to the association giving some details of individual calculations, with which I shall not weary the House today. In reply, the association has sent me a series of comments on those calculations which show that, for widows without dependent children at various ages of 40, 45, 50 and 60 plus, whereas on the Ministry's calculations there would be certain small effects, on the association's calculations there would appear to be significant losses.

Therefore, as chairman of the all-party group on widows, I should be extremely glad if my hon. Friend the Minister would look into the matter and check the figures against those supplied by the association, which has done a marvellous job over many years in fighting for the rights of widows. Would he be good enough to look into the matter and let me have his comments, if he is unable to give me detailed replies now to the calculations that I know that his Department has already received?

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): I support the amendment. I shall be brief in the hope that we shall reach amendment No. 210, on the abolition of reduced rate benefits.

The omens for Government flexibility are not high, judging by yesterday afternoon and evening, despite the high-mindedness displayed by the Secretary of State at the close of play last night, who said that he would look again at one item that concerned many hon. Members on both sides of the House. The Minister, perhaps uncharacteristically, was rather more hard-faced. To be fair to the Minister, he usually is fairly reasonable, but yesterday there was a certain smack of Tebbitry in the way in which he would not countenance the introduction of a special allowance for the severely disabled, who will lose as a result of the Bill, nor look at specific community care additions for them. I hope that a night's sleep has made him feel more reasonable.

We have heard that the savings to be made by this measure are in the region of £40 million to £50 million. Set in the context of the social security budget and of the scale of undertaking that will remain as long as we have any system of social security, and as long as the Government's policies persist, it is not a significant sum of money. However, the Government's arguments will no doubt be similar to those that they made against the case for the severely disabled last night—that even if the sums are not significant, the money goes to significant numbers of people. The categories who will lose as a result of this provision should be exempted, and that should be done by the Government thinking again. I hope that the Minister will show a little more compassion than he was able to show yesterday and will heed the pleas from both sides of the House. I hope that he will say that, even if he will not accept this amendment, he will give an undertaking to redress the injustices that are likely to result.

Mr. Andy Stewart (Sherwood): During my lifetime I have had numerous accidents at work and have the scars to prove it. However, being self-employed, I knew that no disablement benefit was due to me, and that was acceptable. What is not acceptable is the proposal that no benefit should be paid for disablement below 14 per cent., whether temporary or permanent. If it is accepted, many quite serious injuries will go uncompensated. For example, a middle finger is rated at 12 per cent. For those who work in my constituency's largest industry, coal mining, such a loss is commonplace. Many other injuries, involving the eyes, back and knees and resulting in permanent disability, attract assessments of less than 14 per cent. Taking away a benefit that has become part and parcel of the accepted service conditions of coal mining would be highly contentious and unacceptable to my constituents.

I can give my hon. Friend the Minister some information that might induce him to reconsider his decision. At Sherwood's 10 collieries it is normal to have five serious accidents a week per pit, making 50 in all, ranging from 1 per cent. upwards, with 80 per cent. of those accidents under 14 per cent. If my hon. Friend insists on this course of action, those who have suffered such injuries will receive no industrial benefit. I further remind him that, with 25 per cent. of my electorate working in an industry that suffers from a high incidence of industrial injuries, all permanent disabilities resulting from industrial accidents should attract basic disablement benefit. I shall vote accordingly.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): This in one of the wicked moves that the Government have made in the Bill. They are taking benefits away from people who have already paid for such benefits. I am pleased that the hon. Member for Sherwood (Mr Stewart) mentioned the mining industry, although he comes from the farming industry. The accidents that will be affected by this move occur in mining, farming and heavy industries such as engineering, shipbuilding and the like. People will not like this move, and I hope that they wake up to what the Government are doing.

While they work in these industries, people are contributing to the social security fund in the hope that, if something happens to them and they have certain disabilities, they will receive a payment in lieu of the disabilities. That payment for what has happened to them has been made since the welfare state was introduced. It is right and proper for me to point out that this is yet another Government move to do away gradually with the welfare state. This is a shocking state of affairs.

I sat for three months on the Committee considering the Bill, and I know that the issue is broader than just the disablement benefit. The Government are having a go at many things. As my hon. Friends have said in other debates, money is being taken away from other benefits besides this one. That is why I felt that I had to say something this afternoon. I should have loved to contribute yesterday, but I could not because the guillotine meant that there was a lack of time. It will be on us again at seven o'clock, but I wanted to make my point.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I share the concern expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) and by the hon. Member for Ashfield (Mr. Haynes) about this provision. In areas such as mine, where there is not only heavy engineering, but the coalfield and other industries, it is a comfort to those who work in these injury-prone industries that there is some fall back.

We have good safety records in our part of the world, and it has won many awards for the prevention of injury. However, with the best will in the world, injuries happen and it is some comfort to the workers to know that they have a contract of insurance so that if they are disabled—for example, if they lose a finger—they will at least get some compensation.

I hope that the Minister persuades the Government to change direction, although I doubt that they will. At least we are trying to persuade them. We shall vote for the amendment, in the hope that we can carry many Conservative Members with us and win the vote to defeat the Government in their wicked move. Suddenly, out of the blue, people's contract, for which they have paid over the years, is ripped up. It is an industrial contract, but they are told that they will receive compensation only if the injury is over 14 per cent. If it is under 14 per cent., they will receive nothing.

I understand the desire to provide help where it is needed and I realise that there will be a higher level of payment for minor injuries. However, I ask my hon. Friend to think again about this. The fact that there will

[Mr. David Ashby]

be compensation for these kinds of injuries is a great comfort to these people. Therefore, I have my doubts about this part of the Bill.

6.30 pm

Mr. Bill Michie (Sheffield, Heeley): I spent the whole of my working life outside Parliament in industry. It is a sad day when this Parliament discusses taking away so many of the advantages that were gained over many years by people who were dedicated to helping those who work in dangerous environments and to getting society in general to recognise that there are dangers. People should be able to take comfort from the knowledge that at least they will be provided with some compensation if they find that they are in difficulties.

Shop stewards spent many years fighting to ensure that proper compensation was provided for those who were injured. This helped not just those who were injured physically or psychologically. It prompted industrialists to create better working conditions that helped to avoid many of the accidents that would otherwise have occurred. It was a two-pronged effort. It provided a stimulus to co-operation between management and work force in order to create an environment that prevents as many accidents as possible. There are bound to be industrial accidents. However small an injury may be, there ought to be compensation for it.

Many of the problems relate not just to physical injury but to the psychological effect of the injury on the injured. The character of the person will determine the amount of psychological damage that is done. We cannot close our eyes to that problem. Members of Parliament cannot say, "Oh, it's only a finger, so it does not matter very much." It matters a great deal to many people. I should not volunteer to have a finger chopped off just to prove the point that it really does not matter. It is important to provide as much protection as possible for those who work in dangerous occupations. We do not want to return to the dark ages when it did not matter whether a worker was injured, or even killed. However, that is the aim of this part of the Bill.

Mr. Newton: I understand, as I understood in Committee, the reservations that have been expressed by hon. Members on both sides of the House about these proposals. However, the Government gave this matter very careful consideration before deciding to introduce them, and I am unable to accept the amendment. We believe that it is right to seek to concentrate the industrial injuries scheme more closely upon the more severely disabled and to provide compensation for loss of earnings as distinct from the more limited degrees of disablement. They are defined in the Bill as 14 per cent.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): In my professional experience as a solicitor I found that the administrative procedure involved in making claims for these smaller, albeit important, accidents was extremely cumbersome. If the amendment is not passed, there will be savings, but will the savings be given to those who are more severely disabled?

Mr. Newton: My hon. Friend is right. That is one of the factors that the Government have in mind. Many of the claims that we suggest should no longer be met in the way that they were met in the past cost more to decide than the amount of benefit that is paid. That can best be illustrated by saying that compensation for disablement that is found to be less than 14 per cent., much of which is temporary rather than permanent, is about £400. I accept that that is an average and that, as with all averages, it disguises variations. However, it helps to put the matter in perspective.

It is important that the House should understand that we are trying to ensure that compensation continues to be paid for loss of earnings as distinct from disablement at every level of disablement. I accept that there is a net saving, along the lines mentioned by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett), but for the severely disabled the proposals contain a significant improvement that can best be illustrated by saying that 3,700 severely disabled people in this scheme will gain up to £25 a week extra, provided that they have lost earnings.

The present rules mean that the severely disabled receive compensation for disability but that they are debarred from receiving compensation for loss of earnings. By making it possible for them to receive compensation for loss of earnings on top of the maximum amount of disablement pension, the most hard hit will receive an extra sum of up to £25 a week.

Another group of people who are more severely disabled than those to whom I have referred will also be assisted to a significant extent. About 3,500 people whose disablement is between 14 and 19 per cent. will have their disablement pensions rounded up to the 20 per cent. rate. They, too, will gain from the proposals. In both cases, they are more significanly disabled than those for whom we propose to cease paying compensation for disablement, but I emphasise that we shall continue to pay compensation for loss of earnings.

Mr. Kennedy: The Minister for Social Security advances a very clear argument, with which I do not take issue. However, I take issue with the principle that those who hitherto would have received compensation because of industrial injury will not now do so. The Minister is not addressing that argument of principle which is a cause of concern to both sides of the House. How can that be right or just?

Mr. Newton: I am slightly puzzled by the way in which the hon. Gentleman phrases his intervention. He is attracted to some parts of what I said but not to others. Inescapably, we feel that it is right to look at these proposals as a package, in terms of a balance within the industrial injuries scheme, and to focus more closely on the severely disabled. I made no secret in Committee or in the documents that we have published on the subject that we place this in the context of the help that we are able to give to the sick and disabled as a whole.

I do not want to go too far down the track that the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy) opened up for me a few moments ago in relation to community care, but one of the aims of our income support proposals is to provide a significant increase in the amount of support that is given to those who are classified as long-term sick and disabled who are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit, and who under our proposals will receive income support. For that substantial group of people, for whom nothing like the industrial injuries scheme exists if they have been injured at home or

elsewhere, we are seeking to provide assistance through the income support scheme, amounting to about £50 million.

I do not run away from the fact that we have sought to look at the needs of sick and disabled people as a whole, and to try to strike a balance between different groups of people whose disabilities may have arisen in different ways. Indeed, I see my right hon. Friend the Member for Daventry (Mr. Prentice) in the Chamber. In the past, he has had responsibilities like mine, and he will know some of the problems.

Mr. Reg Prentice (Daventry): My hon. Friend has tempted me to intervene. I speak not only as one of his predecessors, but as someone who, for about six years, specialised some time ago as a trade union official in the problem of industrial injuries. Repayment of the debt that society owes, particularly to those who are severely disabled, together with a concentration of help on those people is long overdue. When I was doing my hon. Friend's job, I put out a consultative paper. I am delighted with the provision, as it will help the most severely disabled people in the most practical way.

Mr. Newton: I did myself and the House a favour by referring to my right hon. Friend. He is right, in that significant aspects of the proposals in the Bill were contained in the White Paper which, if I remember rightly, was published in 1981. I do not recall the exact date, but my right hon. Friend may well have been the Minister responsible. We are seeking to focus help in that way.

Mr. Andy Stewart: Does my hon. Friend recall that that report also said that 10 per cent., and not 14 per cent., would be the starting figure?

Mr. Newton: I recognise that the proposals are not exactly the same as those in the White Paper. We have modified them to take account of developments and of other considerations, including the proposals for disabled people in other parts of the Bill.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mr. Stewart) also raised a point about multiple accidents. It is a sad fact that many miners suffer several accidents over a period, and they also suffer from chest diseases such as pneumoconiosis. I hope that it is clear to my hon. Friend that we shall add together the effects of all industrial injuries and pay benefit if the total disablement is 14 per cent. or more. There are specific proposals in the Bill for bringing together successive disabling or damaging accidents in the way that I have described.

We have given this issue careful consideration. We recognise the points made, but we have been concerned to look at the needs of the most severely disabled to ensure that the industrial injuries scheme is as effectively focused as possible on that group, and to take a small but useful step towards fairer treatment as between sick and disabled people — whatever the causes of their sickness or disability—and the other proposals in the Bill.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 195, Noes 296.

Division No. 187] **[6.42 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Smyth, Rev W. M. *(Belfast S)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*

Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Sean Hughes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Cope, John
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John

Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Gerald Malone

Question accordingly negatived.

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 207, in page 96, line 3, at end insert—

'(11) A person who—

(a) attains pensionable age after this section comes into force; and

(b) has retired from regular employment before that day; and

(c) was entitled to reduce earnings allowance on the day immediately before he retired from regular employment,

shall be treated as entitled as from the day on which he retires from regular employment to reduced earnings allowance at a rate not higher at any time than that at which the allowance was payable to him immediately before he retired from regular employment.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendment No. 208.

Mr. Newton: I understand that it is the wish of the Opposition and to their convenience that the amendments be moved formally. I should make it clear that the amendments are of some importance. When we discussed clause 36 and schedule 3 in Committee I said that we would be bringing forward proposals to offset additional earnings-related pension and the invalidity addition against reduced earnings allowance, currently known as special hardship allowance. These amendments are directed to that aim.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 208, in page 96, line 5, at end insert—

'(3) A person who—

(a) is over pensionable age on the day on which this paragraph comes into force; and

(b) has retired from regular employment before that day; and

(c) was entitled on the day immediately before that day to an increase under section 60,

shall be treated as entitled as from the day on which this paragraph comes into force to reduced earnings allowance at a rate not higher at any time than that at which the increase was payable to him immediately before that day.

(4) Where for any period commencing before 6th April 1987 a person is entitled both to reduced earnings allowance under section 59A and to an additional pension of a long-term benefit or, if the long-term benefit is invalidity pension, to either an invalidity allowance or an additional pension, or both, his reduced earnings allowance shall be reduced in respect of any part of the period falling on or after 6th April 1987 by the amount of any increase in the additional pension or invalidity allowance as the result of an order under section 60 above taking effect on or after that date.

(5) Where for any period commencing on or after 6th April 1987 a person is entitled as mentioned in sub-paragraph (4) above, his reduced earnings allowance shall be reduced by the amount of any additional pension or invalidity allowance to which he is entitled.

(6) Where a reduction falls to be made under sub-paragraph (4) or (5) above, the person to whom it falls to be made shall be entitled to reduced earnings allowance only if there is a balance after the reduction and, if there is such a balance, of an amount equal to it.

(7) Where the weekly rate of a benefit is reduced under section 29 of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975, there shall be subtracted from the amount which would otherwise fall to be deducted under sub-paragraph (4) or (5) above equal to the reduction under that section.

(8) In the preceding sub-paragraphs references to an additional pension are references to that pension after any increase under section 9(3) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 but without any increase under Schedule 1, paragraphs 1 and 2, to that Act.'

No. 164, in page 96, line 34, leave out from 'treated' to end of line 35 and insert

'as satisfying the conditions of entitlement to a widow's allowance specified in subsection (1) of section 24 and her entitlement to the allowance under that section shall, subject to the proviso to subsection (2) of that section, continue for so long as she would have been entitled to a pension under section 67 at the initial rate.'.

No. 165, in page 96, line 41, leave out from 'treated' to end of line 42 and insert

'as satisfying the conditions of entitlement to a widowed mother's allowance under section 25 and her entitlement to the allowance shall, subject to the proviso to subsection (3) of that section, continue for so long as she satisfies either of the conditions specified in paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of subsection (1) of that section.'.

No. 166, in page 97, line 4, leave out from 'treated' to end of line 5 and insert

'as satisfying the conditions of entitlements to a widow's pension under section 26 and the pension shall be payable for any period during which she satisfies the provisions of subsection (3) of that section.'.

No. 167, in page 97, line 7, leave out from 'shall' to end of line 10 and insert

'be—

(a) in the case of a widow who was entitled to an allowance under section 70 after her husband died, but has ceased to be so entitled, the rate for a widow of the age she was when she so ceased;

(b) in the case of a widow who was so entitled, the rate for a widow of the age she was when her late husband died,

and for the purposes of this subsection a woman who was under the age of 40 at the relevant time shall be treated as having been of the age of 40 at that time.'.

No. 168, in page 97, line 14, at end insert

'and shall be that rate notwithstanding anything in subsection (3) of that section.'.

No. 169, in page 97, line 15, leave out sub-paragraph (7).

No. 170, in page 97, line 25, leave out

'but does not fall within any of sub-paragraphs (2) to (7) above'.

No. 171, in page 97, line 28, leave out

'the deceased was at his death entitled to child benefit'

and insert

'the widow is entitled to child benefit if one of the conditions specified in section 43(1) of this Act is for the time being satisfied with respect to the child and the child is either—

(a) a son or daughter of the widow and her late husband; or

(b) a child in respect of whom her late husband was immediately before his death entitled to child benefit; or

(c) if the widow and her late husband were residing together immediately before his death, a child in respect of whom she was then entitled to child benefit.'.

No. 172, in page 97, line 35, after 'not', insert 'wholly'.

No. 173, in page 97, line 42, leave out 'A retirement pension' and insert

'B retirement pension at the same weekly rate as her widow's pension.'.

No. 174, in page 98, line 28, after '1948', insert

'and in respect of which a disablement gratuity was not paid to him under this Act after a final assessment of his disablement'.

No. 175, in page 98, line 36, at end insert

'and in respect of which a disablement gratuity was not paid to him under this Act after a final assessment of his disablement.'.

[Mr. Newton]

No. 176, in page 98, leave out lines 43 and 44 and insert—

"14. In section 108 (disablement questions)—

(a) in subsection (1) the following words shall be added at the end, but not as part of paragraph *(b)*—

"but questions relating to the aggregation of percentages of disablement resulting from different accidents are not disablement questions."; and

(b) the following subsection shall be inserted after subsection (4)—".

No. 177, in page 99, line 2, at end insert—

"14A. In Schedule 8 (assessment of extent of disablement)—

(a) paragraph 4 shall be renumbered as sub-paragraph (1) of that paragraph; and

(b) the following sub-paragraph shall be inserted after that sub-paragraph—

"(2) where—

(a) the assessed extent of a claimant's disablement amounts to 13 per cent. or less;

(b) it seems likely that the assessed extent of a claimant's disablement will be aggregated with the assessed extent of any present disablement of his and the likely aggregate amounts to 13 per cent. or less,

the period to be taken into account by the assessment of the disablement shall not end earlier than any date by which it seems likely that the extent of the disablement or the aggregate will be at least 1 per cent.".".

No. 83, in page 99, line 5, at end insert—

"Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 (c. 41)

16.—(1) Section 2 of the Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979 (conditions of entitlement to lump sum payments) shall be amended as follows.

(2) At the end of subsection (1)*(a)* there shall be added the words "or, subject to subsection (3A) below, would be payable to him in respect of it but for his disablement amounting to less than the appropriate percentage".

(3) At the end of subsection (2)*(b)* there shall be added the words "or, subject to subsection (3A) below, would have been so payable to him—

(i) but for his disablement amounting to less than the appropriate percentage; or

(ii) but for his not having claimed the benefit; or

(iii) but for his having died before he had suffered from the disease for the appropriate period".

(4) In subsection (3) the following definitions shall be inserted before the definition of "death benefit"—

"'the appropriate percentage' means, in the case of any disease, the percentage specified in subsection (1) of section 57 of the Social Security Act 1975 or, if regulations have been made under section 77 of that Act specifying a different percentage in relation to that disease, the percentage specified in the regulations;

'the appropriate period' means, in the case of any disease, the period specified in subsection (4) of the said section 57 or, if regulations have been made under the said section 77 specifying a different period in relation to that disease, the period specified in the regulations;".

(5) The following subsection shall be inserted after that subsection—

"(3A) No amount is payable under this Act in respect of disablement amounting to less than 1 per cent.".'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 39

ABOLITION OF REDUCED RATE OF SHORT-TERM BENEFITS

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): I beg to move amendment No. 210, in page 43, line 31, leave out Clause 39.

Time is again at a premium and I shall move the amendment in the briefest of terms. Its purpose is to help some of the most needful people with claims on the attention of this House. The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation said:

"The abolition of reduced rate benefits will have a significant effect on . . . people who will cease to be entitled to a contributory benefit during permanent incapacity."

The Minister estimated that 6,500 people who are entitled to receive invalidity benefit will be affected. Of those, 4,500 will receive supplementary benefit. The change proposed by the Government is thus consistent with much of the philosophy of the Bill, namely, that state benefits should be based on means tests. That is objectionable and degrading. Contributory benefits may discriminate against many disabled people but the correct solution is that initiated by successive Governments in the 1970s, notably the Labour Government of 1974-79, of introducing non-contributory and non-means tested benefits.

In Committee the Minister questioned whether people who had paid only modest contributions deserved to receive invalidity benefit for life. In fact, many of the people affected will have paid contributions for several years but will have a gap in their record as a result, for example, of giving up work to care for children.

In 1984 when discussing the severe disablement allowance the Minister sought to allay fears by stressing how easy it was to obtain contributory benefits. The people under discussion were those aged 20-plus, who would be likely to qualify for starting credits. Therefore, the main issue was passing the first contribution test, not the second, which is the relevant test for reduced rate unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit. No suggestion has been made that starting credits will be abolished, although the logic of the Minister's argument would lead in that direction. Therefore, at the moment this group would continue to be protected.

On the basis of what he said in 1984, the Minister can now fairly be accused of inconsistency. When it suited him then, he praised the easy access to invalidity benefit. He now seeks to make it more difficult.

The amendment is a serious one which I hope will be given due consideration in another place. There is no time now to press the amendment here. I hope that the Government will reconsider their position and explain, more fully than they have so far, what they intend to do in another place to help the people I am concerned with.

Mr. Newton: As I think the right hon. Member for Manchester Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) knows, we have explained the Government's thinking behind the change in reduced rates generally, to which the amendment is directed, and in particular we commented in Committee on the position of those whose entitlement to invalidity benefit may be affected by the proposal to abolish the reduced rates, including the reduced rates of sickness benefit——

7 pm

It being Seven o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution [19 May], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Amendment negatived.

Schedule 4

STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY ETC.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): I beg to move amendment No. 185, in page 99, line 27, leave out from 'contributions' to end of line 33 and insert

'paid in respect of statutory maternity pay; or

(ii) by reference to secondary Class 1 contributions paid in respect of statutory sick pay; or

(iii) by reference to the aggregate of secondary Class 1 contributions paid in respect of statutory maternity pay and secondary Class 1 contributions paid in respect of statutory sick pay'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient also to take Government amendment No. 184.

Mr. Major: This is a technical amendment to correct a drafting defect in the provision that enables employers to be compensated for their secondary national insurance contribution liability on payments of statutory maternity pay. It is analogous to amendment No. 184.

The intention of amendment No. 184 is to make more flexible the power through regulations to compensate employers for their secondary national insurance contributions liability on payments of statutory sick pay. In the interests of administrative simplicity for employers and the Department, that provision was intended to make it possible for employers to be compensated at the same percentage rate for their secondary national insurance contribution liability on statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay. This drafting amendment ensures that that will be possible.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 48

REGULATIONS ABOUT CLAIMS FOR AND PAYMENTS OF BENEFIT

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 85, in page 53, line 5, at end insert—

'(4) Subsections (1)*(g)*, *(k)*, *(n)*, *(r)* and *(s)* above shall have effect as if statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay were benefits to which this section applies.'

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 86 to 89.

Mr. Major: This is essentially a tidying-up amendment to include statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay within the general powers for making regulations applying to other benefits in the clause, rather than relying on the separate powers currently contained in section 8 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 for statutory sick pay. No change in policy in payment of statutory sick pay is intended. I offer that unqualified assurance. As explained in Committee, the arrangements for the payment of statutory maternity pay will be fully spelt out in regulations. They are generally accepted to follow those for statutory sick pay.

The amendment refers only to the specific sections listed, which relate to payment aspects. The other provisions, which deal largely with claiming benefits, are inappropriate for statutory sick pay and statutory maternity pay as, unlike social security benefits, an employee does not need to make a formal claim to be entitled. If he or she satisfies the conditions, the employer is liable to pay.

Before leaving the amendment, I shall refer to one other matter that we discussed in Committee. The hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) will recall that my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security undertook to look again at when an employer fails to pay statutory maternity pay or statutory sick pay even though the DHSS adjudication officer has ruled that he is liable to pay it. As the hon. Lady knows, in the present statutory sick pay scheme, the last resort is for the employee to take action in the civil courts to obtain payment of statutory sick pay. That happens very rarely — we know of only four cases. Nevertheless, I accept that it is not a wholly satisfactory state of affairs.

I am pleased to tell the hon. Lady that, having given further consideration to the situation, we have decided to use the powers conveyed by the amendment to provide in regulations that the Secretary of State will, in certain circumstances, take over the payment of statutory sick pay or statutory maternity pay. The employee will therefore no longer be faced with the prospect of having to take the employer to court if he fails to comply with the adjudication officer's or a social security appeal tribunal's decision. In those circumstances, the employer will be liable to prosecution by the Department for failure to pay. I hope that the intention of the amendment will be generally welcomed by the House.

Amendment No. 86 and the consequential amendments seek to bring statutory maternity pay within the new unified adjudication provisions. The amendments match those made for statutory sick pay in Committee. It was not possible to cover statutory maternity pay at that time as the Committee had yet to debate the new clauses on statutory maternity pay.

The amendments are not controversial, and follow precisely what has already been agreed for statutory sick pay. The right of both the employee and employer to use and be notified of decisions taken in connection with statutory maternity pay is preserved, and similar rights of appeal to a commissioner are given both to trade unions and employers' organisations.

The final amendment, No. 89, specifies questions that are for determination by the Secretary of State.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 49

ADJUDICATION

Amendments made: No. 86, in page 53, line 38 at end insert—

'*(bb)* Statutory maternity pay;'.

No. 87, in page 54, line 1, after 'pay', insert 'and statutory maternity pay'.

No. 88, in page 54, line 7, after 'pay', insert 'or statutory maternity pay'.—*[Mr. Major]*

Schedule 5

AMENDMENT OF ENACTMENTS

Amendment made: No. 89, in page 111, line 37, at end insert—

(d) any question arising under Part V of this Act (including Schedule 4 to this Act) or regulations under it as to—

(i) whether a person is, or was, an employee or employer of another;

[Mr. Major]

(iii) whether an employer is entitled to make any deduction from his contributions payments in accordance with regulations under Part I of Schedule 4,

(iii) whether a payment falls to be made to an employer in accordance with the regulations,

(iv) the amount that falls to be so deducted or paid;

(v) whether two or more employers or two or more contracts of service are, by virtue of regulations made under section 47(2) above to be treated as one,

and any question arising under regulations under section 43(8) above.'. *[Mr. Major.]*

Clause 50

OVER-PAYMENTS

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): I beg to move amendment No. 198, in page 55, line 8, leave out from 'that' to end of line 11 and insert

'any person has failed to use due care and diligence throughout to avoid overpayment of benefit and in consequence of such failure to use due care and diligence'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: No. 199, in page 55, line 19, leave out

'the misrepresentation or failure to disclose'

and insert

'the failure to use due care and diligence'.

No. 200, in page 55, line 22, leave out

'who misrepresented the fact or failed to disclose it'

and insert

'who failed to use due care and diligence.'.

No. 202, in clause 52, page 57, line 30, at end insert 'dishonestly'.

No. 203, in page 57, line 33, leave out paragraph *(b)*.

No. 204, in page 57, line 39, leave out paragraph *(d)*.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: The first three of these six amendments deal with the criteria that have to be established in the test for recovery of overpayments, and the final three deal with the criteria that have to be proved so that a prosecution for social security fraud can succeed. They are the first of several amendments suggested by the working party on the endorsement of social security offences which was recently established by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, under the chairmanship of Sir Norman Price who, until recently, was chairman of the Board of the Inland Revenue. The amendments are concerned both with prosecution for social security fraud and with recovering overpayments made to claimants.

At this stage, I should make it clear that the amendments are tabled as probing amendments, designed to elicit the Government's response to the suggestions that they contain, which are also contained in the working party report. They have the support in principle of the parliamentary all-party penal affairs group, of which I have the honour to be chairman. We hope that the Minister will, even in a preliminary way, be able to make a positive and constructive response as a prelude to their being dealt with more effectively and permanently in another place, when they will be tabled by members of the parliamentary group there.

The first three amendments, Nos. 198, 199 and 200, provide that the test for the recovery of overpayments from claimants should be whether the claimant exercised "due care and diligence" in making the claim. Legislation currently applies several different tests for the recovery of overpayments. First, there is the Social Security Act 1975, which provides that where contributory benefits have been paid under a decision that is rescinded on review, or in later proceedings, repayment must be required unless the claimant can show that he or she acted with due care and diligence to avoid incorrect payment.

That is no more than the concept that I am trying to apply across the board in this legislation. That criterion imposes a duty to be careful, not just honest. The same rules apply to the recovery of child benefit and mobility allowance. Not only is that one of the many different tests that are applied for the recovery of state benefit, but it is considered acceptable and reasonable in the circumstances that I have described. It might help my argument on why it should be applied in the Bill.

The second test for recovery of state benefit is that applied to supplementary benefit under section 20 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976. It provides for the recovery of any expenditure from a person who

"fraudulently or otherwise"

—I emphasise the words "or otherwise"—

"misrepresents, or fails to disclose, any material fact".

The claimant who exercises due care and diligence in that case is not exempted. The cost of recovery can be recovered, in addition to the overpaid benefit.

The third test for the recovery of benefits, which is even stricter in this case, applies to family income supplement. Overpayments may be recovered if it can be established that the payments were not the claimant's fault and if it can be established that the claimant has not disclosed all the material facts. As the House realises, that is a far stricter provision than the previous two, as the burden of disclosure is placed clearly and firmly on the shoulders of the claimant.

A fourth test applies in respect of housing benefit. Any overpayment is recoverable, even if it is caused by official error, except in the case of certificated benefit paid, for example, to recipients of supplementary benefit.

There would appear to be a need, at least prima facie, for standardisation in respect of the four test which can be applied in different categories of social security payments or state benefits. Clause 50 tackles that by applying the currrent test for recovery of supplementary benefit, where, fraudulently or otherwise, a person has misrepresented, or failed to disclose, any material facts under the Social Security Act 1975.

In my view and that of the NACRO working party, it would be preferable to apply to all benefits the test of due care and diligence, which previously applied to Social Security Act benefits. The three amendments are specifically designed to do that. Clearly, we would be less likely to penalise careful claimants who are overpaid through no fault of their own but through administrative error or confusion. It is important for the Bill to take care over that specific point because, as my right hon. and hon. Friends have made clear in previous debates, both this evening and yesterday, hardship can be imposed by a decision to recover overpayment from a claimant, who is usually one of the most highly disadvantaged and poorest members of our community, especially if the overpayment was not the claimant's fault and the money has been spent. Those people are living at a meagre poverty level and such an event could have a devastating and catastrophic effect

on them, their families and their finances. For that reason alone, it would be sensible to make the test for recovery of overpayments that which relies upon the claimant having at least maintained due care and diligence in making his claim.

I turn to amendments Nos. 202, 203, and 204 which deal with the test that has to be established for a prosecution for social security fraud to succeed. Amendment No. 202 would require a dishonest intent to be proved on the part of a claimant in a prosecution for social security fraud. Amendments Nos. 203 and 204—I stress that they are alternatives—provide, instead, that recklessly making a false statement should not in itself be sufficient to constitute social security fraud.

Under the present law, a person who, for the purposes of obtaining benefit, makes a statement which he knows to be false or produces a document which he knows to be false is guilty of an offence. A maximum penalty of three months' imprisonment applies. Provisions to that effect are contained in legislation relating to supplementary benefit, family income supplement, child benefit and benefits under the Social Security Act 1975.

The false statement that a claimant makes may be either a positive statement or an omission—for example, a failure to list all his resources, which does not necessarily show that the claimant has received benefit as a result of that false statement. Case law in 1981—I refer to the case of Clear *v.* Smith and that of Barras *v.* Reeve—has shown that, to secure conviction in such circumstances, it is not necessary to show that the false statement was made with the intention of obtaining benefit or that there was any intention to defraud. The only mental element, as it were, that is required is knowledge on behalf of the claimant that the statement he made, or the statement he omitted to make, amounted to false information. It is unsatisfactory to mount a case, prosecute, and prove a case simply on the basis that someone did not disclose information, or did disclose information, without receiving any benefit as a result, or even having the intention fraudulently to receive benefit.

7.15 pm

As the Minister appreciates, most proceedings for social security fraud are brought under such provisions. In serious cases, proceedings can and are brought under section 15 of the Theft Act 1968. Section 15 provides:

"A person who by any deception dishonestly obtains property belonging to another, with the intention of permanently depriving the other of it, shall on conviction on indictment be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years."

In prosecutions under that provision, it must be shown that there was an intention on the part of a claimant to obtain property as a result of deception and that the deception resulted in obtaining property. The NACRO working party on the enforcement of social security offences expressed great concern about the weakness of the mental element required at present for a conviction for social security fraud, which is much weaker than that which is necessary to obtain a conviction under the Theft Act.

Clause 52 would make matters worse rather than better, and more confused rather than clearer. The clause provides that someone who recklessly

"produces or furnishes . . . any document or information which he knows to be false in a material particular . . . shall be guilty of an offence."

The notion of recklessness is worrying. It is one of the most confusing concepts in the criminal law. In essence, it can be summarised as not intending to make a false statement but taking an unjustifiable risk that the statement might be false where the claimant either knew of the risk or had not considered whether there was such a risk, but would have realised, if he had stopped to think about it, that such a risk existed.

The change will cause a great deal of confusion in the courts for magistrates and judges who may have to determine what recklessness constitutes in practice. Clearly, it would pose great difficulty for claimants who are not used to dealing with the more arcane aspects of the law, and definitions would be required in that instance. As far as I am aware, the proposed change was not discussed in either the Green Paper or the White Paper which preceded the Bill. I stand to be corrected on that if I am wrong. It may be intended to bring the social security fraud offence into line with the Theft Act offence under which a reckless deception will suffice for a conviction, but only if there is also a requirement of dishonesty, which is not the case in respect of a social security fraud offence. We seem to be getting the worst of all possible worlds. We are introducing a new concept, which has been taken from the Theft Act, but we do not have the restraining qualifications that the Theft Act imposes and by which it requires the courts to abide.

As we have been given an opportunity to have a slightly longer debate on these amendments than was foreshadowed even a couple of hours ago, it seems eminently sensible to eliminate the confusion and clarify the mental element that is required for social security fraud by requiring that a false statement should be made dishonestly, as the first amendment provides. It is wrong that social security recipients, who are otherwise decent, law—abiding citizens, should be exposed to the stigma of a criminal allegation, of being hauled before the courts, cross-examined and vilified, and perhaps convicted of a criminal offence, and of having that stand against their record unless dishonesty can be proved. We are not concerned with getting money back from people and are certainly not concerned with hauling people before the courts and turning them into criminals simply because they are incompetent, confused, stupid or badly advised. Clearly, we want to bring people before the courts when they have committed a fraud against the social security system. I have no time for those who engage in fraud to bring the system into disrepute to the detriment of serious and needy claimants. But we do not want to convict and criminalise people unless they clearly have an intent to defraud and to get something to which they are not entitled.

Therefore, and especially because we have provisions to recover moneys overpaid from future benefit claimants without the need to have recourse to criminal prosecution, it is incumbent on us to take the opportunity to put this right in the Bill. If we do not make the change now, at least the situation should not be worsened by extending the definition of the offence to include "recklessness".

I have been open and honest with the Under-Secretary of State in saying that I do not propose to push any of the amendments to a Division. They are new elements to the Bill and we are seeking a sympathetic and positive response from the Minister. I hope that he can accept at least amendment No. 202, but, if that is not possible—I understand why it may not be—there is no real reason why we cannot at least deal with the concept of recklessness.

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): My point concerns official errors. I am sure that, over the years, all hon. Members have faced a number of distressing cases in which official error has occurred and the individual has been told that he has to repay the sum —admittedly, sometimes over a long period—causing genuine financial difficulties, but the error has in no way been the recipient's responsibility or fault. This causes distress particularly to the elderly.

Retired people hate having any form of debt hanging over their heads. When they have been overpaid because of an error, they regard that as a debt. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will consider that point carefully. There is a strong case for saying that, if the overpayment has been the fault of officials and there has been a breakdown in the system, no further claim should be made on the recipient.

Mr. Favell: I shall take up the second point made by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk). As a lawyer, I am unhappy with the word "recklessly" in clause 52. If a person is to be stigmatised as a criminal, it is important that dishonest intent is proved. I do not think that "recklessly" is sufficient to justify bringing a conviction.

I do not agree with the hon. Member for Knowsley, North on amendment No. 198. I should like to ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State what happens when a computer goes bonkers. One hears of computers putting a couple of extra noughts on the cheque. What happens then?

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I join the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) in welcoming the work done by Sir Norman Price and NACRO. The association's report has proved of great value. Until this debate took place, one might have said that it was of value in clarifying the issues, although I suspect that a person reading a debate dealing with the gradations of what might or might not be fraud might think that the issue had been muddied rather than clarified.

I disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) and the hon. Member for Knowsley, North on one point. Although I accept that the use of the word "recklessly" is somewhat reckless, I hope that part of the concept behind the word is retained in the legislation if only because it is not necessarily wrong for a considerable duty of care to be laid on a claimant in terms of statements made in making the claim. Although, like my hon. Friend and the hon. Member for Knowsley, North, I feel that because of its legal connotations the word "recklessly" may be unsuitable, I join all hon. Members who have spoken in hoping that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will reconsider clauses 50 and 52 with a view to introducing amendments in the other place.

I apologise for again using Inland Revenue practice as a comparison. However, there is a schedule of amounts below which the Inland Revenue accepts some responsibility for an overpayment by official error and it writes off at least part of the overpayment. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will consider that point.

Mr. Kennedy: I support the spirit of the amendment moved by the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk). I do not want to go into legalistic technicalities on the most preferable form of wording. The hon. Gentleman's arguments on the use of the expression "due care and diligence" were persuasive.

I should like to raise a point more in line with that highlighted by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). Since the last election, hon. Members have spent several late nights in the Chamber approving various changes to the housing benefits system. I do not know whether it is computer madness or computer meltdown, but Ministers—I think particularly of the time when we had a succession of late night debates on housing benefit and of the then Minister, the hon. Member for Brent, North (Dr. Boyson), who has now moved to the Northern Ireland Office—had no clearer impression than many of the claimants who visit Members' surgeries at the weekend of the complexity of the piecemeal alterations and changes to housing benefit.

I endorse the statement of the hon. Member for Kemptown that it is particularly harsh on pensioners when an overpayment has been made and the local authority seeks recovery of the money. It is particularly harsh because, without doubt, pensioners who have never been in debt in their lives would be morally appalled at discovering that, through no fault of their own, they were in debt and, in many cases, suffering additional agony because proceedings might be instituted against them by the local authorities. The amendments will go some way towards dealing with that intolerable situation and will be welcome. I hope that in another place they will get a fair wind and be given a favourable reception.

Mrs. Beckett: I applaud my hon. Friend the Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) both for raising the issue and for the manner in which he did so. His points were extremely interesting and well put. We support all the amendments he has tabled, but I believe that his case against the use of the word "recklessly" was overwhelming. I hope that the Under-Secretary of State will take it on board.

7.30 pm

Mr. Major: Sometimes one of the unexpected delights at Report stage is that debates one might have expected to be brief occasionally take off and prove to be of greater interest than one might have imagined. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk), first, for his assurance that these are probing amendments, secondly, for the manner in which he moved them, and, thirdly, for the important issues he raised in doing so. As he rightly said, in this group of amendments there are two quite separate but related matters. First, he seeks to rescue the due care and diligence test when considering the recovery of overpayments rather than moving to the misrepresentation or failure to disclose test which is our present intention. Secondly, he turns to the concept of reckless behaviour and I shall respond to him on that point in my speech.

I should like to reassure my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) about overpayments. Social security overpayments caused by official error are not recovered. That is our policy and will continue to be our policy. I can offer a qualified assurance to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell) who spoke, in a vivid phrase, about a computer going bonkers. It is certainly a concept that all of us understand and the general proposition there is that

recovery would be sought for a computer error, provided that computer error was likely to have been obvious to the claimant. If it was not likely to have been obvious to the claimant, we would probably regard it as an official error and would not seek to reclaim the overpayment.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: I am delighted to hear what my hon. Friend has said. However, I have a number of cases on my files covering the last 16 years in which people who were subjected to official errors had a difficult task because some repayment of overpayment was enforced. If I bring those cases to my hon. Friend, will he have the money refunded?

Mr. Major: If my hon. Friend brings those cases to me, I will certainly have a look at them. I can give no assurance whatever without having the details of each case and I suspect that my hon. Friend would be rather surprised if I were to do so. I reiterate the general position that I set out a few moments ago.

I now turn to amendments Nos. 198, 199 and 200. Some time ago we looked at the prospect of a common recovery test. I am grateful to the hon. Member for Knowsley, North for confirming that there is a logic about having a single test. When we looked at a common recovery test, we considered the option of adopting the due care and diligence test. We explored that at some length.

As the hon. Gentleman accurately said, the main difference between the two tests is that where beneficiaries fail to provide correct details of their circumstances under the Social Security or Child Benefit Acts they may not be liable to repay overpayments if they can show that they used due care and diligence. The adjudicating authorities can then take mitigating circumstances into account when reaching their decision. The effect of the due care and diligence test is that the person who failed to provide full facts may be permitted to retain benefit to which he is not entitled and which, had he disclosed those facts, he would not have received. By comparison, the misrepresentation or failure to disclose test provides that overpayments due to a person's failure to provide full facts relevant to his claim are recoverable. However, the Secretary of State has the discretion to take into account mitigating circumstances in deciding whether to seek repayment of overpayments which he is statutorily entitled to recover.

The Secretary of State has a duty to protect public funds and it has been considered by successive Governments that any discretion in whether repayment should be sought should more properly rest with him than with the adjudicating authorities. It must be remembered that the benefit in question will have been overpaid through no fault of the Department. Even then there are safeguards for the individual. If the person from whom the overpayment is recoverable does not agree that he has been overpaid, does not agree the amount overpaid or, in particular, does not agree that he misrepresented or failed to disclose the relevant facts, he may exercise his right of appeal.

The other main consideration we had in mind in deciding to abolish the due care and diligence test was its complexity. It is a subjective test which is more difficult to administer and to understand for claimants and adjudicators and administrators in the Department of Health and Social Security. Its adoption would lead to an additional cost of over £4 million. That is clearly a relevant, though not the most relevant, fact. By contrast, the misrepresentation or failure to disclose test is easier to operate and to understand, partly because it is a factual rather than a subjective test. It is worth noting that there are eight times as many supplementary benefit overpayments in local offices as Social Security Act overpayments. The effect of that is that in terms of experience the misrepresentation or failure to disclose test is most commonly practised in the Department's local offices. Although the hon. Gentleman's persuasion was most eloquent, I fear that there is little I can offer him to suggest that we are likely to change the present policy.

Perhaps I could now turn to amendments Nos. 203 and 204 and to the specific provisions about recklessness. The hon. Gentleman attracted the support of the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) who spoke on precisely the same matter in Committee. He would have attracted the support also of the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Mr. Michie) because I recollect that he also raised this point in Committee. The hon. Gentleman also attracted support from the Government Benches in the form of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) with reservations. He also attracted the support of the hon. Member for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy).

The effect of amendments Nos. 203 and 204 would be to remove from the Bill all references to criminal recklessness in relation to the provision of false information by claimants and others. This clause is a common provison and the present recklessness offence in the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 would also be lost. When this was raised in Committee we discussed — and as I recall they were central to the discussion—the reservations of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders. Those reservations were reiterated in the debate by the hon. Gentleman and by Sir Norman Price. As we explained at that time, the concept of recklessness is not new, either to social security law or to the criminal law generally.

The Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 makes it an offence for an employer recklessly to produce or furnish any documents or information which is false in any material particular. There are more recent precedents for recklessness in the Food and Environment Protection Act 1985. Nevertheless, I am sufficiently impressed both by the arguments advanced in this debate and in Committee upon which we have been reflecting and by NACRO to say, not that I can accept the hon. Gentleman's probing amendments, but that, in the light of what has been said, I am prepared to reflect again upon the concept of recklessness with the possibility of making an amendment in the other place if it seems to us that the arguments presented by the hon. Gentleman have the substance that at first sight they appear to have. I cannot give him a firm assurance upon that point, but I can give him the reassurance that I shall certainly reconsider the point. If upon reconsideration we find it compelling, we will contemplate, if it is appropriate, making a suitable amendment in another place.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: I am grateful to the Minister for the sensitive and comprehensive way in which he has dealt with the series of amendments. I do not agree with him in his refusal to accept the suggestion of a common recovery test and to resist the idea that that should be the establishment of the notion of due care and diligence.

However, I am grateful for what the Minister said about the amendments and in dealing with the concept of

[Mr. Kilroy-Silk]

recklessness in obtaining social security benefits. I am grateful for the support that has been put on record tonight, as it has been on other occasions, of my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) and of the hon. Members for Ross, Cromarty and Skye (Mr. Kennedy), for Stockport (Mr. Favell) and for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) and I hope that that kind of support will be demonstrated in another place.

In the light of the Minister's comments that he will look at this and that there may be an amendment tabled in another place, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: I beg to move amendment No. 201, in page 57, line 9, at end insert—

'(e) housing benefit.'.

Amendment No. 201 would apply the new standard criteria for recovering overpayment of benefits from claimants to housing benefit. As the Bill stands, it provides a standard test for recovering the overpayment of contributory benefits, supplementary benefits and family income supplement. However, it would not apply the same test to housing benefit where, as I have already said, except in the case of certificated benefit, any overpayment is recoverable, even if it has been caused by official error.

It is true that, in its guidance to local authorities, the DHSS has tried to discourage the recovery of overpayment of housing benefit where that is due to official error, and the Minister, in his remarks on the earlier series of amendments, reiterated that that was his view and was the guidance that was being issued. The code of guidance issued to local authorities states that, in deciding whether to recover an overpayment of housing benefit, the authority should have regard to why the overpayment occurred and that where there had been an official error the authority should consider whether the recipient could reasonably have been expected to know that he was receiving too much benefit and, if not, not to seek to recover the overpayment.

That is all very well so far as it goes. The Minister, even in an aside, tended to create an impression that there was no problem in that area, the guidance has been issued, the view was reiterated by him tonight, and it is assumed that local authorities do not go looking for overpayments of housing benefit when it can clearly be demonstrated that overpayment was due to an error on their behalf.

However, I know from my experience in my constituency, and I have been told by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders' working party on the enforcement of social security offences, that the practice in many areas is that the right of recovery appears to be exploited in full by most, if not all, local authorities. Indeed, the practice seems to be that if a local authority discovers that overpayment has been made, it issues a bill for the amount of that overpayment with no further investigation — that has certainly happened in my area—leaving all inquiries about that overpayment until the time, if it arises, when the claimant objects to the demand for the repayment of the benefit.

Given the well-documented inability of many local authorities to cope with the housing benefit system, it seems clearly unjust that some authorities should attempt to make the claimant pay for their shortcomings in this area. Indeed, as with other claims for the overpayment of benefit, when a claim is enforced, particularly if the benefit has been overpaid over a long period in small amounts, it is in total a large amount and that could have a devastating, catastrophic effect upon the individual and the family—an individual and a family, who, again it must be stressed, are already poverty-stricken.

Therefore, the same test for the recovery for overpayment should apply to housing benefit as to other benefits. In that spirit I hope that the Minister will feel able to accept the amendment.

7.45 pm

Mr. Newton: The hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) will be aware that there was some discussion on this matter in Committee when I said that I had a good deal of sympathy with the view that we should be looking to extend commonality of provisions into the area on which he has touched. He will know—it was implicit in his speech—that there is separate provision in clause 29 to deal with the recovery of overpaid housing benefit. That provides for the arrangements to be set out in regulations which could include the circumstances in which an overpayment can be recovered.

As I said in Committee when we discussed clause 29, we have not yet defined the categories of overpayments which it will be possible to recover in the primary legislation, because that is something which we need to discuss with the local authorities. I agreed in principle that it was right for the main grounds for recovering overpaid housing benefit to be the same as those applying to other benefits, in the same way that I also acknowledge the arguments that were then put for aligning some other aspects of housing benefit with other social security benefits, including the application of the social security benefits adjudication procedure. In particular, I recognised the point that the hon. Gentleman has made the subject of the amendment, about recovery being possible only where the claimant has misrepresented or failed to disclose a material fact.

Both in respect of the common provision in respect of overpayments and the ideas that have been put forward for aligning the adjudication systems for housing benefit and other benefits, I hope that I made it as clear as I could that housing benefit is administered by the local authorities.

Therefore, we felt that it would be appropriate to discuss these matters with the local authorities because there are some difficult problems—more particularly in relation to adjudication than in respect of points made by the hon. Gentleman—before seeking to come to a firm conclusion about what we should do.

I should like to repeat tonight, although I am afraid that I cannot go any further, the undertaking that I gave in Committee to discuss this matter with local authority associations. In the time between the Committee and Report stages, I regret that it has not been possible for us to take forward all the discussions that we need to have with them on various aspects of the new scheme, including this one. It would clearly be wrong and against the spirit of consultation to enter into consultation if we had made up our minds and announced a decision beforehand.

The House will have the opportunity to debate the relevant regulations once the discussions have been completed. Having repeated the spirit in which we shall

approach those discussions and my understanding of the reasons for the hon. Gentleman moving the amendment, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will agree to withdraw it.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: It has been a long time since I faced the Minister across the Floor of the House, or indeed in Committee, but when I have done I have always found him to be eminently reasonable, sensible, sympathetic and helpful. Together, just before the election, we extensively re-wrote the law relating to child care, and he was then, as he has demonstrated again tonight, always prepared to listen to a case rather than to reiterate the brief that has been set out for him in that glossy red folder.

Clearly, it would be churlish of me to wish to press the amendment to a Division in the light of what the Minister has said. It is important that the consultations that are under way should proceed. Let us hope that they will come to the conclusion that is enshrined in the amendment. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 56

DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION

Mr. Major: I beg to move amendment No. 90, in page 62, line 9, at end insert—

'(A) In relation to persons who are carrying on or have carried on a trade, profession or vocation income from which is chargeable to tax under Case I or II of Schedule D, disclosure under subsection (1) above relating to that trade, profession or vocation shall be limited to information about the commencement or cessation of the trade, profession or vocation, but sufficient information may also be given to identify the persons concerned.'.

The amendment restricts the information which the Inland Revenue is authorised to disclose to the Department about a self-employed person. It may disclose information only about the commencement or cessation of self-employment, but may also give sufficient information to identify such a person. In Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) mentioned this matter. I accepted the principle of his argument, but I declined to accept the amendment, as it was technically deficient. This amendment is not technically deficient and it meets the commitment that I gave in Committee.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for tabling this amendment, which exactly meets the substance of our discussions in Committee. I congratulate him on achieving a record, in that this is the first time in any social security legislation that the powers given to officers of the Inland Revenue to breach their oaths have been discussed on the Floor of the House. It is a notable occasion, and I encourage my hon. Friend and his ministerial colleagues to mention such matters much more frequently.

I also congratulate my hon. Friend because I am sure that the sigh of relief which will go up from the self-employed and from people involved in trades, businesses and professions because of the amendment will be heartfelt and long-standing.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 60

ANNUAL UP-RATING OF BENEFITS

Amendment made: No. 149, in page 65, line 31, leave out from 'are' to end of line 33 and insert—

'(i) payable by virtue of section 35(6) of that Act to a person who is also entitled to a Category A or Category B retirement pension (including sums payable by virtue of section 36(3)); or

(ii) payable to such a person as part of his Category A or Category B retirement pension by virtue of an order made under this section by virtue of this paragraph or made under section 126A of the Social Security Act 1975;'.—*[Mr. Major.]*

Mr. Newton: I beg to move amendment No. 91, in page 65, line 37, at end insert—

'*(ff)* specified in regulations under section 45(3) above;'.

The amendment is necessary to bring statutory maternity pay within the uprating provisions contained in clause 60. It is intended that the flat rate element of statutory maternity pay will be subject to annual review and uprating each April on the same basis as statutory sick pay and other social security benefits.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 150, in page 66, line 23, leave out from '*(b)*' to end of line 27 and insert '*(c)* or *(d)* above'.

No. 151, in page 66, line 40, at end insert—

'(6A) An increase in a sum such as is specified in subsection (1)*(d)* above shall form part of the Category A or Category B retirement pension of the person to whom it is paid.'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 64

RATES OF PAYMENTS OF STATUTORY SICK PAY AND PROVISIONS AS TO RECOVERY

No. 184, in page 70, line 22, leave out from 'contributions' to end of line 28 and insert

'paid in respect of statutory sick pay; or

(ii) by reference to the aggregate of secondary Class 1 contributions so paid and secondary Class 1 contributions paid in respect of statutory maternity pay'.—*[Mr. Newton.]*

Clause 66

CHILD BENEFIT IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN EDUCATED OTHERWISE THAN AT EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim (Amber Valley): I beg to move amendment No. 142, in page 71, line 8, at end insert—

'(1A) Regulations may provide for substituting for the words "Secretary of State", in paragraph *(b)* of section 2(1) of the Child Benefit Act 1975, the words "local education authority" and for section 2(1A) of that Act to cease to have effect.'.

The amendment would allow the parents of children who begin to be educated at home after the age of 16 to claim benefit. The present position on allowing children over the age of 16 who are being educated at home to be eligible for benefit is unclear. I have never seen clear guidelines from the Department as to the exact position. I understand that approval of parents educating their children at home is in the hands of the local education authority.

The Bill proposes to put that decision in the hands of the DHSS. The local education authority must be better equipped to make that decision, but, whoever makes the

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

decision, it must accord with our principles of parental choice and responsibility and not penalise parents who decide to educate their children at home by withholding benefit. After all, parents who decide to educate their children at home save the taxpayer and the ratepayer a great deal of money.

It is argued that allowing children over the age of 16 to be liable to benefit would give scope for parents who are not educating their older children properly falsely to claim benefit. Why not allow the local education authority to decide, as it does now, whether parents are giving their older children a proper education? After all, that is what the local education authorities are doing, successfully and with no complaints. I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to reconsider a policy that must go against all our principles of freedom of choice, of parental choice and of individual responsibility.

Mr. Stern: Very briefly, Mr. Deputy Speaker — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh no!"] Very briefly. Since we discussed the matter in Committee, has my hon. Friend had time to reflect upon the invidious decision that he proposes to take upon himself under the clause? As a social security Minister, he is being asked to decide educational matters.

Mr. Major: I understand the intriguing and interesting point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). It was well worth making.

Important though it is, I shall deal with the matter briefly because I appreciate that the official Opposition are anxious to move to the next amendment before the guillotine falls. I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Amber Valley (Mr. Oppenheim) will permit me to give him a fuller answer after the debate than the answer that I can give him between now and eight o'clock.

Notwithstanding my hon. Friend's advocacy, he proposed a regulation-making power which I am inclined to resist and which, even if it were granted, the Government would be disinclined to use. As my hon. Friends know from the Committee stage, clause 66 is a beneficial measure introduced by the Government to extend the payment of child benefit to people who educate their children at home. As such, it has been widely welcomed, not least by my hon. Friend. Child benefit is payable for all children up to the age of 16 wherever and however they are educated, but heretofore it has not been payable when a child who was educated at home before the age of 16 continued that education after the age of 16. It could not be paid because the Child Benefit Act 1975 would not allow a home to be regarded as "an educational establishment".

The Government recognised the difficulty, and clause 66 resolves it by amending the Act. I stress that the link to education at home before the age of 16 is important. This is because local education authorities have a duty placed upon them by the Education Act 1944 and its Scottish equivalent to ensure that a child educated at home receives sufficient full-time education which is suitable for his age and his aptitudes.

My hon. Friend's amendment attempts to go further. It aims to provide regulation-making powers to local education authorities to recognise the education being provided at home, for the first time after the age of 16, where no approval or supervision has been sought or provided previously. Such a regulation would place a new, onerous and, I strongly suspect, unwelcome duty on education authorities which they do not shoulder now and which they have shown no inclination to accept. The objective of placing this additional burden is to ensure the payment of a social security benefit. We cannot assume that authorities, whose concern is with the standard of compulsory education, would welcome that extra responsibility.

I am aware that this brief and hurried response will not placate my hon. Friend or other hon. Members, but I hope that they appreciate the reasons behind my decision and that my hon. Friend will withdraw his amendment.

Mr. Oppenheim: I beg to ask leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 70

REFRESHMENTS FOR SCHOOL PUPILS

Mrs. Beckett: I beg to move amendment No. 93, in page 72, line 22, leave out subsection (2).

Without this amendment, half a million children will lose their entitlement to free school meals. All free school milk will be lost because authorities will have to charge for it, and 150,000 children from the poorest families — those on less than £100 a week — will receive compensation of only 44p a week for that loss. We are worried about the effect on families. We are worried, as are the local authorities, about the fact that the Government appear to wish to deny them the right to make differential charges between primary and secondary schools. We are worried about the jobs of those who work in the school meals service, which are undoubtedly at risk.

We are concerned most of all because the Government say that the savings that will be made will be offset by the compensation given to families. There are, therefore, no advantages to the Government on their figures and there are disadvantages to the workers, to the children in those families and, indeed, to the country.

Mr. Newton: On our reckoning more than 60,000 children will be better off under these arrangements.

Question put, That the amendment be made:-

The House divided: Ayes 181, Noes 311.

Division No. 188] **[8.00 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Alton, David	Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Anderson, Donald	Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Bruce, Malcolm
Ashton, Joe	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Campbell, Ian
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Canavan, Dennis
Barnett, Guy	Cartwright, John
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Beith, A. J.	Clarke, Thomas
Bell, Stuart	Clay, Robert
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Bermingham, Gerald	Cohen, Harry
Bidwell, Sydney	Coleman, Donald
Blair, Anthony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Boothroyd, Miss Betty	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Boyes, Roland	Corbett, Robin
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Corbyn, Jeremy

Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llanelli)*
Davis, Terry *(Birmingham, Hodge Hill)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Edwards, Bob *(Wolverhampton SE)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(Liverpool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(Cumbernauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(Great Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(Wythenshawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Rt Hon J. E
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R. *(Wolverhampton NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Islington S & Finsbury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Meirionnydd)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(Bournemouth E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Valley)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton Kemptown)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(Pembroke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsmouth N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(Norfolk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Grantham)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howarth, Alan *(Stratford-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(Guildford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John

MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhodes James, Robert
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Eight o'clock, MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution [19 May], to put forthwith the Question on the remaining amendments and on a new schedule moved by a member of the Government.*

Clause 75

GENERAL INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No 94, in page 74, line 5, at end insert—

'"average salary benefits" means benefits the rate or amount of which is calculated by reference to the average salary of a member of a pension scheme over the period of service on which the benefits are based;'.

No. 95, in page 74, line 17, at end insert—

'"employed earner" has the same meaning as in the Social Security Act 1975;'.

No 96, in page 75, line 23, at end insert

'and which are not average salary benefits'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Clause 76

FINANCIAL PROVISION

Amendments made: No. 97, in page 78, line 4, after 'above', insert—

'*(bb)* sums falling to be paid by or on behalf of the Secretary of State under regulations made by virtue of paragraph 1(*b*) or (*e*) of Schedule 4 to this Act;'.

No. 98, in page 78, line 13, after 'Treasury)', insert—

'*(a)* to be the amount of the administrative expenses incurred by the Secretary of State under Part V of this Act, excluding any category of expenses which the Treasury may direct, or any enactment may require, to be excluded from the Secretary of State's estimate under this subsection; and *(b)*'.

No. 191, in page 78, line 23, at end insert

'sums recovered under section 1(4A) or (4B) or 7(7) or (8) above.'.

No. 99, in page 78, line 29, after 'made', insert

'out of the National Insurance Fund into the Consolidated Fund, or'.

No. 100, in page 78, line 34, at end insert

', statutory sick pay or statutory maternity pay'. — *[Mr. Fowler.]*

Schedule 9

MINOR AND CONSEQUENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Amendments made: No. 101, in page 121, line 45 at end insert—

'1A. In section 58(2) (linked qualifying service)—

(a) the following paragraph shall be substituted for paragraph *(a)*—

"*(a)* under the rules of a scheme applying to him in the earlier period of service—

(i) there was made a transfer of his accrued rights under that scheme to another scheme applying to him in the later period of service; or

(ii) those rights were secured by a policy of insurance or an annuity contract and were subsequently transferred to another scheme applying to him in the later period of service;"; and

(b) in paragraph *(b)*, for the words "that transfer" there shall be subsituted the words "the transfer of his accrued rights to the second scheme".'—

No. 194, in page 123, line 9, at end insert—

'Social Security Act 1975 (c.14)

(7A) In paragraph 6(1)*(h)* of Schedule 1 to the Social Security Act 1975 (regulations about return of contributions) after the word "of", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "the whole or any prescribed part of any".'.

No. 102, in page 124, line 28, at end insert—

'18A. In section 43(2A) (linked qualifying service)—

(a) the following paragraph shall be substituted for paragraph *(a)*—

"*(a)* under the rules of a scheme applying to him in the earlier period of service—

(i) there was made a transfer of his accrued rights under that scheme to another scheme applying to him in the later period of service; or

(ii) those rights were secured by a policy of insurance or an annuity contract and were subsequently transferred to another scheme applying to him in the later period of service."; and

(b) in paragraph *(b)*, for the words "that transfer" there shall be substituted the words "the transfer of his accrued rights to the second scheme".'

No. 103, in page 124, line 45, at end insert—

'(2A) In subsection (2)*(a)* of that section, after the word "under" in the second place where it occurs, there shall be inserted the words "section 52C or".'

No. 104, in page 126, line 3, at end insert—

'22A. At the end of paragraph 5(1) of Part I of Schedule 1A (revaluation of pensions) there shall be added the words "and which is not an average salary benefit".'

No. 105, in page 126, line 20, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

'*(b)* paragraph 12(4) and the reference to it in paragraph 12(3) shall be omitted and shall be deemed never to have been included;'.

No. 106, in page 126, line 42, after "equivalents";', insert—

'(1A) at the end of sub-paragraph (2), there shall be added (but not as part of paragraph *(c)*) the words "and power "equivalents";to provide that they shall be calculated and verified in accordance with guidance prepared by a prescribed body".'

No. 107, in page 129, leave out lines 24 to 29.

No. 178, in page 130, line 8, at end insert—

'40A. The following entry shall be inserted in section 167(1)*(a)* of that Act (regulation subject to affirmative Parliamentary procedure) immediately after the entry relating to section 20(3)—

"section 61(3) (constant attendance allowance);".'

No. 179, in page 130, line 28, at end insert—

'41A. The words following "pension rate" shall be omitted from sections 2(6)*(b)* and 7(2)*(c)* (weekly rates of benefit) of the Industrial Injuries and Diseases (Old Cases) Act 1975.'

No. 180, in page 130, line 29, leave out 'the Industrial Injuries and Diseases (Old Cases) Act 1975' and insert 'that Act'.

No. 108, in page 131, line 32, at end insert—

'PART IIIA

STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY, STATUTORY SICK PAY ETC

Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (c.10)

44A. At the end of section 219A of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (which charges certain payments to income tax under Schedule E) there shall be added "and

(d) payments of statutory maternity pay under Part V of the Social Security Act 1986 or, in Northern Ireland, any corresponding provision contained in an Order in Council under the Northern Ireland Act 1974".

Social Security Act 1975 (c.14)

44B. The words "(other than maternity allowance)" shall be inserted—

(a) after the words "that subsection", in subsection (2) of section 13 of the Social Security Act 1975, and

(b) after the words "for benefit", in subsection (8) of that section.

44C. In section 122(4) of that Act for the words "either or both those Funds" there shall be substituted the words "that Fund".

Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (c.44)

44D. In section 33 of the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 (right to return to work) in subsection (3) and (4) for the word "rights" there shall be substituted the word "right" and in subsection (5) for the words "either of the rights" there shall be substituted the words "the right".

Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 (c.24)

44E. The following subsection shall be substituted for section 3(9) of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982 (definitions relating to period of entitlement to statutory sick pay)—

"(9) In this section—

"confinement" is to be construed in accordance with section 47 of the Social Security Act 1986; and

"disqualifying period" means—

(a) in relation to a woman entitled to statutory maternity pay, the maternity pay period, and

(b) in relation to a woman entitled to maternity allowance, the maternity allowance period;

"maternity allowance period" has the meaning assigned to it by section 22(2) of the principal Act; and

"maternity pay period" has the meaning assigned to it by section 44(1) of the Social Security Act 1986".

44F. The following paragraph shall be inserted before paragraph *(a)* of section 45(2) of that Act (Parliamentary control of subordinate legislation)—

"*(za)* regulations under section 7 of this Act,".

Insolvency Act 1985 (c.65)

44G. In paragraph 3(2)*(d)* of Part II of Schedule 4 to the Insolvency Act 1985 (preferential debts) the words from the beginning to "1982" shall cease to have effect.

Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (c.66)

44H. Paragraph 9(2)*(d)* of Schedule 3 to the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985 (preferential debts) shall cease to have effect.'

No. 109, in page 131, line 45, at end insert—

'46A. In subsection (1) of section 28 of that Act (Category A retirement pension) the words from "(subject" to "rule))" shall be omitted.'

No. 110, in page 135, line 19, at end insert—

'*Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 (c. 71.)*

65A. In section 8 of the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976 (persons affected by trade disputes)—

(a) in subsection (1), the following words shall be substituted for the words from the beginning to "period", in the second place where it occurs, "So long as this section applies to a person, his requirements"; and

(b) the following subsection shall be substituted for subsection (2)—

"(2) This section applies to a person—

(a) who is disqualified under section 19 of the Social Security Act 1975 for receiving unemployment benefit; or

(b) would be so disqualified if he were otherwise entitled to that benefit,

except during any period shown by him to be a period of incapacity for work by reason of disease or bodily or mental disablement.".'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Schedule 10

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 111, in page 136, line 15, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 219A(1)*(b)*, the word "and".'

No. 112, in page 136, line 44, column 3, at beginning insert—

'In section 1(1)*(b)*, the words "and the Maternity Pay Fund".'.

No. 144, in page 136, column 3, leave out lines 49 to 51 and insert—

'In section 13, in subsection (1), the entries relating to widow's allowance and death grant, subsection (5)*(a)* and subsection (5A).'

No. 113, in page 137, line 3, column 3, at end insert—

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

'In section 28(1), the words from "(subject" to "rule))".'.

No. 187, in page 137, line 7, at end insert 'and (7)'.

No. 181, in page 137, line 8, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 50(2) and (5).
Section 57(5).
Sections 58 to 60.
Section 62.
Section 64.
Sections 66 to 75.'

No. 114, in page 137, line 35, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 122(4) the words "or the Maternity Pay Fund".'.

No. 115, in page 137, line 36, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 134(5)*(b)* the words from "and the Maternity Pay Fund" to "determine".'.

No. 116, in page 138, line 6, column 3, leave out from 'allowance",' to end of line 9 and insert—

'in paragraph 8(3), the words "or a maternity allowance," in paragraphs 9 and 10, the words "(other than a widow's allowance)" and paragraph 12.'.

No. 182, in page 138, line 11, leave out from 'II', to end of line 12 and insert—

'in Part IV paragraph 4 and in Part V, paragraphs 2, 4 to 6 and 10 to 15.
In Schedule 8, paragraph *(b)* of the proviso to paragraph 5 and the word "and" immediately preceding it.
Schedule 9.'.

No. 145, in page 138, column 3, leave out lines 27 and 28 and insert—

'In section 6, in subsection (2), the words from "or" to the end, in subsection (5), the words "Subject to subsection (5A) below," and subsection (5A).'

No. 146, in page 138, line 28, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 19(2), the words "and (3)*(b)*".'

No. 188, in page 138, line 29, column 3, after '22', insert '(3) and'.

No. 117, in page 138, line 51, column 3, at end insert—

'Section 46.'

No. 118, in page 138, line 58, column 3, at end insert—

'In Schedule 1A, in paragraph 12, in sub-paragraph (3), the words "Subject to sub-paragraph (4) below," and sub-paragraph (4).'

No. 119, in page 139, line 22, at end insert—

'1975 c. 71.	Employment Protection Act 1975.	In section 40 subsections (2) and (4).'.

No. 120, in page 139, line 24, column 3, leave out from '1' to 'to' in line 25.

No. 121, in page 139, line 28, column 3, at end insert—

'In Schedule 5, in paragraph 1(2), the words from the beginning to "and" in the first place where it occurs.'

No. 122, in page 139, line 29, leave out '*(a)*'.

No. 123, in page 139, column 3, leave out lines 32 to 34.

No. 124, in page 139, column 3, leave out lines 45 and 46 and insert—

'In section 33, subsection (1)*(a)* and the word "and" immediately following it, in subsection (3) paragraph *(c)* and in paragraph *(d)* the words "in the case of the right to return" and in subsection (4) the words "to return".
Sections 33 to 44.'

No. 125, in page 139, line 51, column 3, at end insert—

'In section 132, in subsection (1)*(b)*", III" and in subsection (6) the definition of "supplementary benefit".
In section 138, in subsection (1) the words "(except section 44".
and in subsection (5) the words "(except section 44(3) and (4))".
In section 139(1), the words "(except section 44)".
In section 153(1) the definitions of "maternity pay", "Maternity Pay Fund" and "maternity pay rebate".
Section 156(1).
Section 157(2)*(a)* and the word "and" immediately following it.
In Schedule 14, paragraph 7(1)*(d)*.
In Schedule 15, paragraph 7 and the heading immediately preceding it.'.

No. 126, in page 139, line 58, at end insert—

'1979 c.41	Pneumoconiosis etc. (Workers' Compensation) Act 1979	In section 2(3), the words "industrial death benefit under section 76 of the Social Security Act 1975, or".'.

No 127, in page 140, line 57, column 3, at end insert—'Section 8.'.

No. 128, in page 141, column 3, leave out lines 2 to 4 and insert—

'Sections 11 to 16.'.

No. 129, in page 141, line 8, leave out '(1)'.

No. 183, in page 141, line 39, column 3, at end insert—

'In Schedule 5, paragraphs 4 to 6'.

No. 130, in page 141, leave out line 40.

No. 131, in page 141, line 47, column 3 at end insert—

		'In Schedule 4, paragraph 2.'

No. 147, in page 141, line 48, after 'paragraphs ', insert '6'.

No. 132, in page 141, line 48 after 'paragraphs' insert '7'.

No. 148, in page 141, line 48, at end insert '16,'.

No. 133, in page 141, line 49, after '19', insert '28'.

No. 134, in page 141, line 49, column 3, at end add—

1985 c. 65.	Insolvency Act 1985.	In Part II of Schedule 4, the words in paragraph 3(2)(*d*) from the beginning to "1982"
1985 c. 66.	Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985.	In Schedule 3, paragraph 9(2)(*d*).'

No. 135, in page 141, line 49, at end add—

1986 c. 9.	Law Reform (Parent and Child) (Scotland) Act 1986.	In Schedule 1, paragraph 16. In Schedule 2, the entry relating to the Supplementary Benefits Act 1976.' — *[Mr. Fowler.]*

Clause 78

EXTENT

Amendment made: No. 136, in page 79, line 40, leave out 'Section' and insert 'Sections 24 and'. — *[Mr. Fowler.]*

Clause 79

COMMENCEMENT

Amendment made: No. 163, in page 80, line 19, at end insert—

'(3A) If an order under subsection (1) above brings paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to this Act into force on the same day as section 34 above, the former shall be deemed to have come into force immediately before the latter.'.

No. 186, in page 80, line 26, at end insert

'section *[Entitlement to mobility allowance—general]*,'

No. 138, in page 80, line 31, leave out '23(*c*)(iii)' and insert '23(*b*) and (*c*)(iii)'.

No. 139, page 80, line 32, at end insert

'section 77(2) so far as relating to paragraph 12 of Schedule 1A to the Social Security Act 1975 and section 29 of the Social Security and Housing Benefits Act 1982;'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Amendment made: No. 143, New Schedule—

Earning Factors—

Social Security Act 1975 (c. 14)

1. The Social Security Act 1975 shall be amended as follows.

2. — (1) In subsection (2) of section 13 (contribution conditions and the earnings factor) for the words from "his" to "above" there shall be substituted the words "those of his earnings upon which a liability to pay Class 1 contributions arises and from his Class 2 and Class 3 contributions".

(2) In subsection (3) of that section, for the words from "primary" to the end there shall be substituted the words "earnings upon which primary Class 1 contributions are paid at the reduced rate".

(3) In subsection (4), for the words "contributions of any class" there shall be substituted the words "earnings or Class 2 or Class 3 contributions".

(4) In subsection (5)—

(*a*) for the word "contributions", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be substituted the words "earnings or Class 2 or Class 3 contributions;

(*b*) paragraph (*a*) shall be omitted; and

(*c*) for the words from "shall be derived" to the end of the subsection there shall be substituted the words "may be derived—

(i) from earnings upon which Class 1 contributions have been paid;

(ii) from earnings which have been credited;

(iii) from contributions in different classes paid or credited in the same tax year;

(iv) by any combination of the methods mentioned in paragraphs (i) to (iii) above "

(5) In subsection (6)(*c*)—

(*a*) for the words "person's contribution of any class or classes" there shall be substituted the word "person";

(*b*) for the words "those contributions" there shall be substituted the words "his earnings upon which a liability to pay Class 1 contributions arose and from his Class 2 and Class 3 contributions".

3. — (1) The following paragraph shall be substituted for sub-paragraph (2)(*b*) of paragraph 1 (unemployment and sickness benefit) of Schedule 3 (contribution conditions) —

"(*b*) the earnings factor derived —

(i) in the case of unemployment benefit, from earnings upon which a liability to pay Class 1 contributions arose; and

(ii) in the case of sickness benefit, from such earnings or from Class 2 contributions,

must be not less than that year's lower earnings limit multiplied by 25".

(2) In sub-paragraph (3)(*a*) of that paragraph, after the word "class" there shall be inserted the words "or been credited with earnings".

(3) The following paragraph shall be substituted for sub-paragraph (3)(*b*)—

"(*b*) the earnings factor derived —

(i) in the case of unemployment benefit, from earnings upon which a liability to pay Class 1 contributions arose or from earnings credited arose; and

(ii) in the case of sickness benefit, from such earnings or from Class 2 contributions,

must be not less than that year's lower earnings limit multiplied by 50".

(4) In sub-paragraph (1)(*b*) of paragraph 4 of that Schedule for the words "those contributions" there shall be substituted the words "earnings upon which a liability to pay Class 1 contributions arose and from Class 2 and Class 3 contributions".

(5) In sub-paragraph (2)(*b*) of paragraph 5 of that Schedule (widowed mother's allowance, widow's pension and retirement pensions) for the words "those contributions" there shall be substituted the words "earnings upon which such of those contributions as are Class 1 contributions were paid and any Class 2 or Class 3 contributions".

(6) The following paragraph shall be substituted for sub-paragraph (3)(*b*) of that paragraph—

"(*b*) in the case of each of those years, the earnings factor derived from—

(i) any earnings upon which such of those contributions as are Class 1 contributions were paid or earnings credited; and

(ii) any Class 2 or Class 3 contributions for the year,"

must not be less than the qualifying earnings factor for the year."

(7) In paragraph 8(3) (satisfaction of certain contribution conditions in early years of contribution) for the words from "his contributions of a relevant class" there shall be substituted the words "the aggregate of his earnings upon which Class 1 contributions were actually paid and from Class 2 contributions".

Social Security Pensions Act 1975 (c. 60.)

4. The Social Security Pensions Act 1975 shall be amended as follows.

5. — (1) In section 6 (rate of Categoory A retirement pension)—

(*a*) In section (5), for the words "contributions actually paid by him in respect of that year" there shall be substituted the words "earnings upon which Class 1 contributions were actually paid by him in respect of that year and earnings factors derived from Class 2 and Class 3 contributions actually paid in respect of it"; and

(*b*) subsection (5A) shall be omitted.

6.—(1) In subsection (2) of section 35 (earner's guaranteed minimum) for the words "contributions paid in respect of such earnings as are mentioned in subsection (1) above" there shall be

[Mr. Phillip Oppenheim]

substituted the word "earnings such as are mentioned in subsection (1) above upon which liability to pay Class 1 contributions arose".

7. Section 43(1A) and section 47(2A) shall not apply to any period after the end of the tax year 1986-87.

8. In subsection (3)(b) of section 45 (premium where guaranteed minimum pension excluded from full revaluation) for the word "contributions", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be substituted the words "earnings upon which Class 1 contributions are payable".

Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1977 (c. 5.)

9. In subsection (1)(b) of section 21 of the Social Security (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1977 (calculation of guaranteed minimum pensions preserved under proposed arrangements) after the word "contributions", in the first place where it occurs, there shall be insert the words "or earnings".'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Title

Amendment made: No. 141, in title, line 4, after 'pupils', insert

'to abolish maternity pay under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 and provide for the winding-up of the Maternity Pay Fund'.—*[Mr. Fowler.]*

Order for Third Reading read.—[Queen's Consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified].

8.12 pm

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I shall be brief since the Third Reading debate is itself a short one. The Third Reading marks another significant landmark for the Bill. The Bill gives effect to the proposals which were set out in the White Paper on social security published at the end of 1985. That White Paper followed the most extensive examination of the social security system since the war. It started in the autumn of 1983 with the inquiry into retirement. That was followed by an examination of family support, housing benefit, and supplementary benefit.

The Bill itself has been subject to the longest scrutiny by a Standing Committee of any social security legislation since the original Beveridge proposals just after the war. I should like to pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and to my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for their work on the Bill. I believe, too, that the standard of debate throughout the proceedings has been very high, both from the Government Benches and from the Opposition.

The Bill has three major objectives. The first is to ensure that many more people should have a pension of their own. We want to achieve a major extension of occupational and personal pensions. Over the past 20 years occupational pension cover has remained static. That was so not just in the so-called years of pension blight in the 1960s and the early 1970s, but it has continued to be the case since. The result is that we have basically two nations in pensions, one with its own occupational scheme and the other with no scheme of its own. All the evidence is that people without additional pensions of their own would welcome the opportunity to have them. The Bill makes it easier for both employers and employees to set up new pension arrangements while at the same time preserving the basic pension unchanged and a modified second tier state earnings-related scheme.

The Bill gives for the first time in this country the right to a personal pension. That means in practice that anyone, whether a member of the additional state scheme or of an occupational scheme, can choose instead to have a personal pension. In other words, the pension will be personal to the individual and will be fully portable from job to job.

Personal pensions will be accumulated on a money purchase basis with contributions qualifying for tax relief. Each person will be able to choose the kind of pension savings scheme that he wants and the kind of body which he wants to run his savings scheme. The significance of the last measure is that under the provisions of the Bill we are opening up the provision of pensions not just to life assurance companies, but to building societies, banks and unit trusts. That will not only give the public a wider choice and a greater say in how their pension savings are invested, but it will increase competition between providers of pensions to the benefit of the consumer.

We are concerned to encourage not only personal pensions but the spread of occupational pension schemes. Here again, there is substantial scope for expansion. Up to now there is little doubt that employers, particularly small employers, have been discouraged from starting new schemes by the fact that only schemes promising a benefit related to salary could contract out of the state earnings-related scheme. That is an open-ended commitment which not all employers could reasonably be expected to take on. The Bill provides an alternative route to an occupational pension. In brief, we will see an expansion of occupational schemes and an expansion of industrywide pension schemes.

The changes that we are making come on top of the important changes that we have already made in the 1985 legislation on early leavers and on transfer rights. Taken together, the legislation that is now going through the House and the legislation that was passed in 1985 amount to a major extension of occupational pensions and personal pensions, and a major extension of rights for members of schemes.

The second aim of the legislation is to seek to concentrate help in areas where that help is needed. The evidence of the social security review was that the present system fails to do that in a number of ways. The position has changed over the past 20 years. Any diagnosis of need shows that some of the most difficult problems are today faced by low income families with children. Families with children—unemployed families, but also low income families in work—now make up more than half the people living on the lowest incomes. At the same time, there is the totally indefensible position where families can be worse off in work than out of work, and where they can lose income as their gross wages rise. Through the family credit proposals and the family provision of income support the Bill will enable us to direct more help to these areas. It will help us to tackle both the unemployment and the poverty traps.

I made clear yesterday our commitment to the object and aim of family credit. I believe that there is widespread agreement with the Government's central proposition that we should direct more help to low income families with children.

The Green Paper proposals that have been adopted in the Bill achieve that in a number of ways. For example, flat rate child benefit as a universal basis of help for all children, which will be paid, of course, directly to the mother, will continue. A new family premium in the income support scheme and a new expanded and improved

family credit have been designed specifically to target help more accurately and more generously on low-income families with children.

That will enable us to direct more help to low-income families. As I have already made clear, we estimate that family credit will reach twice as many families as the family income supplement. There is widespread agreement that the present family income supplement scheme is not working and should be replaced. The family credit scheme is a good and worthy successor to that scheme.

The third objective of the Bill is to ensure a simpler system of social security. One of the most common complaints from the public is that the system is, at times, one of bewildering complexity. That is not in the interests of the claimants or of the staff who have to administer the system. The Bill will simplify benefits and put income support, housing benefit, and family credit on a similar basis. The Bill will go further than that. It will introduce common rules for the different benefits and simplify the present complexities of the contracting out rules for the state pension scheme.

The changes have been made because over the next 10 to 15 years we will introduce a new computer strategy for social security. That will be the biggest computer operation of its kind ever undertaken in this country and it will cost up to £2 billion. That strategy will radically improve the service that we give to the public.

The reforms set out in the Bill are fundamental. They follow the most comprehensive review of social security since the last war and the most detailed consultation with the public.

The reforms propose a new framework of social security that will serve the public better in future. The debate on social security has changed. The question is not now whether social security should be reformed, but how it should be reformed.

We are still waiting to hear the proposals from the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher). He launched those proposals in a tentative way some 13 months ago. I have no wish to intrude into the hon. Gentleman's private grief, but we have been promised his proposals for some time. The time has come for him to make clear where the Opposition stand on these matters.

For years hon. Members on both sides of the House have spoken eloquently of the need for reform. The Government must do more than simply recognise the problems in social security. They must put forward solutions and set out a programme for action based on clear principles and objectives. The Bill achieves that. We have a programme which will confer new rights in pensions. We will set the pensions of the future on a sound basis and give millions of people new opportunities for planning for their future and an independence which the public will appreciate and understand.

The Bill contains a programme that cuts through the unnecessary complexities of much of social security and concentrates on what should be its central aim of directing help to those who need it most. It contains a programme that will tackle the most notorious aspects of the unemployment and poverty traps. It will give more support to some disabled people as well as to those low income families who face special difficulties.

That is a programme for reform which deserves the support of the House. The House cannot turn its back on the problems in social security which undeniably exist and which have not been denied, throughout the debate. The House and the Government have a responsibility to act. I ask the House to support the Bill tonight so that we may take the action that is needed.

8.24 pm

Mr. Meacher: I want to pay a well-earned tribute to my hon. Friends who served on the Standing Committee and to my Opposition Front Bench colleagues for their discipline, eloquence, persistence, and effectiveness. Rarely can there have been a Committee where the argument was won more often and more convincingly by the Opposition than the Committee on this Bill. Yet, a stern-faced Government were able to vote us down through the brute force of whipped votes. The Opposition's sole prize in Committee and on Report came last night. We forced the Government to back-track on their universally derided plans to pay family credit through the wage packet. That is a major prize of enormous importance for millions of women. I specially thank all those who forced the Government to rethink that especially ill-advised proposal.

This Bill ends grants as of right for essential household needs for the poorest people on supplementary benefit. It substitutes a so-called social fund with no independent right of appeal and with repayable loans which will drive many families deeper into poverty and debt.

This Bill will, for the first time, cash-limit the relief of poverty. It forces everyone, even the very poorest, to pay 20 per cent. of their rates. That will eat into the basic subsistence minimum designed for food, clothing, and fuel. The Bill will emasculate the state earnings-related pension scheme by which otherwise all pensioners would have been lifted above the supplementary benefit poverty line. Poverty in retirement would finally have been ended had that scheme matured.

This Bill will end the best 20 years rule which alone protected women, the long-term unemployed and the long-term sick and disabled who were unable to earn a full pension from a normal 40 years' working life. As a result of that, they will be exposed again to means-tested poverty in retirement.

This Bill will cut £450 million from housing benefits in addition to the £200 million which was knocked off last year. That will specifically hit pensioners and unemployed families. The Bill ends local authority discretion to provide free school meals for hundreds of thousands of children who will now be put at risk of not having at least one proper nutritious meal a day.

This Bill will punish single childless young people under the age of 25. Under this Bill, 25 becomes the new age of majority for the poor. Below that age, they will get £6·60 a week less income support and significantly less housing benefit than persons in identical circumstances who are older. Altogether, nearly one third of a million young people under 25 will lose out.

I could continue with such descriptions of the Bill. This is not a Bill about social justice or about welfare state reform. It is not a Bill concerned with attacking poverty. Rather, it attacks the poor. It is about redistribution but under this anti—Robin Hood Government that involves redistribution from the poor to the rich. In addition to the £9 billion to £10 billion that has already been taken from the poor in social security cuts since 1979, and in addition to the £4 billion to £5 billion—and that is the Treasury figure—that has already been transferred from the poor

[Mr. Meacher]

in Tory budget after Tory budget, this Bill makes other redistributions. The Secretary of State said that the Bill represented a rationalisation of the welfare state. The welfare state does need to be reformed. It is too bureaucratic, too riddled with means testing and too complex, but this is not a reform package—it is a cuts package. SERPS is being cut by £12 billion into the next century, housing benefit is being cut by £450 million, child benefit was cut by £175 million last year and supplementary benefit, or income support as it is now euphemistically called, is probably to be cut by an estimated £180 million. It is a cuts package worth about £1 billion which affects 3·8 million people, 2·25 million of whom are pensioners and 500,000 of whom will lose more than £5 a week.

The Government's own figures, given in their technical annex, show that one third of a million pensioners aged over 80 will lose, that nearly 2 million pensioners under the age of 80 will lose——

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): There were no pensions for the over-80s under the old Labour Government. We brought them in in 1971.

Mr. Meacher: I shall repeat that if the hon. Lady would like me to. Nearly 2 million pensioners under 80 will lose, 250,000 lone parents will lose——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Meacher: —100,000 low-paid families with children will lose——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Lady will be able to make her own speech in due course.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: The hon. Gentleman referred to me, so would he be good enough to give way?

Mr. Meacher: I referred to the hon. Lady only to ask her to keep quiet and listen.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. We cannot have two hon. Members on their feet at the same time.

Mr. Meacher: One hundred——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Is it in order for the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) to make a deliberately misleading statement and to prevent me from correcting him?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. I remind the House that this is a very short debate.

Mr. Meacher: Nearly 2·5 million pensioners will lose, 250,000 lone parents will lose, 100,000 low-paid families with children will lose, 60,000 sick and disabled persons will lose and 1·75 million other persons in different categories of need will lose.

Those are the Government's own figures. They exclude losses from the ending of single payments, which cost more than £300 million last year. Nor do they include the package full of nasties that the Government served up without notice and without consultation in the last week of the three-month Committee stage and afterwards. The Government tacked on to the Bill a savage new penalty for people who have been unemployed for more than six weeks after leaving a job for reasons that do not satisfy a DHSS official. The only intelligible justification which the Minister was able to offer the Standing Committee for that was that it was a means of saving another £30 million.

People on income support are now to be required to pay more of their mortgage interest, as half will no longer be covered by supplementary benefit as has always previously been the case. They will have to pay it out of money intended for basic needs. The Government have also cut out all of those people who previously qualified for industrial injury benefit but had an assessment of less than 15 per cent. disability. That still involves a serious accident. Another 180,000 people will lose, saving £155 million.

The Government have always said—the Secretary of State repeated it today—that there are three basic aims behind the Bill. I should like to explore them. The first is better targeting of resources on the poor. I refer the Secretary of State and others to the answer given to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) in a parliamentary reply of 13 February. On the figures which the Government provided, it appears that two-parent families with two children, with £100 a week gross earnings or less, will lose. The highest losses are on earnings between £60 and £80 a week—they range from just under £8 a week to just over £9 a week. The picture is similar for three-children families on £110 gross or less. There are approaching 250,000 two-parent families on such low wages.

The losses faced by lone parents earning £100 a week or less are even greater, according to the answer received by the hon. Member for Kensington. They are as high as £11 on gross earnings of £60 a week or more. I do not see how those figures can possibly be considered compatible with concentrating resources on those in greatest need. It is the reverse.

The only people whom the Government have successfully targeted on are the rich—the top 5 per cent. who have received £3·5 billion in the past seven years in income tax concessions, to say nothing of capital tax concessions through weakening capital transfer tax, capital gains tax and abolition of the investment income surcharge, which benefits only those with more than £100,000 stashed away on the stock exchange.

Secondly, the Secretary of State said that the Bill would reduce complexity. I suggest that he has severely increased it, partly through the social fund, which will be an extremely complex mechanism, instead of the basically much simpler and fairer grants as of right, and through a manifold increase in means testing — abolition of universal benefits such as death grant and maternity grant.

Thirdly, the Secretary of State said that his aim was to ease the poverty trap. I put it to him that the Bill will substantially extend the poverty trap. The number of families or individuals who will lose more than 70p out of each extra £1 that they earn will double to 500,000. The number who will lose more than 60p in every £1, which is a higher marginal rate than is imposed on Britain's richest business men, will quadruple. So much for easing the poverty trap.

I should like to give a few examples of the Bill's effects. I shall limit myself to three. Miss F is a lone parent

with an epileptic child for whom she receives a diet allowance of £35. Her current supplementary benefit entitlement before rent is £82·60 a week. Under income support, she would get only £49·90, as her child will not, it seems, qualify for the double family premium. She will lose £32·70 a week.

Mrs. T is a widow with severe disabilities. She suffers from arthritis, diverticular disease in the large bowel, incontinence and a suspected hiatus hernia. She is mostly bedridden and receives an attendance allowance. Her current supplementary benefit entitlement before rent is £52·10 a week, £15·60 of which is to meet her additional requirements. On the illustrative support rate which the Government have provided her entitlement would be £42·85—a loss of £9·25.

Mrs. W is a 74-year-old widow with Parkinson's disease. She receives the higher rate of attendance allowance and has a resident help as she would be unable to live on her own without care. She receives £42·90 towards the cost of that help and her supplementary benefit entitlement before rent is £79·40 a week. Under income support she would receive £42·85—a loss of £36·55 a week. In case anybody believes that that is an exceptional case, I draw attention to the fact that the Minister for Social Security admitted in Committee that 2,500 very severely disabled persons will lose between £50 and £60 a week under the Bill.

Mr. Newton: I most certainly did not.

Mr. Meacher: The hon. Gentleman can deny that but if he wishes me to, I shall look up the quotation.

Mr. Newton: I should like to make it absolutely clear that I simply accepted that there were 2,400, to be precise, people who, in our latest data, receive additional requirements for domestic assistance. As I said again last night, our latest data show that the average of those payments is less than £4 a week. On that basis, it is inconceivable that that number of people are losing those sums of money.

Mr. Meacher: The Minister is wrong. If he looks at the figures for those in receipt of domestic assistance addition, which is paid on average at £47.20 a week, he will see that the number who will lose is as I have said.

The only proper response of those who do these things to some of the most vulnerable and poorest in society should be shame and remorse. If the Government and their Ministers are incapable of such feelings of understanding and compassion, I give notice that we shall do what they will not do. We shall prevent the Bill from coming into force if a Labour Government come to power, as we expect, before the implementation date. If we do not, I give an unequivocal guarantee that we shall eventually repeal the legislation in full.

8.40 pm

Mr. Andrew Bowden: It is with deep regret that I must say to my Front Bench colleagues that I do not believe that the Bill will stand the test of time. That is clear from the Opposition's statements, not least because a general election will take place before the Bill is fully implemented.

At the same time, I want to pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and his colleagues. The Secretary of State is a dedicated and diligent Minister, but he has faced an impossible task. He was asked to reform the social security system—few hon. Members would deny that reforms are urgently needed—but he was not given the means with which to carry it out. Therefore, his brief could not possibly be effectively fulfilled. For that, one cannot blame him. My right hon. Friend will be remembered not as a great reformer but as a Secretary of State who had an impossible task and tragically was unable to fulfil it.

I cannot support a Bill which will create real hardship, and which will reduce the incomes of many elderly people. Therefore, I shall have no hesitation in voting against the Third Reading. It is utterly wrong to force pensioners on extremely low incomes to pay 20 per cent. of their rates without compensatory increases in their income and without any guarantee that the rating system will be basically altered and reformed. It is wrong substantially to reduce heating allowances for 1 million pensioner households, and to cut the housing benefit of up to 4 million pensioners.

I wish to refer to the standard housing benefit high rents scheme, and to tell the House of a specific case in Brighton. A retired couple live on a total income of £107 a week, and at present they receive £5·45 rent allowance. If the high rents scheme is abolished—I am not talking about the other proposed reductions in housing benefit—they will immediately lose £1·45 in benefit, and a large part of the balance will go with other reductions in housing benefit.

Social fund officers and inspectors will face an incredibly difficult task. I have little doubt that the operation of the fund will inevitably lead to a mass of anomalies. During the severe weather of the past two winters we saw the anomalies that arose in severe weather heating allowances. During the past winter officers responsible for deciding whether that allowance should be paid made different decisions at different branch offices no more than 10 miles apart. In future I can see such anomalies arising on these issues. Yet, despite all the responsibilities and difficulties faced by social fund officers, and despite the inevitable errors and anomalies that will occur, there will not be a right of appeal to an independent tribunal. I accept that the Government have made some concessions on appeals, but I deeply regret that there will not be the right of access to a completely independent tribunal.

A great opportunity has been missed. The Government will rue the day when they introduced the Bill.

8.45 pm

Mr. Kirkwood: We have been privileged to listen to a brave speech by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) who is renowned for his work as the joint chairman of the all-party pensioners committee. He would have been doing less than justice to his past work if he had not made the speech that he has just made. I am delighted to follow him.

I have just finished my first Standing Committee on social security, and I wish to pay tribute to the Government Front Bench, especially the Minister of State. Although we may not have agreed with his explanations, he presented them lucidly. I also wish to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett). The burden of the Committee's work fell on their shoulders. It might be stretching the point a bit far to say that I

[Mr. Kirkwood]

enjoyed the Committee proceedings, but I certainly never found that my time was wasted, and we all learnt a great deal from our discussions.

The Government, in my submission, have made a number of mistakes. They made the first one early on. When the guillotine was imposed in Committee the guts fell out of the proceedings, and that has certainly been true on Report where we have not done justice to the work done during the early stages of the Committee. My conclusion from that is that the Government were mistaken in trying to put three separate Bills into one. The Secretary of State stipulated clearly the three major aims of the measure: a major reform of pensions, a major reform of the income support system, and a major clarification and alteration to the common provisions of the appeal machinery. The Bill has suffered because the Government included all three, and I regret that. The Government should learn that lesson for the future.

I regret that there was no real and objective attempt during the review to assess needs. There was a consultation procedure, but many Opposition Members believed that it was a bit of a charade. The Government would have done themselves more credit if they had assessed the level of need. We would all have had a fright if they had done that and presented the figures because the need is, perhaps, much greater than even we on the Opposition Benches imagine it is. But that omission made our discussions much more difficult.

The Government were wrong to rely so heavily on the need for regulations. I fully understand the need to introduce subordinate social security legislation by statutory instruments but the extent to which the Bill is founded on regulations that will come as a consequence of the primary legislation is a mistake and is to be regretted.

Throughout our discussions during the various stages our work has been made more difficult by the tentative nature of the Government's indicative figures. It is difficult for them to do much about that when the Bill is being discussed so far in advance of it being implemented. However, it would have been better had they been able to have the discussions nearer the time when the Bill was being brought into force, when we would be able to discuss real figures and not the estimates of potential losers and gainers.

The Government have not taken proper account of the fact that the Bill breaks the consensus that has been reached between both sides of the House in social security legislation, and particularly pensions legislation, over the past 15 or 20 years. The Government have underestimated the uncertainty, administrative chaos and financial difficulties that will flow from the fact that, as of this evening, all bets are off and the social security system and the machinery for delivering it are back in the party political cauldron. That is not in anybody's interest.

I listened carefully to the Secretary of State, who said that he had two aims. The first was that he wanted to concentrate on those in need, and the second was that he wanted a more simple system. I understand both of those aims, but, on a nil-cost basis, it is impossible to make the system more simple and get fairer and better targeting because they are in direct conflict. Better targeting needs to take account of individual need and to be done well needs extra resources, especially if the system is at the same time to become more simple.

The Bill is a missed opportunity and the alliance view is that we should embrace the technical difficulties of moving towards the integration of the taxation and benefit systems and attempt to unify them. I am confident that, in my political lifetime, I shall see such a reform introduced.

I have doubts about some of the detailed aspects of the Bill and the alliance will be looking carefully at them. As the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) said, we may put the Bill on the statute book and then find ourselves facing an election. The first doubt concerns the position of single people under the age of 25. I understand that the Government have to strike a balance on how support is delivered to young people, but the age of 25 as a cut-off point is unjustified, arbitrary, unnecessary and unfair. That proposal is unacceptable and I shall do everything in my power to persuade my party to change it. The long-term unemployed without children or dependants will still be in a dire position after the introduction of the Bill, and that is unacceptable, as is the 20 per cent. contribution towards the rates for those on income support. The hon. Member for Kemptown rightly referred to that point.

I hope that the commitment that the Secretary of State gave us on the stroke of midnight last night—I thought that he was about to turn into Cinderella—of further consultations and the delivery of family credit by girocheque to the caring parent is fulfilled. It would be unacceptable to leave the Bill as it stands in this regard. A means-tested death grant is unacceptable, and I tried to amend this proposal in Committee. The Government should have accepted my compromise.

The social fund, even with the new clause that the Government introduced yesterday, is unacceptable and we could not countenance the introduction of anything like a social fund in its present form, because of the difficulty of single payments. I am still not satisfied with the regional disparities, as the incidence of the cuts will fall heavily on places such as Northern Ireland, Scotland and some of the other deprived regions. I should change a number of the Bill's significant aspects if I had any influence on such matters in the future.

The Government must not be tempted, between now and bringing the Bill into effect, to chip away with piecemeal cuts just to try to discount the financial agony that will come about if and when the Bill is eventually introduced. That would be unfair and unjustified. When the Secretary of State introduces the regulations that will flow from the Bill, we shall scrutinise them line by line to try to make the improvements that the Bill still needs.

8.56 pm

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): It was with surprise that I heard the hon. Member for Roxburgh and Berwickshire (Mr. Kirkwood) say that he did not enjoy every moment of the Committee. Surely even in the early hours of the morning it was an experience of unalloyed enjoyment. Although there was a great divide of opinion on many matters, it was a remarkably good-tempered Committee. I pay tribute to the flexibility and skill of my hon. Friends the Minister and the Under-Secretary in the way that they handled the Committee, and to the competence displayed on both sides of the Committee during the debate.

Reform of social security was much needed and will be welcomed. The Bill makes many significant changes and I predict that a distantly future Left-wing Government, be

it Labour or alliance, will retain many of its features. The net income assessment system and the common criteria between benefits are two of the significant improvements that will result. The more simple and coherent income support scheme will probably also endure and other measures will successfully curtail a number of discrepancies in the system.

I have three points to make, and it would be helpful if my hon. Friend the Minister would indicate a little of his thinking on these issues on which we touched in Committee. The first is that of the age of retirement. Most people wish for and are prepared to seek greater flexibility in retirement. When he introduced his Green Paper, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State put forward the concept of a decade of retirement. That is a strategic objective, and there is little flesh on the bones of that idea. It is a matter of regret that we did not progress it further in Committee.

There is growing pressure for equalisation in the treatment of men and women, and it is only a matter of time before that issue becomes the subject of the legal process. Pressure for change will come from both men and women. Conflicting choices will mean that a considerable margin of flexibility will be the only solution. A common retirement age higher than 60 would not be a politically feasible option. For this reason, the central recommendation of the report by the Select Committee on Social Services on the age of retirement would be a non-starter.

The costs of reducing the male retirement age would be considerable. Whatever cost calculations one makes will depend on assumptions about job replacement. To take the best estimates available, at 1982 levels, the net cost of early retirement—assuming two thirds of men retiring between 60 and 65 being replaced in employment by younger people—would be £2·5 billion. Even if one assumes full job replacement, it would be nearly £2 billion. For financial reasons, that proposal is a non-starter. No Government, even if they decided that a reduction in the retirement age was the No. 1 priority, would readily be able to find such money.

Another important factor in matters relating to retirement is that only about two-thirds of men aged between 60 and 64 are active in the labour market. About 10 to 15 per cent. retire on occupational pensions, while others effectively retire on sickness or invalidity benefit or unemployment benefit. It would be helpful if we were able to give those people the dignity of retirement status as part of the changes in our retirement law.

Because of the financial and political problems of compulsory retirement at a new common age, or simply an earlier age for men, we need to consider some proposals for abated pensions. A number of variations have been discussed over the years. The difficulty so often is that they can be expensive. The other major flaw is the possibility of topping up an abated pension with other forms of social security benefit. Unless the basic level of pension, with any additional state pension, is far enough above the income level for the new income support, those on abated pensions would merely rely on other benefits to boost their income.

I sought to introduce yesterday new clause 12 to overcome this problem by allowing the payment of abated pensions, with the intention that other topping up benefits would not be payable. The formula for the abatement is the reverse of the current incremental formula. It is now possible to defer receipt of a pension until after retirement age and to earn increments to the basic rate. Those increments accrue at the rate of one-seventh per cent. per week. That results in a 7·5 per cent. annual increase. If an incremental system of that kind can be operated, I believe that an abated system could also be operated.

There would continue to be considerable problems. The abated system may be attractive only to small numbers of people, and they would need to accumulate a considerable amount of additional pension entitlement if there were to be no other benefit top up. Such a scheme would be a useful adjunct to the personal pension provisions in the Bill. Its impact would not be extensive or immediate, but it is worthy of further consideration.

The second issue that I wish to raise is relatively small—the impact of the Bill on unemployed people who undertake voluntary work. There is concern that the income support provisions will curtail the repayment of expenses incurred by unemployed people during their volunteering activities. I am sure that that is not the intention of my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security. It would be helpful if assurances could be given that expenses reimbursed for volunteering will not count as income in this case. It is very important, because a large number of unemployed people in my constituency are active volunteers. They play a useful and important role in the community. It would be a great shame if this role were jeopardised by the Bill.

I wish to refer to the need for a growing awareness about the problems of the terminally ill. Many terminally ill people, usually cancer sufferers, have a short prognosis of three to six months, during which time their condition may deteriorate rapidly, and their circumstances may change considerably. They do not qualify for attendance allowance, invalid care allowance or for other benefits because of the 26-week rule. Many of them are not now eligible for single payments. Even if they were, the system might not be flexible enough to respond with sufficient speed. Sufferers and their families obviously experience considerable stress at these times. The sufferers wish to die with dignity, often in their own homes. Many of them cannot do so because at present our benefit system is inadequately flexible. Many die in hospital, where the weekly cost of treatment could be as much as £1,000.

The social fund offers an opportunity to cope with the terminally ill in the community. It could provide a quick response to their needs. It would mean social fund officers being involved with general practitioners and social workers. That is a new possibility under the new system. I hope that the needs of the terminally ill will be fully recognised within the community care element of the social fund.

9.3 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) said that this is a bad Bill and that as an Act it will be unworkable. I agree with those sentiments.

Throughout the progress of the Bill I have sought to assess its impact upon the thousands of my constituents who are in receipt of social security incomes. My assessment is gloomy. They face a bleak future. For many people who live in my constituency in Strathclyde and for many other people in Scotland and Great Britain as a whole this is a dreadful Bill. I have said that on a number

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

of occasions, and I shall continue to say it. It will have a harmful effect on hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens.

I do not believe that the Government are attempting to focus help on those who are most in need. On the contrary, their aim is to adopt a money-saving approach that will damage the interests of those in our communities who are in need. Throughout the Bill's passage the Government have obscured its full impact from both the House and the country. The figures in the technical annex to the White Paper have confused and misled people. They are now three years out of date and are somewhat misleading. In some cases, the Government's figures are based on a one in 250 sample, and in others they are based on a one in 200 sample. But where data have become available, based on a 100 per cent. or near 100 per cent. count, the Government's figures have been shown up as being inaccurate by between 10 and 40 per cent.

If the Government were genuinely interested in social security reform, they would have carried out a more comprehensive survey of the effects of their proposals. Even if the Government's figures were to be believed, the impact on the elderly, the handicapped, single parents, unemployed people and many others would still be devastating. People in Scotland will suffer badly. I say that because social security benefits are more important north of the border than in many areas south of the border. Partly as a result of this Government's economic policies, more people have to depend on such benefits. In my constituency there has been an 85 per cent. increase in the number of those claiming supplementary benefit since the Conservative party came into office. In November 1979, the number of single supplementary benefit claimants in Greenock and Part Glasgow was about 8,800. By July 1985, that figure had increased to more than 16,000. That 85 per cent. increase compares with a figure of 81 per cent. for Scotland and Great Britain as a whole. As a region, Strathclyde has suffered even more. It has suffered a 94 per cent. increase during that period.

In Scotland, 21 per cent. of the population lives at or below supplementary benefit level. In Strathclyde the figure is fully 26·8 per cent. In Glasgow, the number of those living on social security income and their dependants amounts to a massive 39·5 per cent. of the population. In my constituency, the number of those living at or below supplementary benefit level is a staggering 33,660, or 42·9 per cent. of the population.

I have constantly challenged the Government over the replacement of single payments by that dreadful concept, the social fund. Many people in Scotland manage to survive only because of the assistance that they receive through the single payments regulations. The scale of those payments shows just how much people have to rely on them. Before considering the scale of them, it is important to consider why they are so necessary for Scottish claimants. Factors such as the higher cost of living, higher fuel costs because of the cold climate, long-term structural unemployment and so on are all well documented. Indeed, only yesterday I received an answer about the number of exceptionally severe weather payments made in Scotland. So far 57,000 single payments have been made under regulation 26(1)*(b)* and *(c)*.

It is obvious that to abolish single payments, payable as of right by regulation, and to replace them with an almost wholly discretionary social fund system will badly affect claimants in Scotland and, in particular, in Strathclyde. They will be much worse off than many claimants in other parts of Great Britain. The decision to limit the budget for the social fund is also likely seriously to affect claims in Scotland, depending on the formula used for establishing that budget.

The importance of single payments to enable claimants to survive on supplementary benefit cannot be underestimated. From 1983 to 1985 there was a 64 per cent. increase in expenditure on single payments in Scotland. In one office in Glasgow in the 12 months up to November 1985 £4·6 million was paid out by way of single payments. The office is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Provan (Mr. Brown). The increase in Strathclyde was even higher, at 74 per cent. Expenditure on single payments for the year ended April 1985 was more than £36 million for Strathclyde and more than £54 million for Scotland. That shows the importance of the single payment system in my country. The average single payment in my constituency during the past year was £74.

In addition to the absurd and harsh social fund, the Government are to remove the right of appeal from claimants against decisions made in local offices. The right to an independent hearing has been with us for over 50 years. Given the huge increase in the number of people in Scotland living on, or existing on, social security incomes, it comes as no surprise to find that Scotland is to receive 804 of the additional 5,000 jobs to be created at Department of Health and Social Security local offices. That is about 16 per cent. of the total.

I think that the Minister said that Scotland would receive a generous proportion of the additional jobs. Strathclyde will receive just under 10 per cent. That is not a generous provision. Those staff are needed to deal with the increase in work brought about by the Government's disastrous economic policies. I sincerely hope that the Bill undergoes major surgery in the other place.

9.12 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell: I shall support the Bill, but with considerable reluctance, because the Government have made a genuine effort to limit the ever increasing cost of the welfare system—I believe that that has to be done—and because the Opposition have shown no concept of responsibility and are constantly asking for more to be spent in every direction. It is no exaggeration to say that the cost of their programme would put VAT up to 41 per cent.

I believe that we have missed a great opportunity to reform the entire welfare, taxation and employment system. We held the various reviews but, unfortunately, the advice given was ignored. I believe that we will very much regret that we did not heed those who called for a unified system. It is ridiculous to go on taxing the lower paid and giving benefit at the same time.

I have much sympathy with my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). This Bill will not be remembered. It will not be the great new Beveridge that we might have had and should have had 40 years on. In fact, if we had implemented the Beveridge report as it was first written we could have achieved a great deal.

One of my chief criticisms is that we are saying that we shall give income support and family credit on after-tax income. That makes nonsense of the whole thing. How can it make sense to tax the low paid to such an extent that they need Government support to bring their income back to a reasonable level? We should find a way of raising tax thresholds considerably, so that no one who pays income tax needs extra help from the Government. Government support should be concentrated on the very low paid. There should never be any question of taxing such low incomes.

This Bill will not eliminate the poverty trap or the unemployment trap. It may stop people losing more than 100 per cent. of their extra earnings, but that is not much help if they lose 99 per cent., 90 per cent., 80 per cent., or even 70 per cent. A great many people will lose unacceptably high levels of extra earnings.

Another of my chief criticisms is that the opportunity to offer training to all between 16 and 18 should have been taken, and benefit should be withdrawn. It is wrong to continue to give young people the choice of accepting benefit and doing nothing, or going in for YTS or other training. We should be firm, and withdraw benefit. In other countries, that is acceptable. In Switzerland no benefit is paid until the person is 20, or, if he is in further education, until he is 25. The situation in Sweden is similar.

We shall also still pay benefit to anybody who happens to be in this country and without money. There is no reciprocal——

Mrs. Renée Short (Wolverhampton, North-East): "Reciprocity" is the word.

Mr. Howell: That is right. There is no reciprocity in the rest of Europe or anywhere else in the world. It is unacceptable to say that we have to have that arrangement merely because that is what we do for our own people.

We must recognise that many people in this country are refusing work at £160 a week or more because they can be better off doing nothing. It is principally because of the unlimited nature of the interest relief on mortgages that we continue to pay, and would still continue to pay even if the new proposals were brought into operation. It is unacceptable that interest relief should be given on mortgages to the extent of £1,200 a month. We need a simplified system, which could be thoroughly understood by all.

I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister to the fact that there is an easy way out. He has heard me say this several times before and I shall say it again. We cannot ignore the experience of the Americans in their workfare schemes. That experience is limited. If the Beveridge plan had ever been put fully into operation, if we had operated the workfare scheme after six or three months, and if we had offered work at a workcentre at a reasonable wage, as Beveridge suggested, we could have solved the problem. I beg my hon. Friend to think about a universal workfare scheme, which should be introduced, and I hope will be introduced, before the Bill is put into operation.

We need a new vision. We need a unified system. We could find such a system and make considerable savings. All of us, including the low paid, could enjoy large tax cuts if such a system were put into operation. I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to give serious thought to it.

9.20 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I shall repeat the remarks I made last night. I hope that I shall not bore hon. Members by doing so, but unless I present the Northern Ireland context I shall completely miss the point. If I miss the point, I cannot blame the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security for doing the same. In Northern Ireland, at present, 26 per cent. of all household incomes are derived from social security payments, as opposed to 13 per cent. overall in England, Scotland and Wales. A total of 62,000 people are on the electoral register in my constituency. Of that number, 21,000 draw either supplementary benefit or unemployment benefit. I speak of an area where one quarter of the spending power is derived from social security payments.

It is against that background that I repeat my remarks tonight. I voice my opposition to the Bill on two counts. The first is on purely factual grounds, which I hope are quantifiable; and I hope that I have quantified them properly. We must realise that about £40 million will come out of the social security payments to Northern Ireland. That is a stark figure, especially when it applies to an area which is so dependent on social security payments.

Let us consider some of the factors in the breakdown of that £40 million. The unemployed on supplementary benefit will lose £14·4 million. Single-parent families on supplementary benefit will lose £1·9 million. Pensioners will lose £13·6 million. The sick and disabled on supplementary benefit will gain £500,000. Families not on supplementary benefit will lose £3·3 million. The family as such will lose £10·4 million. Low-income families as such will lose £4·9 million. We must add to that overall wage losses, in terms of Civil Service jobs, amounting to about £10·6 million. That presents a dismal picture. It is as though what I regard as the degrading social fund does not apply to Northern Ireland. That is the net effect of the loss to those on social security. The new social fund will not apply in net terms to the most deprived part of the United Kingdom.

We have had interesting and long debates on how best to implement the social fund. However, when the stark figures are before us, they are rather frightening. Statistics may vary. However, the figures which have emerged are enough to encourage me and anyone from the north of Ireland, who has the interests of Northern Ireland at heart, to vote against the Bill, and to make people aware of its implications. We must try to persuade as many hon. Members as possible to vote against it.

I am opposed to the Bill for other reasons, some of which are more tonal than statistical. I regard the social fund as having a degrading element to it. I regard it as the Oliver Twist syndrome, except in this case people will ask, "Please, Sir, can I have some?" instead of, "Please, can I have some more?" The Bill introduces an element of discretion into what should be a statutory entitlement. That of itself is degrading and offensive.

I am glad that consideration was given to the implementation of a family credit scheme. In Northern Ireland—I suspect that it is also the case in Scotland and Wales — many small farmers are dependent on family income supplement. We must look further at that element of the measure and decide on a new means by which to implement a family credit scheme.

Anyone who has ever been in receipt of social security will realise the condescension and arrogance that underlies

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

the part of the Bill that deals with budget advice. I know what it is to be on the dole and to have to live on social security. One's pride is not helped when a slip of a girl just out of school comes in to give advice on how to budget the little that one is receiving. It is an offence to a person's pride. For God's sake remove that provision while there is an opportunity to do so, because everyone under this Parliament's jurisdiction can well do without such arrogance.

I hope that you will allow me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to be specific on one point because I did not have a chance to raise it earlier. Clause 40 extends the period of disentitlement from six to 13 weeks. That is a dangerous provision and a dangerous addition for everyone but, in the Northern Ireland context, it is much more dangerous.

Almost daily I deal with people who have been intimidated and forced from their jobs and workplace. Under the Social Security Act 1975 such people have left of their own volition and therefore have not been entitled to unemployment benefit for six weeks. Under this legislation, they will not be entitled to unemployment benefit for 13 weeks. Those men and women want to work and have worked all their lives. If someone puts a bit of lead at the back of a man's head, threatens his family or comes forward with a mask over his face, that man has to leave his job. Will we penalise him? Will we take his unemployment benefit from him?

One of the "in" expressions, which is fast becoming a cliché, is "the caring society". The Under-Secretary of State should take a close look at clause 40 and ensure that the loophole is closed, especially in relation to Northern Ireland.

My last and fundamental objection to the Bill is that, instead of bringing more people who need benefit into benefit, it drives them out. At a time when benefit is needed most, that will be the Bill's net result. For those reasons, both tonal and statistical, I shall oppose the Bill. My main reason for opposing it is that I have seen many people who did not have enough bread on the table, who could not put a coal on the fire and who could not put a proper shirt on their backs—and this is 1986.

9.28 pm

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams (Kensington): I am glad to have the opportunity to explain why I shall vote against the Bill. I shall speak as briefly as I can in this unnecessarily truncated debate.

As I said on Second Reading, the Bill is really two Bills. The first part, which deals with pensions, could have been introduced as separate legislation, and it might have been better if it had been. The Government have made a mistake in not pursuing their policy of ending the state earnings-related pension scheme and simultaneously increasing the minimum rates of contribution. That would have been the right, clear-cut approach to reform.

The Bill as it now stands presents in part I an unstable compromise. Some of its provisions are good. I welcome the moves to widen the options for employers and employees; and I welcome the emphasis on money purchase. However, insufficient emphasis has been placed on the protection of post-retirement benefits and not enough has yet been done to ensure transferability of pension rights on terms that are fair to long-service employees. Minimum employers' contributions are still not high enough because they are being drained off in national insurance contributions which are not then applied to their proper purposes.

In particular, I am convinced that the concept of the 2 per cent. subsidy in clause 7 is an improper use of taxpayers' money that will serve only to distort the market for pensions, temporarily but, seriously. That part of the Bill should be dropped. We must hope that it will be thrown out in the Upper House.

The strategy for the reform of the various systems for the redistribution of income constitute the other parts of the Bill. The Government had the choice of providing for citizens' benefits on the basis of citizenship by means of universal benefits such as the Health Service and public education. In cash terms, the clearest example is the payment of child benefit. The Government are obviously trying to edge away from the universal services. I believe that is a mistake. They could have gone for contributory entitlement, but, as I have said, the contributory systems are not getting enough money, especially national insurance and the private pension and savings schemes.

The Government could have chosen to place their main weight on income-related benefits — that is to say, means-tested benefits. That is what they have done in the Bill, but they have made the wrong choice. Having made the wrong choice, everything that follows in the Bill is wrongly slanted and the Bill is a blunder which the public will not in the end accept. The emphasis has been placed on the reform of the means-tested systems, and even there it has not been done in a way that the public will accept.

On 14 February I asked in a written question about the combined effects of the reforms on the disposable income of all those receiving income-related benefits, together with an assumption of a 20 per cent. minimum rates contribution. We have to remember that this is not the only reform that the Government have in mind. Fewer than 500,000 people will gain from the Bill. One million recipients will be in about the same position as they are now, but 5 million people will be down, some of them substantially down, as a result of this Bill. Some 400,000 people will be down by more than £5 per week. I am afraid that the Bill will be seen as a millstone round the neck of every Conservative candidate at the coming general election.

Quite apart from the effects of the Bill in terms of cash, I deplore the inevitable results of relying on the means test to provide a minimum income for every citizen. On 14 April I received another parliamentary answer. It seems that we now have 14 million people living in families receiving supplementary benefit, housing benefit or family income supplement. That is altogether too many people dependent on proof of need in order to obtain the minimum subsistence income that we think that they should have.

Of course we know that some people receive benefits that they do not strictly need, but this is the wrong way to go about correcting that. If there is to be reform, we should not do it by adding, as the Bill will do, to the number of people who will have to apply for benefit on the basis of proof of need. There will be disastrous consequences in the long run for the unity of the nation if we have a large number of people living in a supplementary benefit sub-culture; and the systems of public administration which are already on the verge of collapse in many areas will find themselves with an even heavier burden.

I admit that we need to reform the systems for giving help to people on proof of need, and the Bill contains some

ideas which may prove workable and useful: but the Government are entirely misjudging the mood of the nation in producing this Bill. It will prove largely unworkable in practice if the Government are so unwise as to seek to implement it in full as it stands. The Bill is not, as we had hoped, a new Beveridge, but merely a regurgitated Neville Chamberlain. I suspect that it has been forced on the Department by the Treasury in its enthusiasm for reducing the standard rate of tax.

The right approach would have been to increase the level of contributions in real terms to the national insurance fund—and to set it up again as a real fund, not just an accounting mystery—and to the approved private systems of provision, so that the contributory systems could genuinely take over their appropriate share of the job of income support.

At the same time, the Government should have proceeded to the amalgamation of the negative tax allowances with the positive public outlays for income support to produce a simple, comprehensible system for a partial basic income guarantee, balancing the citizen's obligations and entitlements on a basis which could be seen to be morally and administratively sound.

The Government's U-turn in abandoning their commitment to the tax credit scheme, an established commitment in 1974, repeated in the election manifesto of 1979, has proved to be a blunder. They should now proceed to implement it as quickly as possible on a revenue-neutral basis. That would not give a generous basic income guarantee, but it would give a partial basic income guarantee, which would be the right way to begin.

The cheapest way of providing our citizens with an adequate level of income is not to appoint hundreds more officers to ensure that millions of people remain in idleness. We should instead be hastening to set them free to provide for themselves.

9.35 pm

Mr. Nick Raynsford (Fulham): As time is running out, I want to focus a few brief comments on the housing implications of the Bill. That is the area in which the expenditure cuts are most heavily targeted and it illustrates most perfectly the truth of the point, put very ably by the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) at the beginning of the debate, that the Government's attempt to reform the scheme has been doomed by the inadequate resources that they have allocated for the task.

The truth was voiced by Professor David Donnison a decade ago when he was chairman of the Supplementary Benefits Commission. He warned that the reform that was needed of the method for giving assistance with housing costs could be achieved only with some modest increase in expenditure. The Government ignored that warning in their first reform of housing benefit in 1982-83, to their cost. We all know the sad consequences of that botched and failed reform. The sad thing is that, having failed to learn the lesson last time, they are doing exactly the same again, cutting £450 million from a scheme which is already known to be inadequately funded.

I wish to highlight the areas in which the cuts will bite most severely. We have focused on a number of occasions in the past two days on the implications of the Bill for mortgage assistance. I say only that it is clearly inappropriate, at a time of increasing mortgage default, when building societies are reporting record numbers of people in arrears with their mortgages, for the safety net provided by supplementary benefit to be cut away in any respect.

I want to highlight the extraordinary disincentive effect that the Government's proposal will have. If, during the first six months, a claimant will not qualify for full assistance, how many who, after they have gone through that six months and are thinking about returning to work, will be deterred if there is no prospect of that job being secure, for fear that if they were to lose the job they would once again have to try to cope without proper assistance from the DHSS? That would be a disincentive to work.

There will be difficulties for single parents who often, in the period after a marriage breakdown, need immediate assistance to ensure a remortgage which will keep them in the matrimonial home and avoid foreclosure, homelessness, and all the traumas that go with that. If the assistance which has been available in the past is no longer there, we shall undoubtedly see more insecurity, more homelessness, and more families forced out of the matrimonial home after a marriage breakdown. That is sad, but it is the direct consequence of the Government's proposals.

There is no basis in logic for the proposal that people should pay 20 per cent. of their rates. It is founded solely in ideology. It was rejected by the Government's own review team that looked at the scheme. It is riddled with anomalies, not least of which is that, in many areas, the cost of collecting 20 per cent. of rates will be greater than the amount yielded. It will also lead to a great deal of hardship for people who cannot afford to meet that extra amount and it raises the hideous prospect of people being imprisoned for debt if they are unable to cope.

The third area where the cuts will bite is the assessment of housing benefit. This will cause enormous hardship to a large number of tenants. The rate at which the benefit is withdrawn as incomes rise above the income support level has been increased by remarkable proportions. There has been a progressive increase in the rate of withdrawal in the last three years. The proposal in the White Paper of a 60 per cent. rate of withdrawal of benefit was not even considered by the review. It is 10 per cent. above the rate of withdrawal considered at the time. That in itself was far higher than the rate of withdrawal that applied earlier, and very much higher than that which applied in 1973 when the rent rebate allowance scheme was introduced for the first time by the Secretary of State for Energy who represented possibly a form of Toryism which is remarkably absent from the thinking that prompted the current social security review.

The proposals intensify the poverty trap. People should be aware of that. We are talking about 87 per cent. withdrawal of benefit for people paying tax and national insurance and receiving rent and rate assistance—far higher than for the highest paid person in Britain. It is grossly unfair and will have tragic consequences; it will intensify debt and contribute towards homelessness.

How can that be justified? The Government talk about the increased cost of housing benefit. I should like to give two sets of comparative figures. Housing benefit expenditure has increased from £1·2 billion in 1979-80 to £4·6 billion in 1985-86. It is significant that in that same period expenditure on mortgage interest tax relief has gone up by an identical amount — from £1·45 billion in 1979-80 to £4·75 billion now. Mortgage tax relief is enjoyed by people who are substantially wealthier than those who receive housing benefit. Are the Government

[Mr. Nick Ravnsford]

proposing that that should be cut? They are not. They are talking about cutting benefit to poorer people. That shows the Government's values in seeking to cut money for poorer people while leaving unaffected benefits for richer people. That is the comment on this social security review and this Bill, which will be swept away by the next Labour Government.

9.41 pm

Mr. Dafydd Wigley (Caernarfon): As one who served on the Committee, I take this opportunity to thank those organisations that worked hard to brief us. I think of the Child Poverty Action Group, the Spastics Society, a number of others and some individuals. It would be churlish not to mention the help we received from Tony Lynes, Chris Davies and others who did tremendous work in Committee.

I oppose the Third Reading of the Bill for three reasons. One is the characteristics of my constituency. My constituency has unemployment running at 23 per cent., an aging population, a high dependency on supplementary benefits, seasonal unemployment arising from the tourist industry, with low wages and the need for family income supplement. The background is one of industrial disease, about which we have heard so much in debates on the Bill. In consequence of that and other factors, there is a high level of disablement. All these features highlight the bad aspects of the Bill and how people will suffer as a result of this measure.

Wales, it has been estimated, will lose between £50 million and £100 million a year as a result of this legislation. That must therefore be resisted. There is grave concern among disablement organisations about the way in which those who are most severely disabled will suffer and how some of the general changes will impact on the standard of living of the disabled. For all those reasons, I have grave misgivings about the Bill.

Young people will lose income. Consideration must be given to how the change in housing benefits will hit students, pensioners having to pay 20 per cent. of their rates, the inequities of the social fund, the cash limitation and the lack of an appeal system. There is also the way that school meals are being phased out so that disabled children who go to special schools in my area will no longer be able to have free school meals as a direct result of the legislation. The Government have come up with nothing at all.

The death grant has also been badly handled.

A few crumbs have come out of the debate. I am grateful that the Government have decided to consider the problem of seasonal unemployment. We still have not heard the outcome of their investigations, but I hope that some help will be provided.

Last night the Minister was cut off in mid-sentence in a truncated debate when he was replying about the mobility allowance. He said:

"The issues that have been raised are extremely important and complicated, and there is much anxiety outside the House".—[*Official Report*, 19 May 1986; Vol. 98, c. 74.]

Those were the Minister's words on the mobility allowance and they were chopped. We hope that in the other place the Government will come forward with a response on the points that were made last night.

In the end, we must decide what priorities we have as a House and as a community. We must decide whether these priorities lie with the needy, the unemployed, the sick and the disabled, or whether the priority is to reduce taxation. I believe that the original objective of the Bill was to reduce public expenditure. It has led to a reduction in the costs for those who most need to be sustained.

The words of the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) will ring in the ears of the Government and their supporters. This Bill will be a millstone around the Government's neck as they go into the next general election.

9.45 pm

Mr. Robert Harvey (Clwyd, South-West): I would like to make several brief points in the short time that is left. I believe that there are two glaring omissions from the Bill. The first is the failure to make special provision for carers. All hon. Members will recognise that carers are a badly overlooked and deserving section of the community who are in desperate need of support. I understand and welcome the fact that in Committee the Government pledged to look at the problem at a later stage.

The second omission is the failure to recognise the special needs of a new category of the needy—the long-term unemployed. It is now widely accepted that long-term unemployment is the greatest cause of poverty in this country. It is a new problem as only 250,000 people could be classified as long-term unemployed during the 1950s and 1960s but there are well over 1 million people now who have been unemployed for more than a year.

Obviously some of these people are abusing the system but the great majority are not. They desperately want jobs, have lost them in declining industries, lack the skills for new jobs and are sinking deeper and deeper into frustration because they cannot find work.

When I advocated special help for the long-term unemployed in Committee, I was told, surprisingly, that there was no evidence that the long-term unemployed had special problems. I was told that the short-term unemployed are more likely to be in debt than the long-term unemployed. That is obvious, because the short-term unemployed are adjusting to a new and reduced living standard. However, the greater needs of those on a low standard of living for a long time must be clear to all hon. Members and are clear to me every time I visit the depressed parts of my constituency. I urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to allow his sound common sense to override the patchy conclusions of selective research into the matter.

Another argument against provision for the long-term unemployed was that we lack the resources. The introduction of a special premium after a year's unemployment would cost some £500 million. I accept that that is a lot of money but it is well short of the £1 billion expenditure that was irresponsibly urged by the Opposition. I urge the Government to consider the possibility of introducing the principle of a premium, even at a lower rate, which is affordable.

Another omission from the Bill is its failure to address the issue of early retirement, and reference has already been made to that point. I believe that the greatest cause of unemployment today is the shake-up that has been caused by the necessary introduction of new technology. That technology means that, while there is more wealth created, there is less work to go round. One of the most obvious ways of dealing with that problem is to lower the age for qualification for the job release scheme to 60. That

interim measure would create 100,000 new jobs at a cost of less than £500 million. The long-term solution must be a reduction in the retirement age, for all those who want it, to 60 and for certain manual workers to 55. I call upon the Government to implement that, as it is essential to tackle unemployment which has become the number one issue in this country.

9.49 pm

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I shall take only one minute.

One million words were spoken during the three months of the Committee stage of the Bill; there were 42 sittings, more than 100 Divisions and more than 450 amendments. At every stage, the Government showed that they were determined to cut the living standards of the poorest people by the removal of more than £700 million in benefit payments. It is incredible that, throughout all the stages of the Bill, the Government talked about cash-limiting, efficiencies and savings, but more people will be poorer, more people will have to go cap in hand to the social security, the power of benefit officers will be greater than ever and the power of the individual against the state and the DHSS will be significantly reduced as a result of the Bill. The same Government are prepared to write an open cheque for the purchase of nuclear weapons because they believe that to be more important than providing for the poor.

The Bill will probably receive its Third Reading tonight, because Conservative Members will wander through the Lobby and vote for it. But the Government will be removed at the general election. A new Social Security Bill will be introduced, which will have the sole objective of removing poverty in Britain. This Bill has increased poverty. The Committee stage of the Bill was interesting. I look forward to the defeat of the Government and all the Conservative Members who so happily supported the Bill.

9.50 pm

Mrs. Beckett: As we came to debate the Bill in Committee, the Opposition realised that it was worse than we had believed at first. We did not fully realise when we went into Committee that the Government knew that the biggest losers under the Bill would be the severely disabled, let alone that the only answer they could give would be to say that the disabled might receive some help from charities. We did not realise that the Government knew that they would weaken all pension protection, not just the state earnings-related scheme. We did not fully realise that in the proposals for the state earnings-related scheme they would halve pension entitlement for someone who starts work the year after the Bill becomes law, if it ever does, and would reduce his total pension at the end of his working life to below that of the basic pension today, even if he did not have a day's sickness or unemployment in his life. If he had a substantial period of unemployment or sickness, his pension would be more than halved.

We did not realise that, although the unemployed would be worse off than they are now, purely because of the interaction between income support and the social fund, they would not be sufficiently worse off for the Government, who at the last minute and in the later stages of the Bill would rush in measures to increase the penalties on the unemployed.

Tributes have been paid to the conduct of those who took part in the Committee stage, and I am grateful to those hon. Members who were kind enough to mention me in their remarks. It was a good, constructive Committee in the way in which arguments were conducted. But I hope that our efforts to maintain personal courtesy between hon. Members did not disguise for a second from hon. Members or from anyone in the country the fact that the Opposition feel not just distaste but deep and abiding anger at the proposals in the Bill. Sometimes in Committee, when feelings spilled over, Conservative Members would express incredulity and even amusement, and would say that we did not really mean it and were whipping up false emotion. The fact that they can imagine that we did not mean it is a testimony to the gulf of experience and understanding that exists across the Floor of the House — a gulf which the Bill will widen out of all recognition.

The hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden), in a brave speech, and the hon. Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) said that the Bill will not be remembered. They are mistaken. It will be remembered as the Bill that undermined a key principle of the welfare state—that it should help people before they sink into utter destitution—and it will be remembered as the Bill that makes people ask for charity in place of the rights that existed before it was passed. It will be remembered most of all as the Bill that reintroduced the notion of choosing between the deserving and the underserving poor.

The Opposition have fought the Bill—I pay tribute to all hon. Members who participated in our debates—line by line in Committee, and we shall fight it in the country. We know that we shall not win the Division tonight, but we also know that, when people realise the impact of the Bill, their votes will sweep away the Bill and with it the Government.

9.55 pm

Mr. Newton: I, too, pay tribute to all members of the Committee for the part that they played there and for the part that many of them have played in our proceedings in the House during the past two days. I should also like to thank my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, who played a significant part in our proceedings in Committee, for their work on the Bill.

It is impossible to deal in the few moments that remain to me with all of the issues that have been raised, but I should like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) for his welcome for the pensions proposals, which owe a good deal to his work over the years. I should also like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for Norfolk, North (Mr. Howell) for some at least of what I understand he said.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) talked about housing benefit and the high rent scheme. The new scheme, because it provides 100 per cent. help with eligible rents for those with incomes equivalent to those of people on income support, does away with the need for high rent schemes. There might be some misunderstanding in what my hon. Friend said about that.

I do not want to prolong the disagreement that the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) and I had during his speech, but I reaffirm that our latest information, contrary to what he said, is that domestic

[Mr. Newton]

assistance payments went to some 2,400 people in 1983 at an average value of less than £4. On that basis, the numbers of severely disabled people and the sums of money to which he referred cannot be true.

The hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon) talked about disqualification from benefit. On the face of it, we would expect the cases to which he referred to be counted as just cause for leaving employment and not subject to disqualification, but I shall draw the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the attention of my right hon. and hon. Friends in the Northern Ireland Office.

The most striking thing about this debate and our debates in Committee has been the relentless absence of any constructive approach from the Opposition. That was reflected most strongly tonight in that the one serious argument which the hon. Member for Oldham, West made did not concern what policies the Opposition would pursue, but simply reiterated that they do not like the Bill. He went so far, as I understood him, to say that the Opposition intend to scrap every part of it. Does he mean that he intends to scrap family credit, involving £200 million of additional resources for low-paid families with children? Does he mean that he will scrap the family premium income support, which will help some of the long-term unemployed claimants about which my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, South-West (Mr. Harvey) was rightly concerned? Will he repeal the disability premium and therefore the help that it will bring to 200,000 long-term sick and disabled people? Will he repeal the funeral payments, which will, for the first time, mean that large numbers of people who really need help up to the full costs of a funeral will be able to get it?

We hear constantly from the hon. Gentleman about the bits that he does not like. Let us hear something about the reforms which will help the sick and disabled, low-paid families with children and many of those who are most in need. It will always be possible to spend more on social security. The hon. Gentleman is never short of ideas about that until his colleagues tell him that he cannot go on like that or until, as in his previous incarnation, the International Monetary Fund comes in and puts a stop to it. The hon. Gentleman is short on proposals for creating a sensible and rational structure of social security which makes it possible to spend whatever resources are available better than they are spent at the moment.

There is no one in the country who does not believe that our social security system is not in need of review. The hon. Members for Oldham, West and for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) accept that, but, clearly, they have absolutely no idea how to achieve it. The Government have had the ideas, have introduced the proposals, and will create a sensible, rational system of social security. I urge the House to pass the Bill.

It being Ten o'clock, Mr. Speaker *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [15 April] and the Resolution [20 May], to put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair.*

Question put, That the Bill be now read the Third time:

The House divided: Ayes 331, Noes 208.

Division No. 189] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Corrie, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Goodlad, Alastair
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David

Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsborough)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Monro, Sir Hector
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Parkinson, Rt Hon Cecil
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stokes, John
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Ward, John
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Hardy, Peter
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Sean *(Knowsley S)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McGuire, Michael
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
Madden, Max
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin

Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt'n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Walker, Cecil *(Belfast N)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wigley, Dafydd
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Lawrence Cunliffe.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read the Third time, and passed.

Privileges

10.15 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That this House agrees with the recommendations of the Committee of Privileges in its First Report (House of Commons Paper No. 376).

Mr. Speaker: I should announce to the House that I have selected the following amendments: (a), leave out from 'House' to end and add

'takes note of the First Report of the Committee of Privileges (House of Commons Paper No. 376); believes that it would be proper to punish an honourable Member who disclosed the draft report of a Select Committee before it had been reported to the House; but considers that it would be wrong to punish a journalist merely for doing his job.'.

(g), at end add

'provided that the duration of the penalties to be imposed pursuant to paragraphs 25 and 26 shall be reduced to five days from the passing of this motion.'.

(i), at end add

'provided that the duration of the penalties to be imposed pursuant to paragraphs 25 and 26 shall be reduced to six weeks from the passing of this motion.'.

(j), at end add

'with the exception of paragraph 25.'.

I suggest that it would be for the convenience of the House if the formal moving of the amendments was deferred until the end of the debate. Under the terms of the order passed last Friday, I am required to put them successively to the House. It will be in order to refer in the debate to amendments that have not been selected as well as to those that have been selected. I must tell the House that no fewer than 24 right hon. and hon. Members will seek to catch my eye, and more may also try to do so. Six of the 24 are Privy Councillors. I therefore appeal for speeches to be brief.

Mr. Biffen: It may help the House if I outline the general background to this matter and the basis on which the Privileges Committee has made this report. But first I should make it clear that this matter is for the House of Commons and the House of Commons alone to decide in the same spirit of free voting as the debate on televising our proceedings last November—*[Interruption.]*

Secondly, I think that it would assist the House if I made a relatively compact speech in view of the general interest in the topic and of the desire of many to speak. Thirdly, I propose to centre my speech around a narrative of the events which culminated in the report that we are now debating; and to comment briefly on the alternatives that have been proposed to the Privileges Committee recommendations.

Though the ages the House of Commons has asserted its right to be able to determine the manner of its own proceedings; to choose, for example, when these shall be private and when they shall be public. So far as proceedings on the Floor of the House are concerned they are almost invariably public, and what is said is freely and immediately available to all.

But so far as Select Committees are concerned, the procedural position is that whilst a Committee may take evidence in public, its deliberative sessions and the consideration of any report must be private and confidential, and shall remain so until published. This is of long standing.

This distinction between proceedings on the Floor and proceedings in Select Committees reflects, therefore, a very long-standing judgment of the House as to how Select Committees can best perform their work on its behalf. Both my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Greed (Sir H. Rossi) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) as well as other right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House, in evidence to the Privileges Committee have emphasised the importance that Select Committees attach to the effective maintenance of this distinction. This is because, in their view, Select Committee reports are measurably more influential if they are unanimous or cut across party lines. If draft reports or reports of proceedings of the Committee appear in the press before its deliberations are complete, it is argued that it inevitably becomes more difficult for the Committee to achieve a unanimous view. This should not be a modest factor in our calculations.

The report before the House concerns a departmental Select Committee. These Select Committees were established in 1979. They still have to develop to the role that was originally foreseen in relation to the Executive. This evening, it is their future development that the House must judge, and judge alike the claim of chairmen of the departmental Select Committees that they need this protection of privilege for the deliberative stages of their work.

Against this background, I should now like briefly to recount the facts of this particular case. The Environment Committee, under the chairmanship of my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, reported to the House in its second special report that an article published in *The Times* on 16 December 1985 had resulted from a leaked copy of the Chairman's draft report on radioactive waste. Since the Committee also reported that, in its view, this leak had caused serious interference with the work of the Committee, this special report stood automatically referred to the Committee of Privileges under the new procedure subsequently approved by the House on 18 March.

The source of the leak has not been indentified, despite searching inquiries of all its members by the Environment Committee — *[Interruption.]* — although we all look forward to the debate this evening. This, of course, is one of the most highly unsatisfactory aspects of this case. The witnesses from *The Times* have refused to disclose their source. They have also refused to rule out any category of person — such as the staff of the Committee — from whom the information might have been obtained. Clearly no useful purpose would be served by instituting any further investigation.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green has given evidence about the damage he believes was done to his Committee's work and asserted that substantial interference had taken place. It was on the evidence so forcefully presented by my hon. Friend that the Privileges Committee came to formulate its recommendations.

The Times has acknowledged that it was fully aware that in publishing its leak it was committing a breach of privilege. It justified this as being "in the public interest". For the reasons detailed in paragraphs 18 to 21 of the report, the Committee of Privileges cannot accept this. Otherwise the implication is that *The Times*, and not the House, is the unquestioned judge of what constitutes the "public interest" in the matter.

[Mr. Biffen]

The world of politics and public affairs lives by a relationship with the press that is necessarily intimate and should be based on mutual and sustained respect. The House will not wish to act capriciously, and these matters proceed in the baleful circumstances where the Select Committee has been unable to indentify the perpetrator of the leak.

Even so, this challenge poses an inescapable and disagreeable choice before the House. It can either allow the right of Select Committees to confidentiality in their deliberations to disintegrate or it can defend that right by some form of punishment. As I have already said, in considering this choice, the House will recall that the whole problem of the premature disclosure of the proceedings of Select Committees, and its handling by the House, has only recently been the subject of exhaustive consideration in the second report last Session of the Privileges Committee. Its recommendations were approved by the House on 18 March last by a large majority.

This is the first case under the new procedure and what we decide this evening is bound to colour the future. The Select Committee on the Environment has concluded that its work has been substantially impeded and the Privileges Committee agrees. It is not disputed that a breach of privilege has occurred. The central issue is what is an appropriate, effective and equitable response by the House.

This takes me to the amendments, selected by you, Mr. Speaker, for debate.

The first is amendment (a) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). It urges that the House should take no action against Mr. Evans or *The Times* generally. I do not believe that a course of no action at all would be appropriate in these circumstances since it would put the whole basis of confidentiality of the deliberations of Select Committees at risk. There would also be little point in the Privileges Committee addressing such matters again if the House felt unable to support its judgment in this instance.

Two amendments propose that the recommendations of the Committee should be implemented only for limited periods. Amendment (g) in the name of the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) proposes five days; and amendment (i), in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), six weeks. The Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment was persuasive in arguing that his Committee had been seriously harmed by the leak. In this context I am reluctant to commend a penalty so substantially less than that recommended by the Privileges Committee.

The fourth is amendment (j) tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. This would stop any penalty being imposed upon Mr. Evans.

I admire the way in which my hon. Friend has recognised the very real feeling in the House that a journalist should not suffer, but unlike the 1975 case, Mr. Evans has refused to apologise to the House or to exonerate the staff of the House from being involved in the leak. Indeed, on the second point, it has been stressed that that is his own decision, not his editor's. My judgment, therefore, is that the Privileges Committee's recommendation in respect of Mr. Evans for his actions should stand.

I now address the recommendations of the Committee, which are contained in the motion before the House. The motion proposes that the lobby reporter concerned in this leak, Mr. Richard Evans, should be suspended from the lobby for six months and excluded from the precincts for that purpose and for that period. That is in line with the recommendation made by the Privileges Committee in *The Economist* case in 1975 and in its second report last Session. The motion also proposes that the number of lobby passes issued to *The Times* should be reduced by one, also for a period of six months.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Does not my right hon. Friend think that, if the matter was leaked by a Member of the House who took it as such a strong principle that he should leak it, he should have the courage to say who he is?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that it would be a happy issue to most of our afflictions if any hon. Member who had leaked the document were now to make that evident—[HON. MEMBERS: "Come on."] The debate might help to that end. I should like to say to my hon. and learned Friend that we still do not know that it is a Member of Parliament, because the information which might have been disclosed by Mr. Evans has been withheld.

It is noteworthy that none of the amendments selected has questioned the judgment of the Privileges Committee that *The Times* has breached the privilege of the House. The argument—and it will be echoed in the debate—centres around the extent of the penalties to be imposed.

The Privileges Committee gave the question of penalties measured consideration. Inevitably, the suggested penalties reflect a high degree of value judgment with very little precedent as a guide. The House must judge. Even so, I believe that the recommendations set an appropriate judgment between a token punishment and a penal sanction inappropriate to modern circumstances.

Mr. John McWilliam (Blaydon): Is the Leader of the House prepared to invite members of the Select Committee who are present in the House tonight to intervene and assure the House that they did not leak the document?

Mr. Biffen: I shall try to accommodate the point that the hon. Gentleman fairly makes and also keep in reasonable order. I am certain that this would be to the benefit of the entire House. If there is any member of that Select Committee here who can now resolve the matter by saying that he was responsible for the leak, he should inform the House accordingly.

The House should not lightly set aside the recommendations. The issue is essentially very simple: given that a breach of privilege has occurred, what is the appropriate penalty?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East) *rose*——

Mr. Biffen: My view is that the Privileges Committee has adjudged aright. Given the fact that no apology has been forthcoming from *The Times* in these circumstances, unlike the *The Economist* case in 1975, I urge the House to support the motion and reject the various amendments before it.

10.28 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): As the Leader of the House said, this is a House of Commons matter. In all political parties, there are widely different

views about privilege in general, and, as the amendments on the Order Paper demonstrate, about its enforcement in this case.

I speak as a member of the Select Committee on Privileges, and the report carries the approval of that all-party Committee, with one dissenting voice. Its recommendations, which I support, follow directly from the recommendations of the second report of the Privileges Committee, which was debated as recently as 11 March this year, and subsequently approved by 104 votes to 22 on 18 March. That report did not focus on a particular case, but, following a growing number of leaks from Select Committees, it was directed

"to examine further the laws of privilege and the rules of the House relating to the proceedings of select committees meeting in private".

The Select Committee concluded that if there had been substantial interference, or the likelihood of such, in the work of the Select Committee, then, provided the Priviliges Committee agreed, it might recommend that appropriate penalties be imposed on Members or other persons, including the press, especially if no apology had been offered.

Moreover, the Committee of Privileges gave a clear indication of the nature of the penalties that it had in mind. Paragraph 10 of the report states:

"If a Member of the House is found to be responsible for a leak in one of the above categories, he should be punished. The appropriate penalty in many such cases would be removal from the committee concerned. If an editor or a journalist (or any other person who enjoys the facilities of the Lobby or Press Gallery) has been found responsible for publishing such a leak, he too should be liable to an appropriate penalty. Such penalty might be the suspension, for a specified period, of the Lobby and Press Gallery passes of journalists employed by that organ of the press."

The case before us tonight exactly fits the criteria laid down in the Privileges Committee report. Mr. Richard Evans, a lobby correspondent from *The Times*, obtained and published the Chairman's draft report of the inquiry of the Select Committee on the Environment into radioactive waste. The Environment Committee itself summarised the effect of the leak as constituting:

"a serious interference with the work of the committee."

That assessment was strongly reaffirmed by the Chairman, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi), in his evidence to the Privileges Committee.

The Times report gave a seriously misleading impression of the Select Committee's conclusions. It made it more difficult for Members to approach the evidence impartially, it damaged trust between members of the Committee, and it delayed for some weeks the completion of its report. Both the journalist and the editor insisted —as the Leader of the House has reminded us—that they were acting in the public interest, and it was made plain that it was the settled policy of *The Times* newspaper to seek such information from Select Committees and to publish it.

When asked:

"If you say it is in the public interest to publish it when you did, why is it less in the public interest to let it wait a fortnight until it has been properly discussed and publish it then?",

Mr. Richard Evans replied:

"Perhaps I could take up one point. If we waited two weeks another newspaper might get hold of it."

I do not automatically equate the commercial interest of *The Times* with the public interest, and nor should the House.

As to the proposed penalties—six months suspension and the reduction of the number of *The Times* lobby passes by one for the same period—I have read the letter, as have other right hon. and hon. Members, that was sent to us by members of the Parliamentary lobby and which states:

"the person who leaked the report, who committed the breach of trust and privilege remains undetected and unpunished."

That is true. I regret it, as I am sure all hon. Members do. But in all leaks there are three culprits. There is the source, the editor and the journalist. The absence of one is not a reason for inaction against the others.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman tell the House whether, had the identity of the person who leaked the document been available to the Privileges Committee or were it to be available to the House now, before the matter is disposed of, that would in any way mitigate or change the decision of the Privileges Committee to recommend the penalty which the House is now considering?

Mr. Shore: I do not believe that it would. Obviously a penalty would be imposed on the Member.

I now turn to the underlying argument. The one thing that should united the press and Select Committees is the wish to penetrate more deeply into important matters of policy and to prise open the secrecy which Government Departments and Ministers are always prone to. After all, that was a major motivation in the decision of the House in 1979 to establish 14 departmental Select Committees to maintain an on-going scrutiny of departmental affairs.

Few subjects are of greater importance than the nuclear power industry, as the Chernobyl disaster has so vividly demonstrated, and the unsolved problem of long-term disposal of nuclear waste is one of the great questions involved. Far from seeking to cover up the industry and Government policy in relation to it, the Select Committee has, apart from its own 100-page report, obtained 800 pages of written and oral evidence from bodies as diverse as Friends of the Earth, the Town and Country Planning Association, the Trades Union Congress, the Central Electricity Generating Board, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the Secretaries of State for Transport and for the Environment. All that material is now before the public, and the Committee's proceedings, when witnesses were called and interrogated, were held in public and the minutes published.

Although I acknowledge the investigative skills of the press, the Select Committee's investigation was an exercise in open government that far outstripped in depth, penetration and authority anything that could be otherwise achieved—except perhaps by a Royal Commission or a full-scale planning inquiry with especially wide terms of reference.

To present the issue tonight as one between the advocates of open government and those of closed government would therefore be ludicrous. What is at issue is the confidentiality of the closing and deliberative stage of the Select Committee's work, when it considers the evidence it has received and tries to reach its conclusions. Not only is that report then published but so, too, are the specific dissents and alternative drafts and recorded votes of members of the Select Committee. The deliberative session and the Chairman's draft report which is prepared with the purpose of focusing discussion are all that are at

[Mr. Shore]

issue. Why protect that draft report? Why should it be a contempt to disclose this part of the Select Committee's proceedings?

The answer is simple. Many powerful and interested parties seek to influence Members in their conclusions. None has a greater interest than the Government, since it is Government policy, active or inactive, that the Committee is ultimately investigating. If, at this stage, external influences and pressures, including the Whips, are brought to bear, there is a risk that the judgment of Members will be affected and the difficulties in reaching agreement increased.

If the facts of the Committee study justify it, of course there is great advantage in a unanimous report. No Government can shrug off the findings of a Select Committee whose members always reflect the composition of the House and have, therefore, a built-in Government majority, if that report is unanimous.

The leaked publication of a draft report at the closing, deliberative stage of the Select Committee's work therefore operates against the very purpose for which the Select Committee has been established — to probe sensitive questions, to obtain information from within and outside Government, and then to put the full force of the Select Committee's unfettered judgment behind its recommendations.

No analogy exactly fits but, in trial by jury procedures, the court is open to the press and the public. The witnesses appear and are examined and cross-examined in public. The jury's verdict is then delivered in public. But when the jury retires to consider the evidence and its verdict, the press is excluded. Having heard all the relevant facts, it is for the jury to make up its mind, and for all other influences to be excluded.

It is for those reasons — quite apart from the commercial motivation of stealing a march on other competing newspapers—that I reject the claim of Mr. Richard Evans, the editor of *The Times* and the letter sent to Members by the parliamentary lobby and journalists that this leak was "in the public interest".

No one can be certain of the effects of sustained and major leaks of the proceedings of Select Committees but if, as seems probable, they are weakened and divided by premature disclosures, the major losers will be the public, the House and the cause of open Government that the Select Committees seek to serve. I believe, therefore, that the Select Committee's report deserves the support of the House.

10.39 pm

Sir Ian Gilmour (Chesham and Amersham): The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) who is the shadow Leader of the House, made a delightfully reactionary speech. He produced one of the most far-fetched analogies that has ever been put before the House, that a Select Committee bears any relation at all to a jury. I hope that the House will reject this motion. I hope that I may be forgiven for an extremely mixed metaphor: the Committee of Privileges is making a mountain out of a molehill and is barking up the wrong tree.

We all know that Select Committees do valuable and important work. We also know that their members are Members of the House and do not become different beings when they sit on Select Committees. They are well aware of political pressures, they know the importance of publicity and they live the whole time in the political world. The idea that once they get on to a Select Committee and start deliberating they should be pampered and protected from publicity and that that protection should be reinforced by penal sanctions against the press is quite absurd.

Why do they suddenly become so naive that they can hardly deliberate because there has been some publicity and they do not know how to get on with their Select Committee work? This surely does a great disservice to the members of Select Committees. They are grown-up people and if they are not able to withstand these pressures, they should not be Members of this House.

Sir Peter Emery (Honiton): Will my right hon. Friend please tell the House which departmental Select Committees he has served on?

Sir Ian Gilmour: As my hon. Friend knows, I have served on none. If serving on a Select Committee made me change my mind I would know that I was wrong. I am strongly in favour of consensus, but the idea that Select Committees should be immunised from publicity when no other organ of government is so immunised is wrong. Why should this unique protection be given to Select Committees? The whole idea is bizarre and ridiculous.

So much for the molehill: I will now proceed to the wrong tree. We all know that the leaks are extremely embarrassing and irritating, especially when we all know that they almost invariably come from an hon. Member. The fact that we are unable to find out who did it does not mean that out of frustration we should punish the wrong person. There used to be doctrine a long time ago, I think in the law courts, that the fact that a man had committed adultery with a woman did not necessarily mean that the woman had committed adultery with the man. That is so in this case.

Mr. Fairbairn: Perhaps my right hon. Friend would not like to leak it, but one has to be married to commit adultery. He may not know that.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): You know.

Mr. Fairbairn: Yes, I do know. Breach of trust that is given can never be forgiven for any reason.

Sir Ian Gilmour: I entirely agree about breach of trust, but I am not entirely clear about the relevance of that interruption. We are discussing whether or not there has been a breach of trust by an hon. Member. Whoever leaked this report did wrong. *The Times* and Mr. Evans did not leak and did not do wrong. They published, as it was their right and duty to do. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."] The idea that there should be censorship because of the sacred deliberations of the Select Committees is absurd.

The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney and the other members of the Privileges Committee seemed to be surprised that *The Times* was not prepared to wait until the official report was published. They said that *The Times* should have acted in the public interest, and the right hon. Gentleman thought he knew exactly what the public interest was. All that he was saying was that *The Times* should behave like an advertising man and sit back and allow its columns to be used for advertising.

The correct definition of news was given by William Randolph Hearst—and he should know—as something

that someone does not want published; everything else is advertising. The right hon. Gentleman suggests that newspapers should sit back and say, "We cannot publish this. We must wait until we get the full report." That is not how newspapers should behave. It is not the way in which they behave in any other sphere of government. Why should they behave in that way with the deliberations of Select Committees?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Publish and be damned.

Sir Ian Gilmour: That is right. It is not for the Select Committee on the Environment or the Privileges Committee to decide what it is in the public interest to publish. If any of us knew what it was in the public interest to publish, we would not need a free press and we would not deserve one. It is nonsense to talk about the public interest.

If the motion is passed, the House will be the only loser. Mr. Richard Evans will not lose; he will be respected everywhere except in the House. *The Times* will not lose. Although it will lose one Lobby pass, it can employ an extra journalist to report sport or something else that will improve its circulation. The House will have once more made a fool of itself on a matter of privilege and will have forgotten that the point of Parliament is to preserve free speech, not to prevent it.

10.46 pm

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): When the House of Commons sets up an important Committee — no Committee is more important than the Privileges Committee—to examine a matter of major significance, as it has done on this occasion, and when the report is presented to the House and so many eminent names are attached to the proposition before us, the House must pay careful attention to what is proposed. I greatly respect the opinion of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) — no Member of the House is more truly honourable in every possible sense —so I am usually eager to agree with him.

I would pay a similar compliment, although not quite so glowing, to the Leader of the House if I did not think that it would interfere with his young career at an inopportune time. None the less, they have joined many others to present the proposition to the House, and it must be carefully considered.

However, I am bound to consider it as a journalist for many years. I have seen the conflicts between the House and Fleet street in its different forms. I do not say that, in all those conflicts, Fleet street was right and the House of Commons was wrong, but anyone who examines the history of the House will see that, on many important occasions, journalists have been proved right and the House has been proved wrong. On several occasions in recent times—I am not talking about the 18th century—the House of Commons has clambered upon its privileges hobby horse and fallen flat on its face. I do not want that to happen this time, although it is possible if the recommendations are accepted.

Not all the evidence given by journalists to the Privileges Committee was equally valuable. Many of their answers, although not incriminating, weaken their case, but one argument in the replies that they gave to the highly skilful cross-examination by the Attorney-General and others is difficult to meet. If it is all right for members of the Lobby and other journalists working in the House of Commons or its environs to try to search out what is happening in the Cabinet and to publish that, why should it be wrong for them to try to search out what is happening in Select Committees and to publish that?

If we are told—this is the case put by the Chairman of the Committee and to some degree accepted by the members of the Committee—that it interferes with the process of discussion in the Select Committee, then we must accept that there is a whole range of Cabinet committees, including the Cabinet itself, which could make exactly the same claim. A whole range of discussions and reports—leakages, call them what you will — come from the Cabinet or Cabinet committees which may deal with subjects even more important than those assigned for consideration by this Select Committee.

It is impossible for the House to draw the line in that way and say that different restrictions should be imposed on journalists working here when they are trying to report what is happening in a Select Committee than when they are trying to report what is happening within the Government machine itself.

Despite the prevarication of some of the replies given in cross-examination, the journalists were saying, "We believed that we were doing the same job in trying to report what was happening in some of these Committees as we do as a matter of course when trying to report what is happening in the Government."

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): In the light of what my right hon. Friend has said, may I ask him to say why he did not oppose the report of the Privileges Committee, which was carried by a 5:1 majority—

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): They were whipped. I know, because I called the Division.

Mr. Mikardo: I guarantee to my hon. Friend that nobody whipped me—not on a free vote. It was carried by a 5:1 majority without dissent from my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), and I am sure that he was not whipped. Why did he not oppose that, when that report said precisely that the proceedings of Select Committees should be treated differently from the proceedings of other bodies?

Mr. Foot: I give the assurance that I was not whipped in that case, as I was not in many others. If somebody had tried to whip me, I might have paid more careful attention to the proceedings on that occasion. I do not propose to make the same mistake again.

I have been considering the matter carefully. Whatever may have been decided by a previous Committee—and we can take a lesson in terms of the diligence that we should show in attending to the proceedings of the House — I do not believe that one can draw a proper distinction between the two.

It has been argued that there must be special virtue in ensuring that Select Committees should be able to reach unanimous judgments. In my view, that has nothing to do with it. The procedures should not be so arranged to encourage or discourage that result. I have been somewhat sceptical about Select Committees and their role, because there may be disadvantages in forcing a consensual agreement on matters where I believe party arguments should still prevail.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): My right hon. Friend challenges us to make a distinction between a

[Mr. Nigel Spearing]

Cabinet committee and a Select Committee of the House. Would he not agree that a Cabinet committee or the Cabinet itself deliberates on Executive action to be taken, which may pre-empt the views or policies of the House, whereas a Select Committee can only make a report to the House, and that is its only shot?

Mr. Foot: It is a continuous process, and indeed it becomes enlarged. The departmental Select Committees have certainly become enlarged since they were established. I do not say this against them. In some ways they have shown much greater vitality than many expected they would, and good luck to them in that sense.

It is not a fair distinction, however, to say that they should have a special kind of protection which is not necessary for the Cabinet and Cabinet committees. I do not believe that that distinction can be made to work for the future operations of the House. If the House of Commons tries to draw such a distinction, my prophecy is that it will fail, which is one reason why I am against the proposal before the House.

It is unfair that the journalists should be punished and the real culprits should not; that is so manifestly unfair that the House of Commons will make a fool of itself if it tries to proceed on those lines.

But what is the remedy for the situation? I know there is a problem. I am not trying to dodge it. I understand that the Select Committee cross-examined the journalists on these questions of confidentiality, which are very important.

I am not saying that the House of Commons should not have the right to establish Select Committees or other Committees which would have the right to insist upon confidentiality. It is absolutely necessary. It is necessary for the Cabinet, and for some of these committees. But members of those committees are responsible for protecting their confidentiality. If some members of those committees cause breaches of confidentiality, they cannot put the blame on somebody else who may have a different kind of job.

I know that another remedy has been proposed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), and it is also in the report presented to the House. I understand his argument, but I disagree with it. He says that the solution to the problem is to make all the Committees open and not to insist on confidentiality.

Just as I disagree with my right hon. Friend on that matter, so I disagree when the argument is applied to the Cabinet itself. The trouble about having so many leaks from the Cabinet—this is the leakiest Cabinet in British history—[HON. MEMBERS: "No."] Oh yes, it is the leakiest Cabinet in history. The trouble is that when there is a Cabinet of that nature, the decisions are taken more and more by a sort of inner Cabinet, which thinks that it can preserve secrecy. We also know from our experience over recent weeks and months that the way in which that Cabinet has operated has been highly dangerous to the British people.

Moreover, there is in addition much more of an organised system of leaks although I am not saying that there were not signs of it in years gone by. *[Interruption.]* Day by day and week by week, we have an organised system of communicating to the press the decisions of the Government and the decisions of many Government and Cabinet Committees, and that system continues. [HON. MEMBERS: "No."]

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Foot: I say that it is utterly hypocritical for the House of Commons to say that we will have that system of tolerated and organised leaks, but that, when it comes to a particular form of operation in the House of Commons, we will impose these penalties and methods of operation.

So I say that the House of Commons should try to discover a remedy for the disease, one which really works. That will be achieved only if the House insists on the proposition that Members of the House must show the trust and power of maintaining that confidentiality. It is their business to do it. If they cannot do it, they cannot find scapegoats on whom to thrust their mistakes.

10.59 pm

Sir Hugh Rossi (Hornsey and Wood Green): I commend to the House my amendment (j) in line 2, at end add

'with the exception of paragraph 25.'.

I wish at the outset to thank my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House and the Committee of Privileges for the trouble they have taken to investigate the complaints of my Committee arising out of the premature publication of parts of a draft report even before the Committee as a whole had had time to meet to consider it.

Reading the proceedings of the Committee of Privileges I was immediately struck by the cavalier, truculent and almost contemptuous attitude of the newspapermen in question towards the House. They admit that they acted deliberately in breach of the privileges of the House, make no apology for doing so and assert firmly that they are the sole arbiters of which rules of the House they choose to obey and which they do not. I find that rather rich coming from those to whom the House has granted privileges given to few others, whether it be a licence to come and go at will and to record the proceedings of the House, or to occupy precious accommodation given to no other newspaper.

It is little wonder that the Committee of Privileges was very angry and proposed extremely severe sanctions. I trust, therefore, that my right hon. Friend and his colleagues, having done their best to protect my Committee, will not take it amiss if I suggest that perhaps the Committee of Privileges has allowed itself to be provoked by these very unsatisfactory witnesses into going beyond what is perhaps just and reasonable. Therefore, I tabled an amendment in the names of myself, the members of my Committee and a former chairman of my Committee, to the effect that Mr. Richard Evans be not suspended from the Lobby for six months. That is very much for the reasons expressed in amendment (a) in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg).

It goes against the inherent sense of fair play of the House that a young, well-liked journalist should be punished while the real villain, possibly a Member of the House, escapes censure. [HON. MEMBERS: "Name him."] I must tell the House that, having investigated the matter, I do not know who it is and that I cannot name anybody,

nor am I prepared to name anybody. It would be wrong for hon. Members to throw stones at other people in the House without evidence.

I accept, all the same, that if there were no receivers of stolen property there would be fewer thieves; if there were no publishers, there would be no leakers. However, the journalist in question was doing very little more than his duty in reporting to his employer information which had fallen into his hands. I trust that my amendment will be accepted.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: May I ask the chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment a simple question? Is it true that a member of the Select Committee admitted to breaching privilege on this matter, that he referred the document in question to Mr. John H. Large of Large and Associates, consulting engineers to Greenpeace, and that Mr. John H. Large wrote a letter to the chairman of the Committee on 23 December in which he said:

"On 12 December"——

that is, five days before the leak was published—

"a copy of the draft report was delivered to this office by motor cycle courier".

Does the Chairman of the Select Committee know that that statement by Mr. Large is not true? If it is untrue, do we necessarily have to accept the balance of his statement? Finally, is it not also true that the hon. Member who leaked the document has apologised to the Select Committee and that his apology was accepted by the Committee?

Sir Hugh Rossi: The hon. Gentleman has clearly read my report to the House and to the Committee of Privileges. It is clear that there was a secondary breach of privilege by a member of my Committee who consulted a firm of professional experts because he wanted advice on some of the technical matters contained in the draft report. That is perfectly true. I leave it to the hon. Gentleman in question to identify himself if he so wishes. He has apologised fully to the Committee for that secondary breach of privilege.

We are concerned with a different matter altogether. We are concerned with how the report was leaked to the Press.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Does the hon. Gentleman know whether the company which has been mentioned was being remunerated by Greenpeace for acting in an advisory capacity? The company must have had a commercial interest in this document. Is it not true that, after receiving the document, amendments were suggested to various members of the Committee? Was that not an application of pressure? What is the qualitative difference between that and the case in point this evening?

Sir Hugh Rossi: It is true that that firm of engineers has given evidence and had advised Greenpeace on occasions. We established that; that is clear in our reports. If the hon. Gentleman would like further information as to the extent to which this leak or series of leaks has progressed, I can tell the House tht only two weeks ago I was given a photostat copy of parts of my draft report. This was handed to me by a member of the Central Electricity Generating Board who told me that he had received it from the United States of America before the report was approved and published. I have also been told by the producers of "Newsnight", which produced a programme before the embargo was raised on our report, that they paid for a copy of the draft report.

These leaks are distasteful.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: I will not give way because this is a time-limited debate and I have already been extremely generous in giving way. We are extending the debate beyond the issues before the House.

Having suggested how my Committee feels about the journalist in question, I would now like to consider the responsibilities of the editor and proprietor of *The Times*. This is entirely another matter, because they have the responsibility for publication. If they publish a libel, they risk damages. If they publish in contempt of court, they risk imprisonment. If they publish in contempt of the House, they should risk withdrawal of privileges which the House has been pleased to give them. Their justification is that they have acted in the public interest. In their defence, they have raised a great shout in Fleet street about freedom of the press, which has been reflected in some of the speeches that we have heard already today.

I should like to examine for a moment the proposition that it was in the public interest to reveal what the editor and proprietor revealed. Were we dealing with a Cabinet committee matter, some great hidden scandal of state, some great concealment from the public of vital information, some departmental conspiracy to mislead, I might have some sympathy, but what do we have here? This is the publication of a preliminary draft of a document intended for publication and produced to stimulate public debate. How can it be against the public interest to wait until that document is no longer in its crude form, but good and ready for publication?

Would it be acceptable in Fleet street for the world to see a journalist's copy before his editor cuts or spikes it? Can we look at draft editorials to see whether there is true journalistic independence? Do we review manuscripts of books before the author is ready to send them to his publisher? Examined in this way, the demand to be free to publish the Chairman's report when his Committee has yet to decide whether it reflects its collective view is absurd and untenable. What can be in the public interest in publishing an unapproved draft, which is subject to change and revision, some two or three weeks before it is due to be published in any case in its final approved form? We have already heard — Mr. Evans was asked the question and he replied with refreshing honesty—that, if he had waited another two weeks, another newspaper would have got it. There it is. We are concerned with a newspaper scoop, a desire to keep up circulation to make a profit.

Mr. Grylls: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Sir Hugh Rossi: No.

There is nothing wrong with those objectives in themselves. Running a newspaper is running a business, but I ask that they spare us the cant and humbug of "pro bono publico."

Mr. Wilson's justification was that publication of the draft report widened the debate at an earlier date. He slides over the fact that the deceit so threw the Committee that the final report was delayed three months. He also conveniently ignores the fact that publication of the draft report misled the public and raised false expectations because our recommendations, or some of them, were substantially amended. Expectations were raised about a report of a Committee dominated by Conservative

[Sir Hugh Rossi]

Members attacking Government policy, demanding the shut-down of THORP, no new foreign contracts for reprocessing and one-off dumping at sea and then finishing with it. It was no such thing, but the story was picked up in that form by commentator after commentator and relied upon even after the Committee report appeared. I should have thought that the spreading of misinformation is against the public interest and that that is exactly what happened.

The problem caused by the leak has already been fully recorded. However, the present rules under which Select Committees are required to operate are unworkable if no sanctions are to exist for a breach of them. It is bizarre that I must produce a draft report which I cannot discuss with anyone outside my Committee, refuse constant demands for interviews, and rigorously honour an embargo intended to give equal opportunity to every interested journalist, only to find that my draft report is published behind my Committee's back as the result of some clandestine deal.

I would prefer it if the House adopted one of two methods. When draft reports are sent to members of Committees, they should be deposited in the Library and in the Press Gallery. The status of the document would be clear—that it reflected only the Chairman's personal views, for whatever they may be worth, and that it may be accepted or rejected by the Committee as a whole. The danger of that is that individual Members may be asked to comment, which would make it even more difficult to reach a unanimous consensus view. The advantage would be that the document would join all the other official press releases as an unleakable document. Another course would be to enable the House to enter into exclusive publication rights and recoup some of the Committees' expenses. *[Interruption.]*

I am worried that indecision tonight could well damage the growth of Select Committees. They are an exciting development, still in their infancy, through which Parliament is seeking to re-establish its traditional role as a check on the Executive. During the past 100 years that role has been eroded by the party and whipping systems. Question Time has become a ritualistic game, and apart from occasions such as this, setpiece debates in the Chamber are poorly attended. *[Interruption.]*

On the other hand, Select Committees summon Ministers and, equally important, their officials, and cross-examine them persistently and in depth in a way which is impossible under any other procedures. Having heard all the evidence in open court, as it were. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Some hon. Members would like to hear this debate.

Mr. Speaker: I too should like to hear it.

Sir Hugh Rossi: I realise that some hon. Members are rather impatient with me, but as I do not speak often and this is an important matter on which I have some experience, the House might listen to my remarks, which may be of assistance, particularly as I have heard speeches such as that of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) who has not served on a Select Committee and cannot know what happens in one.

Having heard and cross-examined Ministers and witnesses in open court, as it were, we retire like a jury to consider our verdict. The Committee can chew over the draft report, consider the evidence, evaluate it, and compare impressions. We do so in the absence of political rancour or bias. When we have reached our verdict, we do not hide it; we publish it. That is our function. Intrusion into our private discussions would put pressure on Committees from the outset, and that would diminish the value of our reports.

The departmental Select Committee is a new, delicate constitutional plant which must be protected and nurtured if it is to flourish. It is more in the public interest that the House protects its Committees than that it enables newspapers to scoop one another.

11.20 pm

Mr. John Cartwright (Woolwich): I do not intend to follow the length of the speech made by the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). In the early part of his speech, as the Chairman of the Select Committee, he opened up a veritable Pandora's box of apparent leaks from the Committee. If I understood him aright, copies of the draft report have been freely available on both sides of the Atlantic. If that is the case, I wonder why we do not have a longer list of people arraigned rather than just one journalist from *The Times*. My understanding is that that the leak to John H. Large and Associates resulted in that firm circulating members of the Select Committee with suggested draft amendments to the report that they were urged to move in Committee. That is a much more serious interference in the work of the Committee than any journalist reporting the draft report. I wonder why we are not debating that as well.

In no way do I condone the business of leaks. It is an acutely damaging procedure and one which, over the past few days, I have had good reason to be reminded is extremely dangerous and damaging to trust between one colleague and another. *[Interruption.]* I think that I have made the point. There is only a narrow gap between the leak and the unattributable quote, and the whole business of the lobby system, from which the House has been suffering for so long.

Mr. John Gorst (Hendon, North): Is there no qualitative difference between leaking proceedings of a Select Committee to the press, and leaking them to a member of the Whips' Office of one's party? Whips of either party might, for their own interests, leak them to the press.

Mr. Cartwright: That is a fair point. The existence of research assistants and such people makes it difficult to keep a document 100 per cent. secret.

Tonight we are considering whether the punishment recommended by the Select Committee on Privileges is a reasonable one for us to approve. I cannot accept that it is. I hear what is said about the position of journalists, but it is unreasonable to expect a journalist to refuse the opportunity of publishing a document such as this, which is on an issue of major public concern. To recall what the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit) said during the Fulham by-election, we are all of us consenting adults in this business of politics. We are not naive. We know what journalists are about, and if we are stupid enough to

give them the opportunity to exploit a situation, we are to blame, not the journalists. We should not be punishing a journalist for doing his job effectively.

There is something ironic about Select Committees, which were specifically set up to blow the whistle on Government Departments, to find out where the bodies are buried and to shed light in dark corners of Whitehall, hiding behind the same sort of secrecy that has cloaked Whitehall for so long. When we last had a debate on such matters, we were debating a leak from the Select Committee on the wealth tax, a Committee on which I served. The then Member for Cornwall, North, Mr. John Pardoe, said:

"There is absolutely no value to be attached to secrecy in the deliberations of a Select Committee. The party dimension would flourish more behind closed doors than in the open. The more the Press and the broadcasting media were there to cover the deliberations of the Select Committee, the less would party play its part.—[*Official Report*, 16 December 1975; Vol. 902, c. 1318.]

I endorse very strongly that approach.

Also I endorse the view of those who have already said in this debate that many other bodies suffer from leaks. The Cabinet, Ministers, Government Departments, even political parties suffer leaks from leaks. If Mr. Richard Evans had published a leak that came from any of those sources, he would not be punished. Only the House of Commons gives itself this extraordinary right to punish people for publishing leaks. The question is whether that power is justified. I cannot believe that it is. The House is in danger of making itself look incredibly foolish and pompous and of filling itself with self-importance. That is the House of Commons at its worst. I want no part of it. I shall vote against these recommendations.

11.25 pm

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): There are comparatively few occasions in the House when it is possible that the debate will persuade hon. Members to change their vote. I believe that this is such an occasion and that the speech of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), was highly persuasive.

If right hon. and hon. Members look through the reports on this issue which have been published recently it will be very difficult indeed for them not to be persuaded, as I most certainly am, that we should support the recommendations of the Select Committee on Privileges. It is common ground that the departmental Select Committees that were set up in 1979 have been very effective in removing much of the previous secrecy, in subjecting Ministers and officials to scrutiny and in publishing the results.

The other outstanding feature, which perhaps could not have been clearly foreseen, is the extent to which hon. Members who, on the Floor of the House, are frequently divided along party lines, are able to come together in a Select Committee to examine a particular issue in great depth on the basis of the evidence and then to form a common view that they then report to the House. It means that our proceedings on the Floor of the House are better informed than they would otherwise be.

Hon. Members may have received a few days ago a letter from the parliamentary lobby that referred throughout to the leak of a Select Committee report. It is important to stress that this evening we are not concerned with the leak of a Select Committee report. Such a leak may be deplorable and it may be to the disadvantage of other members of the press, but the damage that is likely to arise in that case will not be great. What is the case —and it is important to distinguish it—is that the leak of a draft report is, as the report of the Select Committee on the Environment makes absolutely clear, likely to make the deliberations and conclusions of the Select Committee very much more difficult.

Here I take up the point that was made by the right hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), the former leader of the Labour party. All the way through his argument he sought to draw a comparison between discussion in Cabinet and discussion in a Select Committee. There is a clear and crucial difference. As soon as the Select Committee's report is published, so are its proceedings. That does not apply to Cabinet discussions. If a member of a Select Committee points out that he wishes to dissent from the report, it is clearly recorded that that is his considered view. What is wrong, I believe, is to publish a Chairman's draft, or the deliberations of a Select Committee on the proceedings, when hon. Members are still in the course of making up their minds on the issue.

It is important to distinguish this evening between what is and what is not important. What is most certainly not important is the contents of a Chairman's draft report. That is something that the Chairman, having gone through the evidence, cooks up, perhaps together with the Committee Clerk, and then puts forward as the basis for discussion. He may include in it a few points to stimulate discussion in the privacy of the Select Committee's deliberations. The draft report may be quite misleading and have no particular validity. A draft report certainly does not have the kind of importance that those in *The Times* sought to suggest that this one had when they published it on the front page. It is merely something which particular Committee Chairmen happen to have taken up. The problem is that it inevitably inhibits free discussion of the issues and, as my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) pointed out, it appears in an incomplete and garbled form, frequently with the objective of influencing the eventual conclusion of the Committee, apart from what it has received in evidence.

That being so, I am sad that *The Times* reporter and *The Times* itself have broken with the tradition which the lobby has recognised over the years. Indeed, I think that it is clear from the lobby's own rules that draft reports are not something which should be leaked because they have the disadvantages I have clearly set out.

The content of the draft report is not important. However, the leak is a matter of great importance because we need to deter that from happening if we are to do our job properly. I am sorry that the press, which on this occasion has broken previous conventions, does not understand that the press, the House and the Committees should all be on the same side, encouraging open government. It is sad that that is not the case. The press should understand the damage that is being done to the work of the Select Committees in trying to carry out their duties towards the House.

Having said that, I stress that there is no question of secrecy being involved, only timing. What the Committee eventually deliberated in its considered view is clearly recorded, so that there is no question of Select Committees engaging in dreadful secrecy. On the contrary, their

[Mr. Terence Higgins]

intention is to look into matters in depth—not to have decisions released half-baked, but to reach firm conclusions which are then published.

I believe that the argument that the rules are out of date is ill founded. Paradoxically, if we had debated this matter 10 years ago it might well have been felt that the rules were out of date and not relevant. The advent of the departmentally-related Select Committees has given the old rules fresh relevance because they are now doing a job which was not done previously. However, I still profoundly believe that the privilege we are asking for is not unreasonable. It is a privilege which enables us to do our job properly and is therefore something which should be supported on the Floor of the House.

It is argued by the Opposition that the publication of a draft report stimulates debate. The fact is that, taking the case we are considering, the debate was already in full swing. The effect of leaking the draft report was not to stimulate the debate but to inhibit and delay the publication of that report.

That being so, there is another point I should like to make and a question of secrecy is involved. If we do not support the Privileges Committee this evening, we are effectively saying that this is not an important matter and that leaks do not really matter. That is very dangerous. Once that happens those outside the House and in Government will say that if one gives anything to a Select Committee it may leak.

Some Committees, such as Defence, Foreign Affairs and perhaps Trade and Industry, receive information which is commercially sensitive or Government classified which is then sidelined. That enables the members of the Committee to report to the House taking into account information which is not generally available. According to the evidence of the editor of *The Times*, it is he who will decide, he asserts, whether something should be leaked. I do not think that he will necessarily be a very good judge of that. It is clear that information which is of assistance to Committees has to be leaked only once, or perhaps twice, for the supply of information to the Committee to dry up. Therefore, there is a serious issue which we must consider.

This is a timed debate and I want only to make one other point about penalties. It has been suggested that the penalties which are proposed by the Privileges Committee are severe. It seems to me that they could not be more appropriate. One should say, in parenthesis, that an assumption has been made that the source of the leaks might be a Member of the House, or an official. The way in which *The Times* has said, "We shall not reveal our sources—it may even be an official," is discreditable. The fact is that it is not absolutely clear that there has been a leak. It may have been procured in some other way—from the United States, as someone suggested.

Mr. McWilliam: Given what the right hon. Gentleman has just said, why did he see it as coming within his remit as Chairman of the Liaison Committee and incumbent on him to write to the Chairmen of the Select Committees suggesting that it was their duty to support the Privileges Committee report?

Mr. Higgins: If the hon. Gentleman looks at our earlier discussions and the evidence, he will see that the Liaison Committee has recognised the importance of the issue. Obviously, members of it will have to make up their own mind individually. There is no question of that. But I believe that it is right that the issue should be debated. It is a matter of great concern to the Select Committees and their Chairmen. That is not seriously in dispute.

We on the Select Committees are trying to do a job. Leaks of Chairmen's draft reports inhibit and damage that work. There is no reason why we should facilitate the work of those who want to leak information. Therefore, there could not be a penalty more appropriate than that which is suggested by the Privileges Committee — that we should not continue to permit those responsible for this damaging exercise to continue to operate in the House in the way that they have done. The penalty is absolutely right. For the reasons that I have mentioned, it is profoundly important that the work of the Committees should not be damaged, as it has been in the case of the Environment Committee. I hope very much that the House will support the recommendations put to it by the Privileges Committee.

11.37 pm

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The issue for the House is straightforward—do we now wish to reaffirm and uphold the secrecy of Select Committee papers and punish anyone who breaches the rule? We are in one sense fortunate that the Member who did it, if it was a Member, is not known, but it follows from what the Leader of the House and the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) have said, that if we knew who the Member was, we would tonight be suspending a Member of Parliament for six months, thus depriving his or her constituents of the right of representation for that period.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Benn: I do not want to give way because I want to put a point that has not been made to the House so far.

The Leader of the House properly presented his report, from which I dissented, with impeccable logic. These are the rules; they have recently been reaffirmed; the leak and the publication were breaches of the rules; therefore we have a duty to identify the culprits, and, where possible, punish them.

You have been generous in selecting four amendments, Mr. Speaker. All agree on the principle of punishment. Amendment (a) says punish the Member of Parliament, but not the journalist. Amendment (g) says reduce the sentence to five days. That would cover the Whitsun recess. Amendment (i) says reduce the sentence to six weeks. That would bring the journalist back at the beginning of August. Amendment (j) says punish the editor, but not the journalist.

I shall vote against all the amendments, and against the report, as I did in Committee, because I do not believe that it is right for Parliament to punish Members of Parliament who publish what they learn by virtue of their election to the House of Commons. I shall not go over my reasons in detail, but I should like to quote from the amendment that I moved in Committee, which only I supported, saying:

"There were no grounds on which the Environment Committee could justify its decision to protect the confidentiality of its original draft report."

When I heard the Chairman of the Committee explain that copies had gone to the group of engineers so that they could give advice, my first thought was, if engineers are

allowed to give advice, why cannot the public read the draft report and send in their advice to influence the Committee? It would be better if Select Committees were to meet and deliberate in public, as the House does. If they wished to go into secret session they would ask the House for permission to do so, just as we have to vote to go into secret session if we wish to do so.

The debate is not about defending parliamentary privilege. Let nobody be under any illusion about that. Parliamentary privilege is an essential privilege to maintain. It is a privilege to liberate Members to speak their minds. Above all, the voters have a right to know what is happening. No hon. Member who has spoken tonight, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Blaenau Gwent (Mr. Foot), has ever argued about the right of the people to know what is going on. My right hon. Friend spoke as a former journalist—a man who thinks that to write a diary is obscene. Yet he supports the rights of journalists. The issue is not about journalists or about protecting Members of Parliament; it is about the right of voters to know what is happening.

The issue is not about the freedom of the press. Members of the lobby are the most secretive lot of all. The lobby system is wholly secretive. I do not accept that the proprietor of *The Times* represents the little man against an oppressive Parliament. Parliament is here to represent the little man against the people such as the proprietor of *The Times*. Let us not be confused about the issue. It is not about Parliament and the press; it is about the right of the electors in Britain to know what is proposed, what are the arguments, and to bring pressure to bear before a decision is made. That is the only way in which Members of Parliament can be held accountable.

Let us suppose that the Shops Bill had been discussed in secret. Does any hon. Member imagine that the outcome would have been the same? The right of the electors to bring pressure to bear is what democracy is all about. If we meet in a tight little circle and say, "We do not want anyone to know until we have reached our conclusions," we are denying the electors their right. The electors cannot exercise that right if they do not know what happened. I shall deal with the argument about consensus in moment.

What I believe the Committee of Privileges, on which I am proud to serve, has done in making its recommendation is to misuse the idea of parliamentary privilege to suppress knowledge which the voters are entitled to have. That is my argument. Misuse by the lobby of the knowledge that it has to deny the electors their right to know is equally serious. As everyone knows, every morning the lobby goes to No. 10 and is briefed by the Prime Minister's press officer. It never puts in the newspapers, "We were told by Bernard Ingham at noon that the Prime Minister is angry with the Leader of the House." It publishes as if it has some special knowledge such as, "It is understood that in high official circles there is some anxiety about this or that development." The Lobby system leads to a conscious deception of the electors. For the lobby to appear tonight as the advocate of the public interest does not stand examination.

When I heard what the lobby journalists said about the report of the Committee of Privileges, I was reminded of two old dinosaurs locked in combat. The misuse of privileges and the lobby system are both designed to deny the public the information it should have.

Those who have been Members of the House for some time know that the place works by official secrecy being breached, on a daily basis, by unofficial briefings. Everybody knows that 99 per cent. of the leaks from the Cabinet come from the Prime Minister of the day. I once angered Harold Wilson by telling him, when he criticised me, that the difference between a leak and a memoir is a matter of timing. That is absolutely correct. Ministers, officials, press officers, Members of Parliament and lobby journalists like the system. Whether one is the Prime Minister, a Back-Bench Member or an official, it is a form of news management which allows rumour, speculation, malice, information and misinformation to be fed out to the public in the guise of the marvellous lobby system under the marvellous privilege which we preserve. But it is not good for Parliament, the press or the public. If the debate justifies itself—I hope it will by rejecting the report—it may force the Committee of Privileges to do what it should have done and consider rules that people will obey, because they are sensible. I hope that it will bust the lobby system, which is equally pernicious.

I supported the idea of Select Committees because when they were set up I thought that they would use the power of Parliament to prise information from Ministers and officials. When we pass a motion giving a departmental Select Committee the power to summon persons, papers and records, we are giving them a powerful weapon. The right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) says, "If the information comes out, they will not tell us anything." I have never heard a more craven admission of the weakness of the right hon. Gentleman's attitude to Whitehall than the implication that, if the evidence is public, he will not get the information that he wants. I fear—I do not want to give offence—that departmental Select Committees, which were designed to prise out information, have become cosy little clubs with permanent secretaries, Ministers and the lobby knowing all about what is happening. That is the problem.

I must confess that I was much struck by the comments of my old friend, Fred Mulley, when we were discussing leaks in the national executive, which, like Cabinet, spends most of its time discussing leaks. He said, "I have discovered a leak-proof document." We all leaned forward, and he said, "It is my weekend press release." That was typical of Fred Mulley. I do not believe in leaks. I am in favour of publication, especially on matters concerning nuclear waste. Only a week or two ago, we were being told how open we were compared with the Russians. Yet the Chairman of the Select Committee himself delayed publication for three months, because his nose was put out of joint by what appeared in *The Times*. He could have published that report quickly.

Something else greatly annoys the House of Commons, and I point it out because it is time we learned some elementary truths. The House objects to the manifest truth that the law has been changed historically by people breaking it. On 18 June 1985, I put some questions to the late editor of *The Times*, Charles Douglas-Home. I said:

"I think you accept that privilege, which is the law of Parliament at the moment, prohibits disclosure?"

He replied:

"Yes."

Then, I said:

"You conceive it to be your duty to assess whether such prohibition is in the public interest and if you decide to publish that is to say you think it right to break the law you take the

[Mr. Benn]

consequences and hope public opinion will support you or that Parliament will not enforce the law. Is that a correct representation of your analysis of the functions you perform?" He said:

"Certainly, yes."

Hon. Members are annoyed that so many laws have been changed because the old ones have been broken. We would not have the freedom of worship if Catholics and Protestants had not broken the various Acts of uniformity; sheep stealing would still attract capital punishment if juries had not refused to convict; atheists would never have been allowed in the House if Charles Bradlaugh had not refused to take the oath; the suffragettes would never have won votes for women if they had not broken the law. I was on the Select Committee in 1958 when the BBC was not allowed for 14 days to discuss any matter likely to come before the House of Commons. The BBC broke the law, the law was changed and the 14-day rule disappeared.

If the House rejects the report, it will lead to new practices that are enforceable. I greatly fear that, if the House accepts the report; it will bring itself and privilege into disrepute. Privilege is necessary. I have always remembered Duncan Sandys, a Territorial officer and Member of the House who in 1938-39 got information from a fellow Territorial officer about the failure to defend London. His fellow Territorial officer was to be court-martialled. Duncan Sandys came to the House and said, "He told me this so that I could put down a question." The House upheld Duncan Sandys and the court martial against his fellow officer did not occur. That is what privilege is for. If we go ahead and vote to suppress information that should be public, we shall deny what we are here to do.

Mr. Faulds It is published.

Mr. Benn: It should be made public in draft so that other people can contribute. We are here to speak up and the House has no authority whatever to silence an hon. Member or to suppress free publication. Democracy requires free publication and the electors are entitled to it. We deny it at our peril.

11.51 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): As some hon. Members may know, I have or may have an interest to declare. That interest is that my wife is currently a journalist employed by Times Newspapers Ltd., and I have worked for Times Newspapers Ltd., in the past as a libel lawyer, although I have to concede that in that capacity I was somewhat less respected. It may be that it is because of that background that I hold a passionate belief in the right of newspapers to publish the news. I also have a healthy distrust of those who seek to stop that. It is for that reason that I have put down amendment *(a)* which has one purpose only: to ensure that no penalty is imposed either on the newspaper or on the journalist.

We must be clear what we are doing. We are being asked to impose a substantial penalty upon a man who has committed no offence known to statute or to common law. Moreover, we are being asked to censure actions that he performed in the ordinary course of his duties as a journalist. Worse than that, in the name of parliamentary privilege we are claiming a right to distinguish between news that ought to be published and news that ought not to be published. Whatever we do in this place, whether it be in the Chamber or elsewhere in the Palace of Westminster, is of interest to the public and is therefore news.

Can it really be right for us to try to prevent the publication of material on the grounds that it is not in the public interest to publish what most certainly the public has an interest in knowing? I find that proposition unappealing. It smacks more of the 17th century than of today and is surely not consistent with the concept of an open society in which the actions of the legislature ought to be exposed to constant and public scrutiny. Above all, it is to arrogate to ourselves a right and a privilege which are not accorded to any other political person or institution in Britain. If we are to arrogate to ourselves such a privilege, it must be justified only in terms of the most obvious and urgent public requirement.

Unlike the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), I think there is a vital distinction between the role of a Member of Parliament and the function of a journalist. I have served on a Select Committee and I agree that it is important for members of a Select Committee to feel that they can trust their colleagues. It is important that members of a Select Committee can exchange confidences without the fear that those confidences will be disclosed to the press. A Member who breaks that confidence and leaks a document or a draft report is guilty of a profoundly dishonourable act and deserves the condemnation of the House.

But what of the journalist who receives the confidence or is sent the draft report? Why should he be bound by the same obligations by which the Member is bound? Having failed to identify the principal offender, can it be right for us to turn around and kick the cat? A journalist does not owe a special obligation to a Select Committee, and a journalist does not owe a special obligation to any member of that Committee. His duty is different. It is to his editor, his newspaper and perhaps to his readers. I should tell my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General that a journalist's function is to publish the news, not a censored version of the news.

I must tell my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that, for me at least, this is a matter of high importance——

Mrs. Sally Oppenheim (Gloucester): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: The House is impatient with long speeches, and I am coming to the end. This is a matter of high importance and a principle that we should defend.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey (Sir H. Rossi) that the publication of a draft report may be profoundly inconvenient—

Sir Hugh Rossi: Misleading.

Mr. Hogg: It may even be misleading. It may have all the consequences that are set out on pages 4 and 5 of the report, but none of those reasons is a good reason, or even the start of a good reason, for taking to ourselves the right to distinguish between news that we want to publish and news that others wish to have published. If mine is the right approach—I believe profoundly that it is—we should reject the recommendation of the Privileges Committee. I ask the House to support the amendment that I tabled, which is the only one that would ensure that no penalty was imposed on either the journalist or the newspaper.

11.57 pm

Mr. Ian Mikardo (Bow and Poplar): I cannot recall any matter of importance coming before the House on which there has been so much ill-informed and misleading comment in the press and from others inside and outside the House as there has been on this occasion. One would think from some of the things that have been said and written that the Committee of Privileges said, "Whoopee, we have caught someone. Let us do something about it." It is as though we decided that we would examine the matter. We did not decide that. We had no option. The decision taken by the House only a few months ago required us to do this. If the House does not want this sort of thing to happen, it must go back on the decision that it made three or four months ago.

There is a logical case for watering down or even getting rid of privilege. I agree to a large extent with my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn), who believes that the privilege that matters most is not our privilege, but the privilege of our constituents, to whom we are accountable. If the House turned its mind to consideration of that proposition and to altering our arrangements to fit in with that proposition, I would take an active part in that discussion. But the House has not done that. The House has laid down rules, and until it changes the rules we are all under an obligation to conform with them. They were confirmed only a short time ago by a substantial majority of the House.

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): The House should know exactly what the House passed. It is found in paragraph 14 of the second report of the Committee of Privileges in 1984-85, which states;

> "If the Committee of Privileges found that a serious breach of privilege or a contempt had been committed . . . the Committee might recommend that appropriate penalties be imposed."

It says no more than that. That is why so many of us took a fairly relaxed view of it.

Mr. Mikardo: My right hon. Friend cannot have it both ways. The House should not lay down a regimen and then, when it is deliberately breached, ignore or condone the breach. Some hon. Members have said that we are in danger of makeing asses of ourselves. We shall do that if we decide the law and then say that if it is broken, we shall ignore or condone it. That will only encourage further breaches of the law. We must decide the position one way or the other. Either we get rid of privilege or retain it, and if we do the latter we must make sure that it is not breached.

It might be thought from some of what has been written and some of what has been said tonight—indeed, from what Mr. Evans and his editor said in their evidence to the Select Committee—that if the document had not been leaked, the report of the Committee would never have been published. It might be thought that only the leak enabled publication to take place.

I have served on three Select Committees and been Chairman of one, and I assure the House that the members of those Committees were anxious to get the widest publication of their fundings. I do not spend, as I do now, 10 to 12 hours a week attending meetings and annotating the papers of the Foreign Affairs Committee simply to finish up with a document that is not published. .

The report of the Select Committee with which we are concerned tonight would have been published in any event. The damage that occurred was the result of misinformation. A great deal of the discussion that took place after the leak was about the Chairman's draft report rather than the report of the Select Committee.

Journalists feed on one another. Many of them write about Select Committee reports without having read those reports. They read what other journalists write about them, so much of the discussion in the newspapers occurs as the result of leaks.

Even after the publication of the Select Committee report, there were articles in newspapers about what were called the contents of the report but which included items that had been in the Chairman's draft that was leaked, but which were not concluded in the final report.

The leak did not increase public interest in the matter. As we know, if one newspaper gets a scoop the others will not touch the story with a barge pole. There is publicity in only one newspaper, whereas if the matter is dealt with properly, with a press conference when the report is pubished, there is publicity in all the newspapers. Such publicity as we got was on the basis of misinformation, with the suggestion that the report contained matters that were not, in fact, in it.

I join those who attach great importance to the work of Select Committees. The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) is strongly in favour of them—so long as somebody else does the work, and he is not alone in that sentiment.

Reference has been made to the letter sent to hon. Members by Lobby journalists. They are opposed to the report. They would be. They are interested parties. They are fat turkeys voting for the abolition of Christmas. They are motorists who park inconsiderately voting for the abolition of traffic wardens. They scarcely exercise disinterested judgment. I have already commented on the suggestion that the early publication of the leak was of value in discussing the report. It was not. It diluted the discussion of the report.

Then the journalists go on to make the point that has been made by right hon. and hon. Members—that, because we do not know who the major culprit is and therefore cannot punish him, we should let the other culprit go free. I wonder what the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) would think if it were suggested in a court that there were two blokes who had committed a burglary but the police had copped only one of them and therefore no charge should be entered against the other. That is a strange bit of legal philosophy.

The next thing that our lobby journalists tell us is that the leak did not damage the work of the Committee. I wonder how they know that. They did not take part in the meetings of the Committee, did they? How do they know, without taking part in the Committee, what effect the leak had on its members? I tell you who does know: the Chairman of the Committee came and told the Committee of Privileges that the work of the Committee had been damaged.

The hon. Gentleman was pressed very hard on the matter, and he will recall that nobody pressed him harder than I did. I said to him, "Look, I do not care whether you are irritated or annoyed, or your members are. What I really want to know is, did it do damage?" He was absolutely clear and specific that it did. He not only quoted that as his own view, but he also quoted to the Committee

[Mr. Mikardo]

of Privileges the view of another member of his Committee, who spoke in very strong terms in the way in which the work of the committee had been damaged.

The hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) is a long-standing Member of the House, and a former Minister. He is not at all an irresponsible chap. I am prepared to take his word for what happened in the Committee rather than the word of a bunch of journalists, none of whom sat in at meetings of the Committee.

I select one other point from this letter from the lobby correspondents. They say that it was the unanimous view of the lobby, et cetera. I have had a letter from a member of the lobby, the correspondent of one of the Sunday newspapers. I will not mention his name.

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): It sounds like Adam Raphael.

Mr. Mikardo: I do not know how my hon. Friend reckons to know that. I will lay a shade of odds that he gets it wrong.

I have had the letter for only a short time. In that time I have not had time to ask the writer of it for his permission to give his name, and for that reason I will not give it, although I can say that he is the lobby correspondent for one of our Sunday newspapers. He says:

"I understand that all Members of Parliament have been sent a letter from the Parliamentary lobby journalists stating that it is the unanimous view of the lobby that it is absurd to employ punishment of the nature recommended by the Privileges Committee in the case of *The Times*. For what it is worth, I have never expressed a view on the matter, so it can hardly be unanimous. Nor have I ever been present at a meeting when a view was sought. Further, my personal view for what it is worth is that the law is the law is the law and that even bad laws are not changed best by breaking them."

Bad laws can be changed, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield said and have been changed, by breaking them; but that is a method of last resort, and we ought not to condone as standard practice things that should be methods of last resort. I support the view of the Committee.

12.9 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I am particularly happy to follow the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) because I agree with much of what he said. As perhaps the only former chairman of the lobby ever to become a Member of the House, which some might think a dubious distinction, I am tempted to follow the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) into various culs-de-sac, particularly on the standing, etiquette and practice of the lobby. However, I shall resist that.

The House is not debating, as I understand it, whether we should change the rules of privilege. If we pass the amendment in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), I suspect that that is exactly what we shall do because, as had already been said, if we impose no penalty, it will be open house and we can forget the rules of privilege. That might be a good thing. I am not entirely convinced by some of the arguments used by my right hon. and hon. Friends in defence of the rules of privilege on the relationships of Select Committees with the press. I speak not only as a journalist but as a member of a Select Committee. I think that too much has been made of the need for privilege to safeguard the good workings of Select Committees.

However, that is not the real issue before us. As the hon. Member for Bow and Poplar rightly said, we have the rule of privilege. The question is whether we should now uphold it.

Therefore, I turn my attention to some of the views of *The Times* and the justification advanced by the editor of *The Times* and of one of his political correspondents in challenging the rule of privilege of the House. I was not impressed by their evidence. I do not regard this as a great battle for press freedom; I do not see it like that. As has been said by many people, the truth was that *The Times* saw a good story and wanted to publish it before anybody else had it. That sums it up. There might be nothing wrong with that so long as *The Times* was prepared to face up to the consequences of breaking the rules of this place at the same time as it wanted its privileges.

A newspaper cannot have it both ways. In my former life as a lobby correspondent for a national newspaper I was frequently telephoned by the night news desk saying that another newspaper had broken the rules. I always refused to break the rules myself. I said to my newspaper, "If you want to do it, do it, but withdraw me from the lobby because it is dishonest to try to have it both ways."

We come to the question of penalties. For the reasons which I have given, I believe that a penalty should be imposed. However, the penalty of six months' suspension is too severe. Is it too late for the hon. Member who leaked the report—because I think it was an hon. Member—to stand up and admit it? If the culprit had been identified, would the House have suspended him or her for six months? I doubt it, for the reasons given by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield. I think that the House would have taken the view that that would be too long to deprive that Member's constituents of his services, unless the Member chose to resign, which might be the honourable thing to do. I do not know; I pass no judgment.

I think that a suspension of six months would have been considered too great a penalty to impose on the prime culprit. Therefore, it is wrong to impose such a penalty on the other person who is just as guilty in many ways but who is not the prime culprit. I tabled amendment (i) because I thought that a suspension of six weeks was probably the right length of time. I do not claim any special merit for six weeks, but it would show that, so long as we have the rule of privilege, the House treats it seriously and that we are not prepared to let the people run amok and cock a snook at the House. That was what *The Times* set out to do. I believe that the penalty of six weeks is about right, and I commend my amendment to the House.

12.14 am

Mr. Michael Cocks (Bristol, South): I sense that hon. Members would like to reach a conclusion on this matter, so I will be brief. It is most agreeable to be able to share the reservations of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) about the Committee's report, although unusually I would not walk hand in hand with him all the way on the matter.

I find it objectionable that we are tonight intending to punish a journalist and a newspaper for a breach of trust by an hon. Member. Until recently I had the honour and the privilege to serve my party in the House in what are known as the usual channels for a long time and I know that the whole process depends on trust. I believe that the present position is very regrettable. The penalties that have

been proposed do not meet the case because they are far too heavy. However, I think that there must be penalties. They are necessary to protect the privileges of the House which have been built up so elaborately. It is very easy to destroy traditions and values, but it is extremely hard to establish them.

I am unhappy with the behaviour of the staff of *The Times* involved in this matter, as they have refused to exonerate the staff of the House from any complicity in the leak. *The Times* staff are in a favoured position in this place and the staff of the House have a great responsibility and a unique role to play. Unlike hon. Members, they cannot defend or look after themselves in the cut and thrust of debate. The staff of *The Times* have been irresponsible and their behaviour is regrettable.

We should think very seriously about the penalties. We are dealing with a system of Select Committees that has been set up only very recently. Some people had misgivings about their structure and, although great tributes have been paid to them, there are still some deficiencies. Some Committees work better than others. It is a new system and the problem we are discussing now will crop up again and the House should reflect on how best to deal with it.

The amendment tabled by my hon. Friend — and I say that in a personal capacity — the Member for Monmouth (Sir J. Stradling Thomas) and myself would reduce the loss of privileges to five days. That seems to strike a balance between the needs of the House to do something and to avoid a disproportionate penalty which would not serve the interests of the House, the press or the people. We have not so far in the debate referred to the nature of the issue involved with the leak, which was the disposal of radioactive waste. In the light of what has happened since the leak occurred, the Chernobyl disaster, the public would misunderstand if we were to impose swingeing penalties tonight. I would commend my amendment to the House as a compromise between inertia and showing the House's displeasure but not in such a way as to be punitive.

12.18 am

Mr. Cranley Onslow (Woking): It is always a pleasure to listen to the right hon. Member for Bristol, South (Mr. Cocks) and I hope that he will not take it amiss if I say that this has, in some ways, been an unsatisfactory debate. I say that not because I found his speech unsatisfactory, but I believe that this debate is rather like Hamlet without the prince. The debate has been difficult to focus because of the absence of the really guilty party.

Mr. Geoffrey Dickens (Littleborough and Saddleworth): He is here.

Mr. Onslow: Whether here he is absent or silent, the debate has been difficult because of our inability to turn our attention on the hon. Member or other person who is responsible in the first place for the leak and the breach of privilege that flows from that.

I cannot go along the lines advocated by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that we should not punish a journalist merely for doing his job simply because the real guilty party cannot be identified. I do not know how my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham defines a journalist's job. Although there is nothing heroic about that job, and although it is undesirable that we should make martyrs of them, we should not necessarily take them on their own estimation.

In this case, there seem to be factors which journalists who have given evidence to the Select Committee on Privileges do not see in the same light as the House and others outside. The question that has been begged throughout is what is meant by the words, "public interest"? In answer to question 12, Mr. Wilson said:

"My main reason for publishing it was its public interest. I felt that public interest in this subject was paramount".

In other words, he felt that his readers wanted to know. He did not think in terms which most of us think in when we use the words, "the public interest", meaning that there is a broad national matter of policy which has to be addressed. The editor of *The Times* thought in terms of his paper, his proprietor, perhaps, and his readers. That is confirmed by his answer to question 18. When the second special report of the Select Committee came into his hands through another leak, the story was written by Mr. Evans who said:

"the decision was taken not to use it, probably quite rightly, because that was not in the public interest."

When the editor answered the same question, he explained himself in these terms:

"I read the story and said, 'I see no public interest in this.' I felt there was no point in flouting or waving a red flag at an albeit dormant bull for an item that was not of sufficient public interest or for which there was no other reason for publication."

Mr. Wilson is quite clearly using the words, "public interest" in terms of what people want to see in *The Times*. I do not take the view that that is the only, the right or the broad definition of the phrase, "the public interest".

There has been some misunderstanding and ambivalence which I find most unfortunate and which seems to shed some light on the standards of the editor and one lobby journalist of *The Times*. They define everything in terms of whether it is in the interests of *The Times*. That being so, we must take some action, but what action is appropriate depends on the gravity of the offence and its effects. The leak did not damage the taking of evidence by the Select Committee, as that had been done. If the leak had had some effect which prevented the Committee from making a proper and thorough inquiry which Parliament had charged it with, that would have been a most serious matter. If the leak had brought into the public domain evidence which had been given in confidence in private, that would have been a serious matter.

The leak has had some effect, which we cannot quantify, on the report. The Select Committee would have produced it anyway, but in a form which, according to its Chairman—we have to accept his word for this—would probably have been different. It is impossible to say what differences there would have been, but there was an interference of some kind. *The Times* was evidently reckless of the possibility that the leak would cause such an interference. That cannot go wholly without remark. There must be a penalty. We must ask whether the recommendation of the Privileges Select Committee is appropriate or whether something lesser would more nearly meet the case.

Without being disrespectful to the members of the Privileges Select Committee, I think that something lesser would meet the case, although I would not go quite as far as the right hon. Member for Bristol, South. I side with my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris).

[Mr. Onslow]

There is here something of which the House must take notice. The evidence that Select Committee reports are prone to leak is now overwhelming. This sort of occurrence is likely to happen again, and the evidence to that effect is overwhelming, so we had better do something about it. The Select Committee on Procedure had better look at the matter, and decide what changes need to be made in the format of the preparatory work on the Chairman's report, whether in all cases it should be kept so secret as it has been in the past, whether the Committee should be allowed some discretion in the matter or whatever is appropriate. I do not believe that we can in all conscience continue as we are, knowing that leaks are likely to happen, and how much damage they can do if they recur.

12.25 am

Mr. J. Enoch Powell (South Down): The House finds itself obliged tonight to come to a decision which will be momentous in the future for the effectiveness of its proceedings, for it relies and always has relied to a considerable extent on the information and advice which is tendered to it as a result of the work of the Select Committees which it establishes. In turn, that work is essentially dependent on the confidentiality of deliberation which those Committees enjoy.

The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Sir I. Gilmour) said, in one sense correctly, that hon. Members are the same people when they sit in this House and when they serve on a Select Committee, but in another and important sense they are different people on a Select Committee. They gain a certain personality and perform a function which cannot be performed in the open House. A Select Committee by its very behaviour provides for the House the composite result of the candid deliberation of hon. Members of different experience and points of view who have listened to the evidence and have, so to speak, lived together, studying the evidence and comparing their respective opinions on it. It is that with which Select Committees serve the House. They cannot do so if members of those Committees are, in effect, in public offering their advice to colleagues, particularly if the basic material of their work, which is and is bound to be the draft report of the Chairman, has become a public document.

It simply is not fair or reasonable to expect hon. Members to pool their opinions and to risk the expression of candid views, as they need to do in a Select Committee, if they cannot be sure that their confidentiality is protected. For that reason it has been the rule of the House that, whatever may be the case with the evidence taken, Select Committees have a right to confidentiality and privacy of debate and deliberation among themselves. I was greatly reinforced in that opinion by the view to that effect expressed firmly tonight by the right hon. Member for Blaenau, Gwent (Mr. Foot). Our only difference is that he believes that confidentiality can exist without protection and I believe that it is a fiction, unless the House defends confidentiality, which its Select Committees need to possess. It cannot defend that confidentiality unless a breach of it is published, and unless it is known that it will be punished.

There are several forms of breach of that confidentiality. There is the breach that can be committed by an hon. Member who sits on a Select Committee, but there is the more essential breach which is committed by the publication of what has passed or been placed before a Select Committee. Therefore, despite the fact that we are not aware whether or by whom on the Committee the information was disclosed, we are not entitled to address our attention to the publication of the information put before the Select Committee. Unless the House proceeds to protect confidentiality by punishing publication, in effect we are deciding tonight that we shall deprive our Select Committees of the opportunity of confidential debate and consultation.

It would be better—this was usefully brought out by the right hon. Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn)—and fairer for all concerned to say that, in future, all proceedings of all Select Committees are to be public. The public and the press can come in and hear what every member of the Committee says. That will be the effect, only arrived at by an unfair and fortuitous process, if tonight we do not accept the recommendation of the Select Committee on Privileges.

We need what our Select Committees can give us by using the confidentiality and the privacy of consultation and discussion. The House can have the benefit of that service, on which it has so long depended, only if we defend that confidentiality. We can only do that by punishing, and by being seen to be ready severely to punish, breach of confidentiality in the form of publications.

12.30 am

Sir Philip Goodhart (Beckenham): I do not always agree with every word that the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) says, but on this occasion I do.

There can be no doubt that Richard Evans is a first-class reporter, and there can also be no doubt that his expertise in getting leaks from Select Committees led directly to the prolonged study of the issue by the Select Committee on Privileges. The Committee, after hearing evidence from editors and lobby correspondants and from Chairmen of Select Committees, decided by 12 votes to one—the majority included the Leader of the Liberal party—that the rules of privilege should be maintained, and that the procedures should be strengthened in certain cases.

Without any doubt, this decision by the Committee, which was then endorsed by the House, put *The Times* in a difficult position. It could give up the task of trying to extract information from the Select Committees. I do not think that it would be reasonable to expect that *The Times* should behave in such a manner. *The Times* also had the option of presenting the information that it had obtained in a more circumspect manner than hitherto.

The story that has caused all this trouble was published on Monday 16 December, with the single most important item being the suggestion that the thermal oxide reprocessing plant at Sellafield was defective, and would be scrapped unless the financial and employment consequences were too enormous. It is arguable that this was information that should rapidly be put in the public domain, and it could be done without compromising the Select Committee on the Environment.

The third option that was available to *The Times* was to take the recommendations of the Select Committee head on and try to smash them. To my mind, there is no doubt that this is what *The Times* tried to do. On 16 March, Mr. Richard Evans said that a copy of the confidential report had been obtained by *The Times*. Nothing could be more

flagrant or more open than that. He is putting on a banner the fact that he has chosen effectively to breach the rules of privilege. Therefore, the question is whether or not the House of Commons should respond and what should be done about Mr. Richard Evans. Should action be taken against this individual?

I note that, among Mr. Evans' many talents, he is a first-class golfer. On occasion he has turned out for the Lords and Commons golf side. I hope that in the months to come he will do so again. I do not understand all the rules of golf, but I know that one of the rules is that one is allowed to have only 14 clubs in one's bag. If Mr. Evans went along to one of the parliamentary matches and said, "Look, I have 17 clubs in my bag", he would expect to incur some penalty. That is what he has done to the House.

Whether or not we should stick to the six months' suspension is doubtful. Personally, as an old *Telegraph* man, I am inclined to side with the amendment of another old *Telegraph* man, my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), and would suggest that six weeks is long enough. However, I have absolutely no doubt that, if we take no action at all, we shall be treated with contempt and that we shall deserve to be treated with contempt.

12.41 am

Mr. Robert Sheldon (Ashton-under-Lyne): One of the interesting aspects of the speeches of the hon. Members for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) is that they have highlighted the fact that there are leaks all over the place. This is the House of Commons that we know. We have to learn to deal with it as we know it rather than try to pretend that it is something different.

I have been a member of three Select Committees, the Chairman of a couple of Sub-Committees and the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee. My experience is quite different from that of the right hon. Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) and of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. The difficulty is to establish the identity of the person who leaks. That is the most important question.

Again and again I have witnessed the ritual condemnation by the Chairman of a leaker. Everybody is hushed when they listen to it and everybody condemns it; and the second person to condemn it is usually the person who made the leak. We live side by side with each other in a Select Committee and usually we have a pretty good idea of who the leaker is. I should be surprised if that did not apply to the Select Committee on the Environment.

The question is why information is divulged. It is not because of a bribe, which used to be the problem in the 1940s. The political career of the person concerned may be improved by having friendly relations with certain lobby journalists. Some members of a Select Committee may be anxious to brush aside secrecy and to have a more open debate, a matter to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr. Benn) referred. Certain members of Select Committees may also hope to achieve certain political aims.

One of the problems is that, although the fingerprints of the leaker are well known, what does one do when he does not own up? Because a person has to have his or her name attached to a story in the press, that makes it easy for the leaker; and as we have a House of Commons of right hon. and hon. Members, we assume that they are still honourable even when they do not divulge the matters that they have leaked.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if in this case an hon. Member has leaked he will not own up, because he has aggravated the offence by saying to the Select Committee on the Environment that he did not leak? Every member of that Committee, as I understand it, has written to the Chairman to say that he did not leak, so there is no possibility in this case of the person concerned owning up.

Mr. Sheldon: No, of course there is not. That is the world in which we have to live. To put the journalist in a special category because his name has to go on the article that he writes when the major culprit goes unpunished make us look extremely hypocritical. That worries me more than anything.

It is not as if we are looking at really secret matters. In my experience, the really secret matters are not leaked. In my Committee we deal with confidential and secret matters and I have known that in a number of other Committees, but those documents are not leaked. It is always those which have no secret connotations, no commercial confidentialities or anything of that kind.

Therefore, we need to look at this matter with a little more restraint. Members used to cultivate the press and, of course, the press cultivates Members. That will continue whatever we say or do here. As long as we can say, as we are able to say, that the Committees operate in an atmosphere where there is no leakage of really important matters concerning our country and industry, perhaps we should calm down and take things a little more easily.

How does the Committee prepare its report? If it is really impeded, this would be serious. My experience is that there is always a great deal of give and take. Everyone realises the advantages of unanimity on a report because if it is unanimous it is more likely to be heeded—not very much more likely but a little. Therefore, Members do not expect too much from their report but think of it as a service to the House. As a result, they act together and decide what they can agree.

I would have been astonished if I was Chairman of a Committee and felt myself seriously inconvenienced. Of course, I respect the views of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green, but I must give my experience. I would have been able to ride it out without feeling that my report would be gravely damaged.

How will we get hold of the person who leaked the report—bring in the special branch or use spurious devices? All of these matters are an inconvenience. We rely a great deal on trust. However, we know full well that for one reason or another we cannot always claim that trust and confidence. I believe that it is sensible that we should calm down. The work of the Select Committees will continue and it will be to our advantage. Let us leave it at that.

12.43 am

Mrs. Sally Oppenheim (Gloucester): During the debate a number of right hon. and hon. Members have, by inference, represented the Privileges Committee as some kind of pompous hanging and flogging body which is paranoid about secrecy. At this stage in the debate we

[Mrs. Sally Oppenheim]

should ask ourselves whether there is a certain amount of pompousity in an editor of a newspaper who decides that it is in the "public interest" or, as the journalist and editor in this case said, in the interest of obtaining changes and influencing the industry, to publish leaked material on the basis of a draft document when they have not heard any of the evidence or attended any of the meetings.

Are there not double standards about the person who maintains that he or she can purvey the leak but must be provided with absolute secrecy by the journalist because suddenly confidentiality and secrecy become very important?

The hon. Member for Bow and Poplar (Mr. Mikardo) provided a tour de force in the debate. However, I have one little dispute with his analogy of two burglars being caught. I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that a more correct analogy would be the difference between the punishment of the receiver of stolen goods and the burglar. I believe that the receiver of stolen goods is punished to a greater extent than the burglar if he is caught and brought before the courts.

Mr. Michael Meadowcroft (Leeds, West): Is there not a strange paradox, in that there is a third burglar, in a sense —Large and Associates, which received the draft and used it to promote amendments to the Committee? As I understand it, the Chairman of the Select Committee argues that one of the key reasons why he wanted the matter to be dealt with was that it affected the deliberations of the Select Committee. Surely those amendments did so. We know that culprit. Why is that culprit not before the Privileges Committee as well?

Mrs. Oppenheim: The Privileges Committee has considered every aspect, including that point. It has been said several times by right hon. and hon. Members that it is the confidentiality of evidence given that is of importance to the Select Committees, and that there will be a lack of confidence among those providing evidence to the Select Committees. In fact, that lack of confidence already exists and is already damaging the Select Committee system.

I have never been an aficionado of the Select Committee system, but we have it, and, if we have it, we should protect it. If the House votes tonight to take away the little protection that our Select Committees have, it will be voting to open the doors as wide as possible. It will be inviting people to leak; it will be inviting journalists to receive those stolen goods; and it will be a bad day for the House of Commons and the country.

12.46 am

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): I speak as a member of a Select Committee which has been known for its leaks in the past, but it is also a Select Committee that I do not think will wither and die simply because people are not banned from the House of Commons because of what they have done in the course of their employment.

That Select Committee is not always unanimous. We tend to argue among ourselves. I believe that if Select Committees develop and grow to fruition in the years ahead, it will be simply because they argue among themselves and produce one, two or three reports at the end of the day.

Let us be realistic about what we are talking about. For example, when Tisdall or Ponting leaked documents, it was not the newspaper that was prosecuted, but them. In the Select Committee, apparently we have two leakers. One was honourable and said to the Chairman, "I wrote off for advice." The other was dishonourable and hid wherever he or she—perhaps it is not a member of the Committee—wished to hide. Yet we seek to ban the journalist. It is not the knife that we should prosecute, but the hand that held it.

I respect the journalist, and make no bones about it. I have known Richard Evans since I first came here, and like him very much. I respect him for not disclosing his source. Time and again, journalists have risked going to prison for not disclosing their source. That is a matter of honour. It is a tragedy that whoever told Richard Evans does not have the same honour.

I have great respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), as I have great respect for the Leader of the House, but the analogy of this whole business to a jury trial makes a farce of the issue. If this is a jury trial of one Richard Evans, two things are absent. One is the words of Richard Evans. Do we condemn, do we cast a man out of his job, without giving him a right to reply here? The other point is that it is the first time in history that the prosecution and its witnesses have formed part of the jury.

So let us put the matter aside. Perhaps hon. Members will learn one lesson from tonight, that if one wants to make a point, if one wants to give a document, at least one should have the courage to put one's name to it. It gives some respectability to what one does. The House must accept that, no matter what happens tonight, the Select Committee system will continue. It will grow, if hon. Members want it to do so. I commend amendment *(a)* to the House. I hope that the House will support it.

12.50 am

Sir Edward Gardner (Fylde): I agree with the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) that this is a momentous debate and that it will probably have a profound effect on the future and efficacy of Select Committees. The report which the House has been asked to approve tonight deals with two closely related but very different aspects of parliamentary privilege. One aspect is that of parliamentary privilege itself. There has been no dispute or debate tonight that what has been done by *The Times* was a breach of parliamentary privilege.

It is the second aspect that gives one cause for disquiet —namely, what penalty is regarded by the House as the proper one to be imposed? It would be easy to be dogmatic and to accept what the Committee of Privileges has recommended. There is no disrespect to any party in questioning the propriety and the justice of the penalty, any more than it is disrespectful and improper to question, after a conviction has been found in a court, what the penalty should be.

The most disquieting aspect of the debate is the absence of any readiness by the member of the Committee—if it was a member of the Committee—to own up to what occurred. That is particularly offensive, when one bears in mind the fact that the Chairman of the Select Committee on the Environment took the trouble, as he was required to do by the new rules, to insist on a formal written assurance by the Member that he was not responsible for

any leak. One must bear in mind that that was the person who handed to the journalist the document which was ultimately published.

We are entitled to ask: who is to blame—the tempter or the tempted? I think that both are to blame. If we had the information, which we do not have, about who leaked the report, we might take a different view about the punishment that should be apportioned between the journalist and the original leaker.

My anxiety about the severity of the punishment is shared by many right hon. and hon. Members. It was certainly shared by the Chairman of the Environment Committee because he, with others put down an amendment which would allow us to select a less severe punishment. I do not suggest that that could be done. However, I say in all earnestness that we must beware that we do not remove the protection that Select Committees must have if they are to carry out their duties.

I did not like—and I do not think the House would have liked — the evidence that was given by the journalist and the editor of *The Times* to the Committee of Privileges, because it seemed to me—I do not think that I am misreading it—that there was an implicit threat to do again what has been done in the past. It is right that the House should take all the steps available to it to prevent that.

12.54 am

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): I have two minutes in which to speak. I believe that the House will commit a grave error of judgment if it takes any action against Mr. Richard Evans. I have been present in the Chamber during the two previous debates on this matter in the past two months. They were poorly attended. They dealt with the report of the Select Committee of Privileges which was published in July last year. It made two recommendations — first, that a Liaison Committee should be set up between the complaining Select Committee and the Privileges Committee to filter references about Members' actions and, secondly, that action should be taken against journalists.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner) and I divided the House. On the first occasion, we failed, as did the Government. Few Members were in the House that night. On the second occasion, the Government won, but only because Government Members were whipped. The effect was to introduce into our rules a recommendation which we knew in advance would end up in this debate. We make a mockery of Parliament.

I voted against the motion because of my long-standing interest in the confidentiality of Select Committees. I have spent the past 15 months in the Public Accounts Committee behind closed doors, arguing about these matters in the belief that it is wrong for Select Committees, particularly the Public Accounts Committee, to retain documents which are not reported to the House and not allow members of the public and the press access to them. We intend to press on with the campaign. I believe that journalists have a right of access. But it only goes so far. Too much paper work is held in select Committees as unreported evidence and it should be made available. But it is wrong that a draft report should be leaked. The document has no status and Members have not had time to amend it formally. If a Member in his or her stupidity decides to leak that document, the journalist who receives it is free to do what he wishes with it and his editor is free to publish. The sin is the sin of the Member. It is not the sin of the journalist.

12.57 am

Mr. Biffen: I have not trespassed on the time of the House, but it may be appropriate if I use the closing few minutes to bring our proceedings to a relatively orderly close.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) believed that the character of the debate was such that individual contributions could affect its outcome. Undoubtedly, that is true. It has been in every sense a House of Commons evening. The right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell) believed that we were on the threshold of a momentous decision. I do not know whether I would elevate the occasion to quite that extent, but there is no doubt that this matter concerns the future working of the House and of its Select Committees.

I should like to make four brief points. First, as the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours) has reminded us, we have only recently set down the ground rules of privilege affecting Select Committees. We are not, therefore, dealing with some encrusted inheritance from the last century. It is a matter of the Privileges Committee operating within the requirements of the House of the most recent vintage.

Secondly, the House must address itself to the fundamental problem of whether or not conventions should exist which would encourage a consensual approach to the work of Select Committees. Thirdly, there could be no more dramatic and opposite views than those expressed by the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Mr. Sheldon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi). Fourthly, if we believe that penalties are appropriate I hope that we will not take refuge in believing that token penalties will have an influence upon the subsequent course of events. Either the decision is worth taking or else it is worth ignoring.

In all parts of the House there is a great desire that we should have had the occasion to identify the person responsible for this leak. To that end we have not been aided by the refusal of *The Times* newspaper. That is in contrast to what happened with *The Economist* where it was made quite clear that the leak came from a member of the Committee. The debate has illumined the nature of our choice. Let the House now decide.

It being One o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded, pursuant to the Order [16 May], to put the Questions necessary to dispose of the motion relating to privileges.*

Amendment (a) proposed, to leave out from 'House' to end and add

'takes note of the First Report of the Committee of Privileges (House of Commons Paper No. 376); believes that it would be proper to punish an honourable Member who disclosed the draft report of a Select Committee before it had been reported to the House: but considers that it would be wrong to punish a journalist merely for doing his job.'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 158, Noes 124.

Division No. 190] **[1 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan	Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Alison, Rt Hon Michael	Batiste, Spencer
Ancram, Michael	Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Arnold, Tom	Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Ashdown, Paddy	Beith, A. J.

Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red sh)*
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Boyes, Roland
Brinton, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Burt, Alistair
Caborn, Richard
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Crouch, David
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dewar, Donald
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dobson, Frank
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fallon, Michael
Fatchett, Derek
Favell, Anthony
Fisher, Mark
Fletcher, Alexander
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forth, Eric
Foulkes, George
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Grist, Ian
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Harvey, Robert
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hayes, J.
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howells, Geraint
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
Johnston, Sir Russell
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Key, Robert
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Loyden, Edward
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Malone, Gerald
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxton, John
Meacher, Michael
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Nicholls, Patrick
O'Neill, Martin
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Parry, Robert
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Raynsford, Nick
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Spencer, Derek
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Terlezki, Stefan
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wainwright, R.
Waldegrave, Hon William
Waller, Gary
Wareing, Robert
Warren, Kenneth
Wheeler, John
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Gerald Bermingham and
Mr. George Gardiner.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baldry, Tony
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Body, Sir Richard
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Browne, John
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Chapman, Sydney
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clegg, Sir Walter
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cope, John
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Faulds, Andrew
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Foster, Derek
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Godman, Dr Norman
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Heddle, John
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McGuire, Michael
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
Martin, Michael
Mates, Michael
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Miscampbell, Norman
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Neubert, Michael
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patchett, Terry
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wiggin, Jerry
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Woodall, Alec

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Ivan Lawrence and
Mr. Nigel Spearing.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Main Question, as amended, agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House takes note of the First Report of the Committee of Privileges (House of Commons Paper No. 376); believes that it would be proper to punish an honourable Member who disclosed the draft report of a Select Committee before it had been reported to the House; but considers that it would be wrong to punish a journalist merely for doing his job.

PETITION

Plessey (Takeover)

1.12 am

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I beg to ask leave to present a petition on behalf of the employees of the Plessey factory in my constituency. This is the first of a series of petitions from the employees of Plessey factories throughout the United Kingdom. The petitioners object to the takeover by General Electric plc of the company. They fear for their jobs, for research and for the creation of a monopoly. The prayer of the petition states;

"We, your Petitioners, ask your honourable House to urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take all such steps as are open to him to prevent"

the said takeover.

To lie upon the Table.

Cyprus

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—[Mr. Malone.]

1.13 am

Mr. John David Taylor (Strangford): We have had an excellent day of debates and, though the hour is late, it is nevertheless, important for us to address our minds to the question of the island of Cyprus, and I use the term "island of Cyprus" advisedly.

Cyprus is once again in the news. We have recently had the new recommendations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations for a settlement in the island between the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities.

This is an island that I know well, and I immediately declare my interest in it. I first went there in 1972 when, on the advice of a Greek Cypriot friend, I purchased a small cottage near Kyrenia, which at that time was governed by the Greek Cypriot Government. I have been there every year for the last 14 years and have seen government under the Greek Cypriots and, as is now the case in northern Cyprus, under the Turkish Cypriot Administration.

Cyprus is important to us in the United Kingdom for many reasons. First, because we are a guarantor power under the treaty of independence for the Republic of Cyprus. Together with Turkey and Greece, we in the United Kingdom share that responsibility. Secondly, of course, we have two sovereign bases on the island of Cyprus, one entirely surrounded by Greek Cypriot territory and the other, Dhekelia, mainly surrounded by Turkish Cypriot territory.

Cyprus is, of course, a member of the British commonwealth of nations—the Commonwealth as we now call it. It is significant that at the time of the wedding of the Prince of Wales and Princess Diana, both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Administrations, within the Commonwealth state of Cyprus, produced their own special postage stamps to commemorate that event.

There is a large British permanent resident community in southern and northern Cyprus. The British resident community in northern Cyprus has been increasing during the past few years. The subject is now of international interest, and of special interest to the United Kingdom.

The past 23 years, since 1963, have been sad years for that island, and 1963 saw attacks upon the Turkish Cypriot minority. In 1974, we saw the Greek inspired coup against the legitimate president of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, followed by the intervention of one of the guarantor powers, Turkey, without the co-operation of the United Kingdom.

Since then there have been many well-meaning efforts to bring about peace between the two communities in that island. Perhaps, coming from Ireland, I have greater experience and knowledge of the obvious difficulties in bringing together two communities in an island to work for the betterment of their entire community.

In 1974, there was a coup against the Government of Cyprus. Following the division of the island at that time, there was in 1977 a meeting between Archbishop Makarios and the leader of the Turkish Cypriot community, Mr. Rauf Denktas. At that time there was progress. The leadership of the Greek Cypriot community accepted that Turkish Cypriots were another community

[Mr. John David Taylor]

that had to be respected as equal citizens on that island, and that a bi-zonal arrangement was probably the best way forward for the islanders.

Subsequently, as we know, Archbishop Makarios died and there followed various initiatives from the United Nations. First, there were the 1981 Waldheim evaluations, which were not successful. Then in 1983 there were the first Pérez de Cuellar indicators, which were not successful. Most significant of all, in 1985, the first draft agreement was proposed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Pérez de Cuellar. The broad guidelines were accepted by the Turkish Cypriot community, but unfortunately they were rejected by President Kyprianou, the leader of the Greek Cypriot community.

Once again the United Nations, with the encouragement of those in the West, decided to look again at these proposals to see whether there was any room for movement, to bring about further compromise in Cyprus between the two bitterly divided communities in that island.

Just recently a draft framework agreement, which is really an amendment to last year's proposals from the Secretary-General, has been produced. It is an overall package; it is not possible to accept part of it and reject the other part. Although there are some aspects of the agreement that are unpleasant for the Turkish Cypriots, they have accepted the broad package. Unfortunately, the Greek Cypriots have raised four problems and have invited the Secretary-General to arrange an international conference involving the main nations such as Russia and the United States to decide upon the factors, or a meeting between the heads of the different communities in Cyprus to discuss the issue.

Understandably, it is difficult for the Turkish Cypriots to entertain the idea of an international conference because in such a setting they would merely be sitting on the back benches while the Greek Cypriots, being recognised as the international representatives of the island, would be at the main table along with the United Kingdom, Greece, Turkey, Russia and any other nations that were involved in the conference. Therefore, the Turkish Cypriot community would not have equal status at such a meeting. One can see why they are not prepared to accept that proposal.

If this agreement does not succeed—and it seems that it may not—time will be running out in Cyprus for an agreement that will bring the two parts of the island together. Since 1974 the Turkish Cypriots have waited for an agreement that would bring about an independent sovereign and bi-zonal federal state in Cyprus. At the same time they have suffered because the Greek Cypriots have been recognised internationally as the official representatives of the island. The danger is that the Turkish Cypriots will soon move towards an independent northern Cyprus, which would mean that the partition of the island, which is already de facto, would quickly become a long-term reality, with de jure recognition.

I want to point out how this has been happening over the past few years and is beginning to increase in momentum. In Strasbourg, for instance, in recent months the assembly of the Council of Europe has for the first time challenged the credentials of the Greek Cypriot Members of Parliament. Recently that assembly, by 68 votes to 53, decided to suspend the credentials of the Greek Cypriot Members of Parliament as representatives of Cyprus. So, for the first time, an international body is beginning to question the legitimacy of representation by Greek Cypriots only for the island of Cyprus in international affairs.

The second factor which is assisting the division of Cyprus is European economic aid. The European Community has an association agreement with all of Cyprus because it was negotiated before the coup against the Cyprus Government and the subsequent arrival of the Turkish troops. Clause 5 of that agreement states specifically that both communities must benefit from European Economic Community aid. However, because we recognise only the Greek Cypriots as the official Government for all Cyprus, all the EEC aid is going to the Greek Cypriot part of Cyprus. The Turkish Cypriot part is not benefiting from European Community economic aid under the association agreement.

There is a problem within the EEC, not simply about recognition, but because the Commissioner, Claude Cheysson, has a bias against Turkey. That is reflected in his attitudes towards the Turkish Cypriots. The clause in the agreement says that both communities should benefit and we should ensure in the United Kingdom, through our representations in the EEC, that clause 5 is operated fairly and that projects submitted from northern Cyprus benefit in the same way as projects from southern Cyprus.

There is also the problem of international aid, that is, aid other than EEC aid. All international aid goes to southern Cyprus because we do not recognise northern Cyprus as a state. The more one pours financial aid into southern Cyprus the more that creates a disparity between the living standards in the two parts of the island and the more one perpetuates the division there. That is the tragedy. By recognising only one part of the island, we are actually assisting the long-term division in the island.

Another problem has arisen over flights. Flights go smoothly from every international airport to southern Cyprus. Until recently, there were very few flights to northern Cyprus because that part of Cyprus is not recognised. One can see that there is a creeping acceptance of northern Cyprus as a separate independent state, because charter flights have recently started to northern Cyprus from Germany. We know that regular flights are made via Turkey from the United Kingdom to northern Cyprus and before long there will be charter flights to northern Cyprus as well. In terms of flights and communications, recognition of northern Cyprus is becoming a reality as the political problems of the island remain unresolved.

Today, throughout the whole of western Europe, the postage stamps issued by the northern Cyprus authorities are recognised on packages coming from northern Cyprus to western Europe, including the United Kingdom.

Recently, and this is a further development that emphasises how the existence of northern Cyprus is becoming more acceptable, passports which have the imprimatur of the Turkish Cypriot authorities in northern Cyprus are not only acceptable in western Europe but last month became acceptable in Greece. Until last, month, Greece had refused to accept such passports.

Finally, there is the growing interest of the Moslem world in the independence of northern Cyprus. The Moslem authorities in Arab countries are becoming more willing to recognise the independence of northern Cyprus.

We must try to avoid the permanency of the division in Cyprus. We must seek to bring about an agreement on the island. The division can be avoided only if the United Kingdom, which has a main interest in the island, and the other western nations, advise Greece through our allies in the EEC and NATO, and the Greek Cypriots who are in the Commonwealth, that the United Nations Secretary-General's proposals must be given a more positive response. If that is denied, the Turkish Cypriots will not stand waiting for recognition much longer. The de facto recognition that is already taking place as I have described will become de jure recognition by some Arab countries, and that will put pressure on other countries to follow their example.

That would be a sad solution for Cyprus, and I hope that those in the United Kingdom who can bring influence to bear will do so. It is not good enough for us to stand quietly aside and say that we are supporting the good offices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In another place recently, 10 questions on Cyprus drew but one answer — that we support the good offices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. That is likely to lead us nowhere unless we take the initiative—we have a greater interest in Cyprus than most other countries—to encourage both communities to make a go of the United Nation's proposals.

Tourism is vital to the northern side of Cyprus. Following the problems of terrorism in the middle east, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advised that it might be dangerous to visit certain countries. Northern Cyprus has not seen a bomb or a bullet for 14 years. I do not believe that any European country could claim such peace and stability. I know that the Greek Cypriots rightly objected to the Government advising people that it would be dangerous to visit Cyprus. I hope that, if it has not already done so, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office will pretty soon correct that advice and make it clear that it is quite safe for United Kingdom residents to visit Cyprus.

My final point concerns British citizens' interest in northern Cyprus. At the time of the coup and the arrival of Turkish troops—we should not forget that there are Greek national troops there—there were properties that British citizens had bought jointly with Greek citizens. That created a problem in northern Cyprus when it became a part of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. There were also properties that had been bought by British citizens on their own, but for which, during the coup, they did not get title deeds. When the new authorities took over, therefore, they had no title.

I know that the Turkish Cypriot authorities have considered these problems through their assembly, but many British citizens still do not have their title deeds and are waiting on a decision by the Turkish Cypriot assembly. I should like an assurance that the British Government, through the high commission, are making every effort to ensure a speedy resolution to the problem.

1.33 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Mr. Tim Eggar): I congratulate the right hon. Member for Strangford (Mr. Taylor) on his success in the ballot and on his choice of subject for debate, although not on the hour of it.

Cyprus is of special interest to many hon. Members on both sides of the House, and I know that the right hon. Gentleman has made tireless efforts on its behalf. I recognise his interest in and connections with the Turkish Cypriot community. I am particularly pleased that the right hon. Gentleman has initiated the debate because this House must be the forum for discussions of matters of major national and international importance.

First, I shall deal with the right hon. Gentleman's two final points. Following representations and consideration within the Foreign Office, the advice to tourists on travel to Cyprus is exactly the same as that relating to other parts of the Mediterranean. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we have been pressing the Turkish authorities to try to remove the difficulties over claims. We have made it clear to them that the problems have been continuing for far too long, and that we look to them for a resolution of those outstanding claims.

Obviously, our interests in Cyprus go back over a number of years. As the right hon. Gentleman said, we are one of the guarantors of Cyprus independence under the 1960 arrangements. We have had a long connection, have governed Cyprus, and still retain our bases on the island. We have played an active part in what can loosely be described as the Cyprus problem over the past 26 years. As an example of this—the right hon. Gentleman did not mention this—I draw the attention of the House to our role in the United Nations' peacekeeping force, UNFICYP. Our contribution amounts to 760 men of the total of 2,350 who are deployed on the island, and it costs us more than £21 million a year, which is about one third of the total cost. The right hon. Gentleman will agree that that is a significant commitment, and shows the importance that we attach to a resolution of the Cyprus problem.

For many years now our policy on the Cyprus problem has been dominated by two overriding objectives. The first is to do what we can to contribute towards finding a peaceful, just and lasting settlement to the Cyprus problem. The second is to try to ensure that nothing happens that will make such a settlement more difficult to find, or that leads to a deterioration of the situation in Cyprus. Perhaps I can characterise these policy themes as the "negative" and "positive" aspects of our policy.

I should like to begin with the negative aspect. It was the desire to avoid a deterioration in the situation that led us to state strongly over a number of years the undesirability of the Turkish Cypriots declaring independence, and to refuse to recognise the so-called "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus". Apart from the legal and constitutional arguments, it was clear to us then and it is clear to us now that recognition of the so-called TRNC would in no way contribute to the search for a settlement. I know that the right hon. Gentleman accepts that. Indeed, it would make such a settlement more difficult to find. We continue to urge all parties to avoid anything which will make things more difficult.

I should like to turn now to the positive aspects of our policy, and to explain rather more fully some developments in recent months. We continue to believe that the Secretary-General's initiative offers by far the best prospect of a settlement. That is not to say that a settlement will be easy. It will require courage and statesmanship on both sides to overcome years of mutual distrust. I can understand the frustration that has led some to argue for a separate initiative from Britain, or indeed from other

[Mr. Tim Eggar]

quarters, but we firmly believe that the efforts of Senor Perez de Cuellar must be supported firmly and unequivocally.

Let me sketch where the Secretary-General's initiative now stands. He has made three sets of proposals, all with similar basic provisions on two of the key issues, territory and the constitution. The Turkish Cypriots accepted the first version in January 1985. The Greek Cypriots accepted the second version in April of that year. The Secretary-General put forward his latest proposals at the end of March. Obviously, they do not meet all the concerns of all the parties. But they seem to us fair and reasonable and we support them and the Secretary-General's role.

The Secretary-General has yet to receive substantive replies from both sides. He will no doubt wish to await them before deciding his way forward. But I stress that the crucial moment has now arrived. Now, if ever, political courage is needed. We fully recognise that difficult issues remain — for example, troop withdrawals, guarantees and the "three freedoms". It is important to understand that what the Secretary-General is proposing is an integrated whole. He wants agreement on his present constitutional proposals as the way into an overall settlement. He wants positive responses from both sides to his current framework proposals to pave the way for progess on outstanding issues. If I have one message to get across tonight it is to urge all the parties to seize what we regard as unique opportunity. It may not be repeated for a long time, if at all.

The right hon. Member spoke about the Council of Europe Assembly. Naturally, we hope that a settlement of this problem would allow both sides to be represented there.

The right hon. Member has talked about the interests of the Turkish Cypriot community. We trade normally with it. We have supported its right to be consulted on negotiations for the EC—Cyprus customs union. It also benefits from aid we give to Cyprus. This includes a small ODA — financed technical co-operation programme, support for students' fees, worth almost £1 million, and the Foreign Office scholarship and awards scheme provision of £20,000. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, we keep in close contact with Mr. Denktash and other Turkish Cypriot leaders over the Cyprus problem and on other issues affecting British interests.

Mr. John David Taylor: I fully accept that, as the Minister has said, British aid is being given to both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, but will he comment on the problem that the European Community, in which we have a role to play, is contributing to only one community?

Mr. Eggar: That is a lengthy and complex problem, and I should be happy to write to the right hon. Gentleman on it, but time is short, and I would not want to go into the details at this point.

An agreement is close. Let us all concentrate on getting that agreement so that issues of troop withdrawals, guarantees and the "three freedoms" can be properly addressed. We are often asked to put more pressure on the parties in support of the Secretary-General. Throughout his initiative, we have taken all opportunities to urge parties towards settlement. The Secretary-General has expressed gratitude on a number of occasions for our particular role. Most recently my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister met Prime Minister Ozal of Turkey here on 18 February and President Kyprianou here on 7 April. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary met Mr. Papandreou on 21 March.

The situation in Cyprus is tragic and wasteful, and is an unnatural division that complicates the balance in the eastern Mediterranean and adds to the conflicts between Greece and Turkey. The Secretary-General is working hard to secure a settlement, and it is my belief that the House should support his efforts.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at seventeen minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 21 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Support

1. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the comparative amount of Government support in per capita terms enjoyed by ratepayers *(a)* in the north of England and *(b)* in the south of England.

The Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Kenneth Baker): Government support to local authorities, in the form of aggregate Exchequer grant per capita, in 1986-87 amounted to £222 in the south of England and to £307 in the north, about 40 per cent. higher. The corresponding figure for the midlands is £243.

Mr. Favell: With figures like these, why the clamour from the Socialist town halls of the north, such as Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield, that they are being robbed of their birthright? Is it to cover up for their over-indulgence? Does my right hon. Friend have an addition to make to the Government's "must get the message across" list?

Mr. Baker: Yes. It is clear from the figures that under the rate support grant system the Government continue to give substantially higher sums of money to those in the north. This is one aspect of the north-south divide and a fact that is not generally recognised. For example, looking at RSG alone, in the last years of the Labour Administration the north got 28 per cent. more than the south. Now, under this Government, the north gets 50 per cent. per head more than the south.

Mr. Tony Banks: Now that the Secretary of State is getting out of the frying pan, will he tell the House whether he truly believes that there should be no Government control over rates? If so, does he think that his successor will share his belief?

Mr. Baker: The rates policy that I have pursued and set out in my Green Paper is very clear. I have made it clear that the system of local government finance needs a complete and absolute overhaul. I have put my proposals on the table. We await proposals from other parties.

Mr. Fallon: Does my right hon. Friend agree that those figures make it all the more disgraceful that Darlington borough council has not only increased the rates by 21 per cent. but has increased its spending by 21 per cent.? What does he have to say to a council which puts water slides before jobs?

Mr. Baker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The total budgets of local authorities for next year show an increase of over 8 per cent., the inevitable consequence of which must be higher rate increases. The point that I have demonstrated in the grants is that substantial sums of money flow to local authorities, disproportionately in favour of the north.

Mr. Eastham: Is the Minister not being a little dishonest when he tries to draw a simple analysis between the north and the south? I remind him that the north was the home of the industrial revolution. Consequently, it was left with the legacy of all the rubbish and old buildings that had to be replaced. Is that not why the north needs extra money?

Mr. Baker: I have made it clear that I do not begrudge this flow of money, and in fact the rate support grant system achieves that aim. On top of that, we have introduced an urban aid programme, which again is principally directed to the towns and cities of the north.

Mr. Marland: Is my right hon. Friend aware that in some counties in the south, especially Gloucestershire, with which I am most familiar, funds that have been reallocated this year have not been distributed by the Liberal-Labour pact which is now in power in Gloucestershire? Does he agree that that distorts many of these figures?

Mr. Baker: I have sympathy with my hon. Friend. Wherever a Liberal-Labour pact gets into power, things go wrong.

Mr. Straw: I wish the Secretary of State well, whatever the future holds for him later this afternoon. From our point of view, although we have had a few disagreements with him, we think that whoever replaces him is likely to be worse, especially if it is his right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), or even worse his right hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Mr. Stanley).

Does the right hon. Gentleman accept that the overall figures that he has given obscure the fact that inner city areas in the north as well as the south have suffered severely, especially Labour areas? For example, Sheffield and Manchester received only 45 per cent. of their total expenditure by way of grant. How can he justify the fact that Newcastle, although it spends less on some services than Wandsworth, has only 20 per cent. of its expenditure covered by grant, while Wandsworth has 85 per cent.?

Mr. Baker: The hon. Gentleman, who knows better than most the complexities of the rate support grant system, will know why grant varies from authority to authority. We are trying to devise a system to reward those authorities which give good value for money to their ratepayers.

I thank the hon. Gentleman for what I took to be good wishes. I may not be the only spokesman on the move.

Voluntary Organisations

2. **Mr. Rogers** asked the Secretary of State for the Environmnt when he last met representatives of the voluntary organisations in Greater London and the metropolitan counties to discuss funding arrangements under the Local Government Act 1985.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): My right hon. Friend

last met representatives of voluntary organisations to discuss the effects of abolition on 24 March. There are no plans at present for a further meeting.

Mr. Rogers: When will the money which the GLC allocated for forward funding be returned to the boroughs as a result of that being declared unlawful by the House of Lords?

Sir George Young: That is a matter for the London Residuary Body, not the Government.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Why, in the borough of Southwark, although there was one urban programme grant to the Silwood estate, for which we are grateful, was the total urban programme cut by half this year from about £200,000 to about £100,000? Although boroughs such as mine in south London are clearly deprived, why do they not qualify for any of the more important statuses under the urban programme as programme partnership authorities? Is it not about time that we looked again at the urban programme and the funding of urban areas, which clearly does not always meet the needs of the most deprived parts of our inner cities?

Sir George Young: I hope that the hon. Gentleman will recognise that one of the inner city initiatives, under my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, was set up in the London borough of Southwark with extra resources of about £1 million behind it. We shall consider Southwark's urban programme. I do not think that it has applied under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978 for assistance to industry, to which it is entitled, and that is something that I shall also be pursuing with the borough.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Under-Secretary clarify the Government's intentions with respect to the Secretary of State's letter of 20 March 1986 about the proposed rate-capping of the arrangements to fund voluntary organisations in London? Would it not be scandalous, and further undermine the Government's commitments in the House of Lords and elsewhere to the voluntary organisations, if the already inadequate level of funding under the Richmond scheme were to be held by that draconian use of the Local Government Act 1985? In that connection, will the Government also clarify their intentions on funding for voluntary organisations in the metropolitan areas?

Sir George Young: There seems to have been some genuine misunderstanding about this. Earlier this year the London boroughs decided to have a budget of £27 million. We have made it clear that we have no plans to reduce that figure, and the Government have an open mind on next year's budget.

Radiation

3. **Sir David Price** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are his latest estimates of the highest and lowest levels of natural background radiation within the United Kingdom; how the former compares with acceptable international standards of safety from radiation; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): Excluding the contribution from the daughter products of radon in dwellings, which varies very widely, the radiation doses from natural background range from about 0·9 mSv per year to 1·5 mSv per year. Including the contribution from radon, a typical range is from 1 to 10 mSv per year. For artificial sources of radiation, the internationally recommended dose limit for exposure of members of the public over many years is 1 mSv per year.

Sir David Price: Does my on Friend agree that those figures show that there is a wide variation in levels of natural radiation? Can we then conclude that there is much still to be identified and measured when it comes to judging radiation levels, and that we should not add to man-made levels of radiation if we can possibly avoid it?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not disagree with my hon. Friend. On average, exposure to people from industrial sources is a good deal less than 1 per cent. of annual exposure. That puts the thing into perspective. The great majority of radiation comes from natural cosmic radiation, rocks and so on.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Is not the belching filth that comes out of Britain's coal-fired power stations for more damaging to the environment, and particularly to the Lake District, than any radiation? Is it not time that we took our gloves off in the argument over the impact on the environment of nuclear or coal-fired power?

Mr. Waldegrave: I am not sure that I would agree with the hon. Gentleman about "any radiation", but he is right to remind us that there are problems of pollution with any major form of power generation. It is probably true that the most intractable of all long-term environmental problems will be carbon dioxide and the heating of the atmosphere.

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle: Does my hon. Friend agree that his original answer was extremely erudite but totally incomprehensible to all hon. Members with the exception of the few who have had a very good education in that sphere? Is it not therefore important to evolve a meaningful form of language that brings home to people exactly what we are talking about?

Mr. Waldegrave: I agree with my hon. Friend, but it is also vital to have the data available so that those who have had the education to which my hon. Friend referred can interpret it properly. It is difficult to simplify things a lot without confusing the issue further. However, in order to help my hon. Friend, other hon. Members and, indeed, myself, we have prepared a comparative table of sources of radiation which has been made available in the Library of the House and, I think, in the Vote Office.

Mr. Frank Cook: The Minister has told the House that, according to international bodies, the acceptable level is 1mSv a year. If so, why has the legally enforceable level in this country been set by the most recent ionising regulations at 5mSv a year? Why do America and West Germany have levels that are 20 times more stringent than those in Britain?

Mr. Waldegrave: The hon. Gentleman has made the mistake of believing everything in that "Panorama" programme. I have to say that in almost every critical respect that programme was wrong. The methods by which we calculate safe dose limits in this country are different from those in the United States and Germany. Ours are tighter than those in Germany, and equivalent to those in the United States. The issue is so important that I am providing every hon. Member with a briefing note on that programme, which contained many mistakes.

Mr. Ward: My hon. Friend will be aware that this morning there was a leak from the Cap de la Hague waste treatment plant near Cherbourg. That is a matter of concern to my constituents and to others on the south coast because there have been other incidents in the past. As a result of that leak was there any emission into the atmosphere, and what precautions are the Government taking to keep everybody informed?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can reassure my hon. Friend and his constituents. My officials and officials of the Radiochemical Inspectorate have been in touch with their opposite numbers in France. There was no leakage of radiation from the building concerned and, therefore, no impact on the outside environment in France, let alone in the United Kingdom.

Dr. David Clark: When the Minister responded to my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton, North, (Mr. Cook) about the "Panorama" programme, was he saying—this is important—that the standards of radiation measurement in the United Kingdom are higher than they are in Germany or in the United States of America?

Mr. Waldegrave: The measurements are the same. We are talking about safety levels. I am advised that although they are differently calibrated or put together, the effective protection levels for the population in Britain are tighter than they are in Germany and equivalent to those in the United States.

Council Estates (Sale)

4. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received and from what bodies concerning the proposal to sell off whole council estates or parts of estates to private developers.

The Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction (Mr. John Patten): My right hon. Friend has received many representations on this general issue. They have come from organisations representing interested parties, from individual Members of this House, and from members of the public.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister appreciate that the proposals are causing particular anxiety among tenants because of the threat of eviction? Does the Minister recognise that as time goes on developers will invariably choose the better sites? What is happening about waiting lists, tranfer lists and the homeless? What assurances can the Minister give about these sensitive issues?

Mr. Patten: Some tenants have been unnecessarily alarmed by the literature put through their doors during the recent local government elections campaign. Much of that literature was not factually correct. Under the proposals to which the hon. Gentleman refers tenants will enjoy a high measure of protection, on all fours with the protection that council tenants receive when councils move their tenants from one council property to another, and similar to the protection that private tenants get when private landlords move their tenants from one place to another with the approval of the courts.

Mr. Dover: Is my hon. Friend aware that many hon. Members fully support the proposals because they will end the often inhuman and remote management by housing authorities and lead to much better management in the private sector?

Mr. Patten: I believe that the private sector, and, perhaps, new institutional forms of management can provide a lot. It is interesting that a substantial number of Labour-controlled local authorities are seeking to involve the private sector in the interests of the people who live in their areas.

Mr. Allan Roberts: Will the Minister confirm, or deny, recent reports in the press about a speech that he made that he intends to allow council housing not only to be sold off against residents' wishes, but to force such property to be sold by councils against the wishes of the councils?

Mr. Patten: The best thing that I can do is to send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the speech so that he can see exactly what I said. I can sum up exactly the feeling and sentiment of my speech by quoting one sentence, in which I said:

"The Government's goal is to recreate in our cities a diverse and socially welcome pattern of different types of housing available for rent which will match and complement the diversity and richness of our owner-occupied stock."

I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of my speech.

Mr. Neil Hamilton: Was not my hon. Friend too mealy-mouthed in his response to the hon. Member for Newport, East (Mr. Hughes)? Is my hon. Friend aware of the unscrupulous propaganda circulated in my constituency during the recent local government elections by the Labour party in Manchester about the threats that the Government were holding over the heads of tenants in my constituency and stating that it was an absolute fact that when the Housing and Planning Bill went through they would be evicted? Perhaps my hon. Friend should beef up his answer in response to my intervention.

Mr. Patten: I can see that I need some training in this approach from my hon. Friend. He will be aware of the letter that I wrote to him a day or so ago condemning in clear and unequivocal terms the leaflets that were put through so many doors in Manchester. However, in my characteristically, I hope, subfusc and reasonable approach when answering questions, I was seeking to say that we should put the recent local elections behind us with the scaremongering leaflets that were circulated during those local elections. Let us tell tenants in public sector stock, particularly elderly tenants, exactly what the facts and the truth are. That is so important in politics.

Mr. John Fraser: Does the Minister accept that the best way to add to the diversity and choice of housing is to allow local authorities and housing associations to continue with the task of building homes for rent, on which the Minister and his Department have been screwing them down for the last seven years? If he wants to assure tenants about houses being sold off to the private sector, should he not give to tenants the same veto on sales to the private sector as he has promised tenants in respect of the privatisation of management? Will he give that assurance and change the Housing and Planning Bill in another place?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman, who served on the Standing Committee on the Housing and Planning Bill, will be well aware of the considerable assurances that I have given during the examination of the Bill. I think that the hon. Gentleman, who is a London Member, is, to a great extent, playing the wrong tune over new building. In London and our other great cities we should be finding

ways of bringing back into use the scandalously large number of empty council houses and flats to house the people who need that accommodation.

Mr. Cartwright: Is the Minister aware that there is widespread support for the case to break up centralised, monolithic and remote local authority housing management? Will he be taking practical steps to encourage the development of housing co-operatives, housing associations and neighbourhood housing trusts rather than taking the easy option of simply selling the estates off into the private sector?

Mr. Patten: On some occasions the option which might be appropriate could well be selling off part, not necessarily all, of the accommodation on an estate. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) that a variety of ways of breaking up monolithic tenures would be very appropriate, especially if they are the sorts of tenures which the people who live in those flats and houses want. That is why we need a radical re-examination of our policies towards rented housing in the public and private sectors.

Housing (Coventry)

5. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the numbers of houses in Coventry unfit for human habitation, substandard or requiring major repairs.

Sir George Young: Coventry provides its assessment of stock condition as part of its annual housing investment programme return.

Its summary for both public and private stock as at 1 April 1985 was as follows: number of unfit dwellings, 939; number of fit dwellings lacking standard amenities, 5,409; number of non-substandard dwellings in need of renovation, 13,644.

Mr. Nellist: Considering that the Minister has recently visited Coventry, South-East, is he not aware that the appalling figure of over 20,000 houses represents almost one in six of all private and public houses in the city of Coventry? Is it not true that the cuts of almost £100 million in the past seven years in rate support grant for Coventry has meant that for five years the Labour council has not had the money to start to build a single council family house? Does he accept that the thousands of families who live in those houses in Coventry, apart from welcoming the resignation of his Government, could do with an injection of capital for the building of decent houses for people and providing proper jobs for workers?

Sir George Young: The hon. Gentleman mentioned cuts, but the figure for expenditure on housing by Coventry was £13·4 million in 1982-83 and £19·8 million in 1985-86. Therefore, there have not been dramatic reductions in capital investment on housing by Coventry. I very much welcome the initiatives that Coventry is now at last beginning to take to interest the private sector in helping to tackle some of the problems mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Housing (Leicester)

6. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what plans he has to seek to speed up the sale of council houses and flats within Leicester.

Mr. John Patten: I understand that over 4,000 flats and houses have been sold under the right to buy in Leicester, but only 13 flats had been sold at the end of December 1985.

This low level of flat sales is a common pattern across the country. For that reason, the Government have announced proposals, contained in the Housing and Planning Bill, designed to encourage the sale of flats under the right to buy.

Mr. Bruinvels: Is that not a shocking indictment of the Labour-controlled Leicester city council? It just does not care. In fact, it has sold only 12 flats and 4,300 council houses and there are still 34,400 council houses and flats left ready to be sold with 700 people waiting to buy them. Will my hon. Friend do everything in his power to give the people of Leicester the opportunity of owning something that should belong to them and not to the dreadful Labour-controlled council?

Mr. Patten: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend. It is a pity that Leicester, like other councils — for example, Manchester and Nottingham — is paying so little attention to the aspirations of the people who live in its area. I wish that the controlling Labour group on Leicester city council had watched the recent Labour party political broadcast on television, which was a great paean of praise for home ownership and showed a welcome conversion to our policies.

Peak Park Planning Board

7. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has any plans to introduce direct elections to the Peak Park Planning Board.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): No, Sir. We have already provided for statutory district council representation on the board in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Mr. Knox: Since the Peak park is one of only two areas in the country where planning is undertaken without directly elected representatives being involved in final decisions, why should those of my constituents who live in the Peak park put up with this undemocratic treatment?

Mrs. Rumbold: Twelve local authorities are involved in the administration of the Peak district park, and direct elections would be impractical in those circumstances. Two thirds of the members are appointed by the councils. I expect that they would be capable of representing the interests of the Peak park. We recognise the advantages of choosing members with local knowledge and experience when we appoint them from the Department.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. Lady accept that there is a strong case for improving the representation of people from Greater Manchester and Sheffield, who use the Peak park at weekends and at other times for recreation? There is considerable resentment in those areas over the fact that in recent years their representation on the Peak Park Planning Board has been reduced.

Mrs. Rumbold: Locally elected people from the wards in the Peak park could represent the interests to which the hon. Gentleman referred.

Mr. Franks: The Minister will be aware of my great anxiety about the planning procedures in south Cumbria.

which incorporates the Lake District Special Planning Board. The Minister may also be aware that the Peak park——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question relates to the Peak park.

Mr. Franks: This relates to the principle, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: That is a different matter.

House Building

8. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many public sector housing starts are planned for 1986-87; and how this figure compares with 1978-79.

Mr. John Patten: My Department does not forecast housing starts or completions in the public or private sector.

Mr. Dubs: Will the Minister confirm that, nevertheless, there has been a significant fall in public sector housing starts during the lifetime of the Government, that in many inner cities no public sector houses are being built and that several million people cannot afford, for reasons of low income or unemployment, to buy in the private market? Among them are hundreds of thousands of people who are badly housed and overcrowded, and the Government's housing policy offers them no hope.

Mr. Patten: That is exactly what the Labour party said before we started the process of council house sales, never mind the present position. The balance of new build has switched between 1979 and now, nowhere more successfully than in Wandsworth, which has done a marvellous job. By selling properties, Wandsworth was able to spend last year about £58 million—the biggest housing investment programme in London—and this has allowed it to spend more on maintaining and repairing its council house stock than any Labour or alliance-controlled council in London.

Mr. Heddle: Does my hon. Friend agree that the way to curb homelessness is through the maximum use of existing housing stock? The number of houses left empty, not for two, four or six months, but for a year, is a scar on the face of a caring society and an indictment of many Labour-controlled housing authorities. Does he agree with the proposition that the answer to homelessness might be for councils to give house keys to people on their waiting lists who are do-it-yourself experts and who could renovate the houses in exchange for a compensatory rent-free period?

Mr. Patten: That is a possibility. That view was expressed by the Opposition during the Committee stage of the Housing and Planning Bill. It is clearly something to consider. It saddens me that there is so much housing need and so many empty houses and flats, not only in the council, but in the private, sector. It is absurd that we cannot, as men of good will, find a consensus and so bring back much of the empty properties and house more of our people.

Mr. Raynsford: Does the Minister agree that, coinciding with the dramatic decline in public sector starts, there has been a continuing increase in homelessness? There are now more homeless families accommodated in bed-and-breakfast hotels than ever before because there are insufficient public sector homes for them. Is it not wasteful of public finance to spend money on bed-and-breakfast accommodation? Is the Minister aware that in Wandsworth, because of the increase in homelessness, there are people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation who should be in public sector housing?

Mr. Patten: The hon. Gentleman, with his experience in these matters, should look at the large number of empty properties in London boroughs, seek ways with us to bring them back into use, through better management in the public sector, and try to find ways to bring down the absurdly high number of empty private properties to rent, by looking hard at that area.

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend agree that Left-wing local authorities which refuse to enter into imaginative partnership with the private sector for the improvement and renovation of their derelict housing stock are denying their citizens the right to decent housing? What action will he take to force such local authorities to act responsibly and in the interests of the people who live in their cities?

Mr. Patten: I agree entirely with my hon. Friend. He is absolutely right and my answer is a clear and unequivocal yes. I am happy to report that many Labour authorities, such as Salford and Oldham, have been collaborating and co-operating with better housing for their own tenants and inhabitants. Some councils are not so co-operative, including places such as Manchester, Nottingham, and Leicester—we have heard their names before—and, in particular, Liverpool. I think that the tenants will, in the end, force councils to take action that they should have taken long ago. If they do not do so, we may have to take action.

Mr. Freeson: No matter how much private investment is brought into joint action with public authorities, we need more public investment to deal with the very large number of private dwellings that are in grave need of repair and renovation and could be put to use by housing associations and local authorities if money were available to buy and repair them.

Mr. Patten: Money is one half of the equation. The other half is the inhibition that so many private landlords feel about improving and bringing back into use their own stock which is being kept empty. If the right hon. Gentleman is putting forward a suggestion and would like a response from us, I say, "By all means put forward your suggestion, but recognise that the expenditure of extra money on the improvement grant system will not necessarily bring back the empties."If only the Labour party would move a bit on the private rented sector, we would be in business.

Mr. Squire: Further to the question of the hon. Member for Fulham (Mr. Raynsford), will my hon. Friend confirm that he wishes to see the phasing out of bed and breakast accommodation as a means of solving homelessness, on both social and financial grounds?

Mr. Patten: Yes. It is a method of last resort, to be used only when everything else has failed.

Mr. Rooker: Does the Minister accept that the public, whether owners, tenants or the homeless, rightly condemn the 100,000 empty dwellings in the public sector, and, in many ways, condemn them more than they condemn the

500,000 empty homes in the private sector? If there were genuine good will to do something about the matter, surely the Government would have accepted the Opposition's new clause to the Housing and Planning Bill, which would have allowed people who have been on the waiting list for more than 12 months to take over the tenancy of a property that has been empty for more than six months and was available for letting.

The Minister must appreciate that his predecessors, playing the numbers game, have left millions of our fellow citizens in junk housing which will have to come down. That being so, why was the Government's national building programme for new homes down by 70,000 last year on the figure for 1978, the last full year of the Labour Government?

Mr. Patten: I agree with a great deal of what the hon. Gentleman has said. It reflects something that I mentioned in a speech yesterday to which he was good enough to listen. I said that councils had

"segregated council tenants on estates and labelled them with a distinctive address and a distinctive architecture. For many, it has not been a social success."

It is because of that fact that we need to start again and to look at the provision of social housing in this country. Perhaps the scheme mentioned by the hon. Gentleman, which we were not able to accommodate in Committee, should be looked at again—if only we can find a way of stopping people getting into flats that have been empty for six months, 12 months, or longer, and taking accommodation that is more than they need. That is the one problem with that scheme. If the hon. Gentleman can think of a way round the problem, I should be pleased to hear from him.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that this is often a self-inflicted problem? In Leeds during the past two decades some 10,000 more houses have been demolished than have been built. Given that there is a need for rented accommodation, it is important to present a package of refurbishments for housing association dwellings and public sector starts. Will his statistics reflect that and make the point that we have to get on with housing for rent? We should not be demolishing houses that could be refurbished.

Mr. Patten: Demolition is rather like putting people in bed-and-breakfast accommodation and should be a last resort. I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Leeds, West (Mr. Meadowcroft) that we need a greater diversity of provision on our housing estates.

Land Disposal

9. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the rate of disposal of building land in the inner cities by public bodies.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: No, but I believe that better progress is being made since we set up the registers of unused land. Some 38,000 acres have gone from the registers, including since 1984, 4,400 acres of inner city derelict land.

Mr. MacKay: During my right hon. Friend's all too short but positive stewardship in the Department of the Environment, may I ask whether he has seen enough to agree that it is disappointing that more public sector land has not been sold for housing in the inner cities? Does he agree that one of the many reasons for that is that there is not much incentive for builders to build in the inner cities when they are able to build on green field sites in my constituency and elsewhere?

Mr. Baker: I have issued 107 notices to dispose of surplus land and 25 directions were issued following those. It is disappointing that there are still substantial quantities of unused derelict land in the inner cities, especially in the north. It serves no one's purpose to leave that land derelict. One of the ways in which we can abate the development pressures in the sort of area that my hon. Friend represents is by bringing as much as possible of that land back into active use.

Mr. Winnick: Some of this building land could undoubtedly be used by local authorities to supply the accommodation so desperately required by people who have no accommodation at all. Why does the Minister not recognise this? Is he aware that if the rumours are true he is to be replaced by the present Minister of Transport, a noted Right-wing fanatic? If that is true, those who are in desperate need of housing can give up all hope.

Mr. Baker: Quite a lot of this derelict land is owned by local authorities, and nearly all of it is owned by statutory authorities. It is a matter of motivating them to dispose of it to bring development forward. Two grants are available, the derelict land grant, which we have increased to £90 million a year, and the urban development grant, which we have increased to £25 million a year. I wish it were possible to educate certain councils to get on with the business of disposing of that land.

Mr. Gow: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the dissatisfaction that he has expressed about the rate of progress in selling unused land now on the land registers is shared by those on the Benches behind him? Is he further aware that there is a widespread belief on the Tory Benches that it is wrong, morally, socially and economically, for public bodies to hold on to land for which they have no operational requirement, either today or tomorrow? Will my right hon. Friend urgently consider taking further and specific powers to secure the release of unused land so that it can be put to better use by others?

Mr. Baker: I agree wholeheartedly with my hon. Friend. He asked about extra powers. We are using the powers available to the Secretary of State for the Environment, but more has to be done. It is morally indefensible to allow land to lie vacant when it could be used for industrial development and for houses.

Dr. Cunningham: Is not this problem just a symptom of the Government's abysmal failure on inner city policy in general? By systematically removing financial resources from those authorities which were trying to deal with these problems they have created a situation in which local authorities cannot use the land because they have no money. They do not want to sell it because if they need land later it would cost them a lot more to buy it back. In addition, because the problems of the inner cities are getting worse, land in the hands of private developers is also lying idle because people will not invest until the Government and local authorities start tackling the problems with more vigour.

Mr. Baker: I reject completely the criticism of the stewardship of myself and my predecessors in relation to the inner cities. I remind the hon. Gentleman of the figures

that I gave earlier of the proportionately greater amount of money that is provided under the rate support grant system to the towns and cities of the north, of the way in which we have trebled the amount of support through the urban programme to the towns and cities, and of the triumphant success of the greatest reclamation of any inner city area in the world—London docklands.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: What incentive is there for responsible Conservative-controlled authorities, such as the borough of Macclesfield, to sell land that is surplus to their requirements if they are then unable to spend that money on the sorts of desirable projects that are in the best interests of the people of the area—such as housing for the elderly, young marrieds and single people—because of the limits on the spending of capital receipts? How can my right hon. Friend urge his policy upon such a council when it is against the best interests of that council as it cannot spend the money when it has sold the land?

Mr. Baker: The amount of cash that is received by local authorities on selling the land remains theirs, and they can use it either to redeem debts—and some £2 billion has been used to do so—or there is a system of cumulative borrowing powers under the capital control system.

Radiation

10. **Mr. Simon Hughes** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to improve the arrangements for co-ordinating Government monitoring of radiation levels following the leak from the Chernobyl nuclear power station.

Mr. Waldegrave: Arrangements for co-ordinating monitoring of radiation levels have been in operation for a number of years and worked effectively after the accident at Chernobyl. My Department will be examining its procedures in the light of recent events to determine whether any changes are desirable.

Mr. Hughes: Does the Minister accept that it does no good to the Government's reputation for co-ordinating any environmental policy if they change their Secretary of State for the Environment three times in three years? On the question of radiation levels, does the Minister accept that we need more progress than we have seen to date on the co-ordination of seven Government Departments and six other agencies, and that so far we have received only a babble of unrelated technical information, rather than plain information for the ordinary person? Does he also accept the figures produced in *Nature* magazine on 15 May by three employees of the NRPB, which showed that although the increase in radiation in the south of England was only 1 per cent., in the north it was 15 per cent. above average? Should that not be a salutory warning?

Mr. Waldegrave: The joke was feeble, the second part of the question was wrong, and the last part in relation to the figures in *Nature* was roughly right. The hon. Gentleman should read the rest of the article, which says that these background levels are still of trivial proportions.

Mr. Neil Thorne: Will my hon. Friend take this opportunity to thank the local authority emergency planning officers for all the work that they do in assisting the Government to monitor these levels, particularly their role in the civil emergency sphere?

Mr. Waldegrave: Let me widen my hon. Friend's question. I should like to pay tribute to those local authority officers, but I should also like to pay tribute to all the people who manned the monitoring stations. According to Murphy's law, such an accident was bound to happen on a bank holiday weekend, but these people did their jobs very well throughout that weekend and subsequently.

Mr. Dalyell: In the light of the Minister's courteous phone call to me last Friday, has he been able to check whether on Saturday 26 April or on Sunday 27 April there was any inquiry about graphite fires in reactors to the International Atomic Energy Authority, the CEGB or the AEA emanating from Russian sources?

Mr. Waldegrave: As behoves any Minister questioned by the hon. Gentleman, I have checked and rechecked the answer that I have given him. I have been unable to find any contact other than the one that I described by Mr. Emerson of the International Atomic Energy Agency on 29 April. After careful checking, I have been unable to find any other contact.

Mr. Roger King: Is my hon. Friend aware that Southwark and many other areas throughout the country are designated nuclear-free zones and that the people of those areas have been subjected to Russian fallout? What is he doing to acquaint the Russians with the fact that we have nuclear-free zones? Furthermore, is he aware of what level of protest, if any, has gone from those zones to the Russians?

Mr. Waldegrave: Behind my hon. Friend's question lies a serious point, because a number of local authorities under Left-wing Labour control have taken a negative view about civil defence. Contingency plans were not involved in this incident, but they might have to be in a more serious one, if there ever was one; pray God, there will not. Many of those attitudes are extremely irresponsible.

Dr. Cunningham: Will the Minister be a little more explicit about the telephone call to which he referred in response to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)? If it is the case that a British official in the International Atomic Energy Agency received an inquiry from Russia on 29 April about how to deal with a graphite fire, why was that information not communicated immediately to the British Government? Would it not have made a major difference to the preparedness of the country and of the emergency services if that potential warning and been acted upon? *[Interruption.]* If I were a Conservative Member I would not underestimate the genuine concern of the British people about the nature of this incident and the way it has been handled. Is it not extraordinary that the information was not communicated to the Government immediately?

Mr. Waldegrave: Though no one doubts the heroism and the technical competence that have now been brought to bear by the Russians on this tragedy, if any Government have to answer questions about cover-ups, it is not the British Government.

Rate Support Grant

11. **Mr. Corbett** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he proposes to issue the "Rate Support Grant Supplementary Report" for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government announced to the House on 10 April our intention to seek to place beyond doubt the issues raised over the Secretary of State's powers under the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 to determine block grant multipliers. Until the legislation, which we shall shortly introduce to the House, has passed all its stages and received Royal Assent, we have been advised that it would not be appropriate to make any further supplementary reports. The Secretary of State will therefore lay the first supplementary report for 1986-87 before the House for its approval as soon as he is able.

Mr. Corbett: Will the Minister think again about the answer that she has just given to the House and undertake that the Secretary of State will obey the decision of the court, which found that the city of Birmingham had had about £7 million stolen from it, on top of about £508 million in the last five financial years? In short, will the Minister say that the Government will obey the law rather than seek to change it retrospectively?

Mrs. Rumbold: It is a fact that had Birmingham pursued the court case that it intended to pursue there would have been the most incredible turmoil from 1981 onwards for all authorities, including Birmingham. All that the Government have sought to do is to put matters right within the House to bring about a situation which all authorities, as well as local authority associations and Opposition Members, had always understood to be the case.

Mr. Yeo: When my hon. Friend is considering rate support grant issues, will she pay particular attention to the outstanding record of Suffolk county council in keeping within Government guidelines? Will she also urge her colleagues to give Suffolk county council more favourable treatment under the rate support grant in future?

Mrs. Rumbold: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. That is a matter that my right hon. Friend will consider in the next block grant assessments.

Mr. Haynes: Having listened to all the waffle at the Dispatch Box this afternoon, I am afraid that my local authority in Ashfield will suffer another serious reduction in rate support grant for the next financial year. I do not know with whom the Minister can have a word, because apparently the Secretary of State is moving on and I do not know who is taking over. Will the Minister have a word with whoever takes over about releasing the money received from council house sales so that we can provide better services for our people in Ashfield?

Mrs. Rumbold: Wiser people than I have avoided speculating at this Dispatch Box.

Mr. Straw: Why does the Minister not come clean about the disreputable nature of the Government's actions? Will she confirm that Birmingham was not pursuing its case, but had won it, and that the Government are now seeking to overturn a decision in Birmingham's favour which was lawfully arrived at in the high court of justice? Will she also confirm that the delay in introducing the Bill is because of major drafting problems, and that the net result of the series of decisions is to deprive Birmingham and other authorities of millions of pounds to which they are entitled, and to create further uncertainty for every local authority in the land?

Mrs. Rumbold: I must point out to the hon. Gentleman that a number of Labour authorities would stand to lose if we were to pursue the course that he has just set out. Birmingham is not likely to lose and, indeed, no authorities are likely to lose. The practice that was followed is commonly understood and has continued during the past few years, and we shall continue to use it. The legislation is simply to achieve what was thought to be the position.

Hampton Court Palace

12. **Mr. Jessel** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects to receive the report of Sir John Garlick following the fire in Hampton Court palace.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): My right hon. Friend has asked Sir John Garlick to complete a thorough inquiry as quickly as possible.

Mr. Jessel: Can my hon. Friend say how long it will take to complete the repairs and reinstatement before reopening the palace completely to the public? What can be done to speed that up, as Hampton Court palace is not only a royal palace of great importance but a major national museum and a highly valued amenity for local people?

Mr. Tracey: My hon. Friend naturally takes a deep interest in Hampton Court palace, which is in his constituency. I can reassure him that all the state apartments are now open to the public, except for the rooms on the south front which were damaged by the fire and those immediately adjacent to them. We hope to reopen the outside area of the south front this weekend, but it is too soon to say when the remaining apartments will be fully restored and reopened.

Local Government Services (Privatisation)

13. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his proposals to privatise local government services following his recent consultations.

Mr. Waldegrave: It remains our firm intention to introduce legislation to require competition for a range of local authority services as soon as the parliamentary timetable permits.

Mr. Atkinson: Now that it has been proved beyond all reasonable doubt that the most remarkable savings have been made by privatising local government services, without a loss of standards in those services and with the full approval of the electorate, as was amply demonstrated in the election results of 8 May, will my hon. Friend hasten the time when he plans to introduce legislation to oblige all local authorities to put such services to the competitive test?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can only repeat what I said in my initial answer, that, without in any way anticipating the contents of the Queen's Speech, if legislative time is available, the Government intend to take further action in this area.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: What conclusion does the Minister draw from the large number of formerly Conservative-controlled authorities which reject the privatisation of

services, particularly the borough of Trafford, which examined in detail the possibility of privatising refuse collection and decided that it would not make economic sense?

Mr. Waldegrave: I draw the same conclusion as I draw from the fact that a number of Conservative councils which were at the forefront of privatisation, including Bath, Wandsworth, Westminister, and Merton, did rather well at the local elections, namely, that what controls the swings at modern local government elections is, unfortunately, the national position.

Water Metering

14. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what progress has been made by water authorities in further trials of universal residential metering.

Mr. John Patten: Following consultations on the Watts report, the water industry is developing a co-ordinated programme of trials.

Mr. Freeman: Bearing in mind the Government's excellent proposals for the abolition of the residential rating system, does my hon. Friend agree that the water authorities should now be giving urgent consideration to the introduction of universal metering as the only viable alternative system?

Mr. Patten: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his excellent question, and I have read and greatly admired his pamphlet on water metering. If domestic rating is abolished, clearly we must replace it with some other basis for charging for the water industry. That could well be via water metering. That is why we need well conducted trials to consider the pros and cons of water metering as a method of charging fairly for water.

Mr. Boyes: Are the Government not aiming to change the whole nature of the water authorities before the metering experiment takes place? Are chairmen of water authorities not informing the elected representatives that their services will no longer be needed because they are to be replaced with a number of full-time executives? The Labour party condemns the loss of the elected representatives of the water authorities. How, and from where, will the Minister choose the full-time executives? Is it not disgraceful, unacceptable and disgusting that the Government will be changing the nature of water authorities before Parliament has had an opportunity to debate the matter and decide its attitude to the water authorities?

Mr. Patten: The answers to the hon. Gentleman's questions are no, no, no and no. I cannot see the link between his questions and the question on water metering.

Privilege

3.30 pm

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with the new rules on procedure, I raised with you on Monday night and Tuesday morning a possible contempt of the House in breach of privilege in relation to Leigh and Linklater. Will you find it possible to rule, Mr. Speaker, before the Whit recess?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has written to me, correctly, and I am considering the matter.

Education Expenditure (HMI Report)

3.31 pm

Mr. Charles Radice (Durham, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is not a matter of surprise that the Government have not made a statement on the report——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am frequently surprised, but is this a matter for me?

Mr. Radice: The point of order, Mr. Speaker, concerns the report of the HMI on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on education provision, which is published today but on which no statement has been made to the House, despite the fact that it shows that overall schools are generally stretched for money and resources. I should have thought that that was a matter of great importance for Members, pupils, parents and teachers, and that the Secretary of State for Education and Science, whoever he or she is, would have had the courtesy to make a statement to the House.

Mr. Speaker: I have received no request for a statement. There may be one tomorrow.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker,——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is not really a matter for me.

Mr. Greenway: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is it not surprising that the Labour party, when in government, never published such reports?

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us be surprised by the ballot. For motions on Friday 6 June.

BALLOT FOR NOTICES OF MOTIONS FOR FRIDAY 6 JUNE

Members successful in the ballot were:

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): I beg to give notice that on 6 June I shall raise the subject of my concern at the behaviour of the Prime Minister in relation to Westlands, the sending of F111s to Libya, and the Falklands war.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): I beg to give notice that on 6 June I shall draw attention to the extension of privatisation of local government services.

Mr. Clive Soley.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: With the leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the two motions relating to Statutory Instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Education Support Grants (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Value Added Tax (Handicapped Persons and Charities) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 530) be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c. — *[Mr. Durant.]*

Public Safety Information Bill

3.35 pm

Mr. Robin Squire (Hornchurch): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for greater public access to information on public safety matters; to give local authorities and their officers certain duties to bring such matters to the attention of the public in order to ensure greater public safety and for related purposes.

It seems appropriate that the issue of public safety should be raised at this time, as there has been much debate on safety in the past few weeks. A great deal of that debate has centred on the right to know about information concerning dangers and hazards which may threaten the public. My Bill deals with some of the less spectacular —if that is the right word—but nevertheless actual and potential dangers that confront people in their everyday lives. Although they are lesser dangers in one sense, in another they are equally important in that for many people they exist all the time.

The Bill would do three things. First, it would ensure that where there is a matter of public danger about which a local authority or any of its officers obtains information —public danger in that case is defined as danger in any place to which the public have access or any place which people occupy, except as freeholders or leaseholders—it must be brought to the attention of the next appropriate committee and discussed in public. The press and the public would thus be alerted and councillors would be seen to be deciding what action to take. That in itself would be a spur to action and would give the public considerable protection.

Secondly, any member of the public likely to be affected by the hazard would be told of the information that the council had. They would have a right to see the information and to copy it on payment of a reasonable copying fee.

Thirdly, the information must be placed on a public register, which would be available for inspection at all reasonable hours. That would enable the press and the public to obtain an overall picture of the amount of information on any one danger. That is a straghtforward measure, although inevitably it covers many areas. I am afraid that it is indicative of the dangers which people face these days.

Last year there was the Bradford City football tragedy. Councillor Farley, the former council leader, has been quoted as saying that, had the Bill been law, the fire would not have occurred with the resulting disaster. His reason for saying that is easy to understand. Both Bradford city council and West Yorkshire metropolitan county council had on their files a report which contained the words:

"The timber construction is a fire hazard . . . a carelessly discarded cigarette could give rise to a fire risk."

The report was filed. It never reached the agenda of any council committee or sub-committee. Had the Bill been law, the officers would have been under a duty to put the matter on the agenda and it would have been discussed in public. As Councillor Farley stated, and I fully accept, for such a debate the Strangers Gallery would have been packed and the press would have widely reported the danger. It is inconceivable that no remedial action would have been taken, in which case the fire and the tragedy would not have occurred.

For that reason, the Bradford city council has not only declared its support for the Bill but has started voluntarily to implement it as far as the current law allows, because it realises that the Local Government (Access to Information) Act would not change the situation. That act gives the public rights once items reach an agenda, but for public safety that may not happen, or it may happen all too late. All the examples I shall give to the House would not be affected by my 1985 Act. That is why I believe the new Bill is necessary.

A Department of the Environment survey reveals that, of 334,000 houses in multi-occupation — HMOs — in England and Wales, 38 per cent. lack the legal requirement on means of escape from fire — that is, 127,000 houses occupied by perhaps 750,000 people. Yet those people have no legal right to see the information held by local authorities on the dangers in which they live. On average, two people die from fire in such properties every day.

The Institution of Environmental Health Officers is concerned about the lack of rights for occupants of HMOs. Its working party urged last year that occupants should have the right to view copies of notices served on landlords. The reason is obvious. The notice may stress the lack of means of escape or some other danger, such as lethal wiring, or loose brickwork, but the occupiers who live in danger have no right to see it. My Bill would give effect to the institution's recommendations.

Thousands of homeless families spend months and even years in overcrowded and, for the ratepayer, enormously expensive bed and breakfast establishments. Often they lack proper fire safety certificates issued by the fire authority under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. Yet fire officers are prevented, by section 21 of that Act, from informing the residents of the bed and breakfast establishment, or even the local environmental health officers, of the dangers they have found on their inspections. Thus, millions of pounds of ratepayers' money is spent on placing the homeless in establishments that may well be dangerous while other servants of the ratepayers — fire officers — are prevented from telling them of the dangers in which they live.

Section 17 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974 gives county councils considerable information on the disposal of dangerous waste materials; yet, as an interdepartmental working party reported last month, the county council is

"under an obligation to keep records of these matters but there is no specific obligation to make these records public".

The public therefore may live, work or play in the vicinity of a dangerous waste site but they may never be told—until, of course, an accident happens. An EEC directive will shortly give councils additional duties regarding transfrontier shipment of hazardous wastes, but, as the Government working party reports,

"The Directive contains no mention of release of information".

Only last week, a *Which?* survey showed that many large stores lack adequate means of escape from fire, yet neither store owners nor fire authorities have any obligation to notify the public of the results of any surveys. Will it take another Bradford-type fire before there is a duty to inform the public? The Bill seeks to avoid that risk.

Many authorities collect considerable information on asbestos, but there is no obligation upon them to inform the public, or even those in immediate contact with the hazard. Hon. Members may remember the televised demolition, or would-be demolition, a few months ago by Hackney borough council of Northaird Point—the tower

[Mr. Robin Squire]

block that would not fall down and remained half standing after the explosion. During the preparation for the demolition, the council discovered that there was asbestos in the building, and, presumably relevant precautions were taken. However, on the Trowbridge estate there were seven other tower blocks of similar design, and the council was under no obligation to inform those tenants of the presence of asbestos. After pressure, information reached the tenants. But it cannot be right that that information reached them only through pressure. A better way of doing things is to give tenants the right to know.

I could give many other examples, but fortunately, as I am sure hon. Members would say, time does not allow me to do so. In promoting the Bill, I already have the support of 26 local authorities, seven of which have already said that they will implement the Bill voluntarily as far as they are able within the current law. Bradford city council has not only already done this, but its officers have drawn up a code of practice. The council expects no difficulties in implementing the Bill, but I am bound to say that, even if administrative difficulty is put forward as a reason for opposing the Bill—as it was by some as a reason for opposing my Bill last year—the saving of lives must take precedence over that reason. Friendly discussions have already been held with some local authority associations which have reservations but more on technical drafting points than on the principle.

I believe that my Bill is in line with Government thinking on matters of public safety. The interdepartmental working party on pollution matters to which I have referred recommended greater public access to information, following the Royal Commission recommendation

"that there should be a presumption in favour of unrestricted public access"

to information on pollution. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, in his preface to the working party report, stated:

"The Government accepts the broad thrust"

of the working party report.

A consideration and discussion document by the Health and Safety Commission has recommended greater access to health and safety information, following a statement in the House by my right hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk, Coastal (Mr. Gummer), the then Minister of State, Department of Employment, that

"the presumption must be in favour of openness rather than secrecy."

In a press release dated 4 March 1986, the Department of Employment announced that the Under-Secretary of State, Department of Employment,

"endorsed the Commission's proposals to make the public aware of the health and safety consequences of industrial activity"

I feel that my Bill, which deals purely with the local authority aspect of public safety, is in accordance with current thinking on these matters, I urge the House to give leave for it to be introduced.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Robin Squire, Sir Bernard Braine, Mr. Chris Smith, Mr. Allan Roberts, Mr. Geoff Lawler, Mr. Simon Hughes, Mr. Piers Merchant, Mr. Archie Kirkwood, Mr. Michael Hancock and Mr. Steve Norris.

PUBLIC SAFETY (INFORMATION)

Mr. Robin Squire accordingly presented a Bill to provide for greater public access to information on public safety matters; to give local authorities and their officers certain duties to bring such matters to the attention of the public in order to ensure greater public safety and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 165.]

Orders of the Day

Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call upon the Minister, I must tell the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

3.45 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Although legal aid in litigation has a long history in Scotland, it has existed in its modern form only since the implementation of the Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1949. One of the opponents of that Act suggested that its provisions were virtually the liquidation of the profession in Scotland, but the rapid expansion of the legal profession in Scotland has demonstrated how inaccurate that was. The 1949 Act was implemented initially for civil actions only and the problems of providing criminal legal aid were not resolved until the passage of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1963 which allowed its introduction in the following year, with an extension to district courts as recently as 1975. The availability of advice and assistance in matters not involving litigation was clarified in the Legal Advice and Assistance Act 1972. I have mentioned briefly the developments since 1949 to illustrate the piecemeal fashion in which the present system has evolved.

There have been continuing criticisms of certain aspects of the legal aid arrangements, some from their very inception. The Royal Commission on legal services in Scotland, in its report published in May 1980, highlighted some of these. The Government concluded that changes were necessary and eventually we issued a consultation paper, over a year ago now, seeking views on what these changes should be.

The Royal Commission, which contained a fair sprinkling of lawyers, supported the view that it was wrong in principle for the Law Society, as the governing body of the solicitors' profession, to be responsible for supervising the payment of public funds to its own members, as it could not assert effectively the interests of the public purse where these conflicted with those of the profession. The scope for conflict of interest was subsequently increased through the assumption by the Secretary of State under the Divorce Jurisdiction, Court Fees and Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1983 of responsibility for determination of legal aid fees.

In our consultation there was general support for the proposition that there should be established an independent board to administer most aspects of legal aid. This view was indeed reflected in the debate in the Scottish Grand Committee last July when the Opposition spokesman indicated that an independent body would be acceptable. Indeed, all those commenting attached great importance to the independence of the board, in particular in reaching decisions on legal aid applications. Although it was never the intention that the Secretary of State should be involved in such decisions, we have made it clear on the face of the Bill in clause 3(4) that any guidance given by the Secretary of State shall not affect the consideration or disposal of applications.

I am also certain that a board containing members with the knowledge or experience referred to in clause 1(4) covering business, finance, information technology, management and administration, and consumer and social affairs as well as law and court procedures, will be better qualified to administer the legal aid arrangements than a body consisting entirely or predominantly of lawyers. It is important that there should be one body with express responsibility for the administration of legal aid and for reviewing its operation. In a sense, we are not so much establishing a new non-departmental public body to administer legal aid as changing the nature of an existing body and strengthening its management. The staff carrying out the functions will be broadly the same as those carrying them out at present.

While some improvements in administrative arrangements have been made in recent years, I am convinced that there is considerable scope and a real need for further rationalisation. The need stems in part from the vast expansion of legal aid expenditure in recent years. If administrative costs are left out of account, net expenditure on legal aid has increased from £7·8 million in 1978-79 to £38·5 million in 1985-86, an increase of over 390 per cent. compared with an increase in the retail price index of about 90 per cent. over the corresponding period. We simply do not know enough about the reasons for this expansion, especially in relation to criminal legal aid. One of the main defects of the present arrangements is the absence of management information to assist in the determination of how effectively and efficiently the system is operating and where changes should be made. There is also a very strong case for making better use of suitable management and other systems, including those relevant to public sector administration and accounting. I do not think that anyone could reasonably object to changes designed to secure that legal aid is available where it is needed and that it represents, and can be seen to represent, value for the increasingly large amounts of taxpayers' money expended on it.

The board will, of course, be taking over not only the various responsibilities of the Law Society and its legal aid central committee, but also those of the Scottish Home and Health Department in relation to the assessment of financial eligibility for civil legal aid. This will result, for the first time, in the same body considering both the general merits and the financial eligibility of applications for civil legal aid.

The board will also assume from the courts responsibility for dealing with applications for legal aid in summary, but not solemn, criminal cases. The inconsistency in the application of the various criteria for the award of legal aid, notably interests of justice and undue financial hardship, has been the subject of continuous criticism since criminal legal aid was introduced. The Royal Commission echoed this criticism and it has been repeated since then. In its 1983-84 annual report on the Scottish legal aid scheme, the legal aid central committee suggested that the procedure for granting criminal legal aid should be altered in the interests of uniformity, justice and possible economy. Such reservations as have been expressed about the arrangements envisaged under the Bill have tended to centre not on the transfer of responsibility designed to ensure greater

[Mr. John MacKay]

consistency but on whether the new arrangements can be introduced without materially increasing delays in court proceedings. All concerned are anxious to avoid delay wherever practicable.

The Bill in fact provides for the automatic availability of legal aid in the most urgent cases and I am satisfied that it will be possible to devise arrangements designed to limit to a minimum any delays in the consideration of applications. This is one of the matters to which special attention will be given by the management consultants whom I have recently appointed. I should perhaps emphasise that they will be advising on the administrative arrangements and not on policy questions.

Another all too valid criticism of the legal aid arrangements is the difficulty of finding a way through the maze of primary and secondary legislation. The Bill seeks to remedy this by adopting a clearer and more systematic approach. It deals separately with administration, with advice and assistance, with civil legal aid, with criminal legal aid and other forms of legal aid, and makes separate provision for each category. The consolidation of the primary legislation will serve to make it more intelligible. For example, the text of section 1 of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967 has been amended in previous legislation in nine different ways. The Bill also provides for a reduction in the number of types of secondary legislation through the abolition of schemes which account for much of the existing corpus of secondary legislation. These will, to a significant extent, be replaced by regulations. This has led to some criticism which I regard as unfair. We are replacing schemes which are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny by regulations which are.

I have referred to the major criticisms of the present arrangements and what might be done to meet them. Hon. Members will note that much of the Bill re-enacts existing legislation in a clearer form and that—criminal legal aid apart — it changes the administration rather than the substance of legal aid services. It may be helpful to the House if I outline the main new provisions in the Bill and how we envisage that arrangements might operate in future.

Clause 1 provides for the establishment of the Scottish Legal Aid Board which will unite most aspects of legal aid. I am confident that the combination of the various responsibilities in one body will lead to significant improvements in the administration in Scotland by overcoming the present fragmentation. I have already referred to the knowledge and experience which it is desirable that the board should have and we are inviting suggestions for board members from the Law Society, the Faculty of Advocates, the Scottish Consumer Council, the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities. When my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State comes to make the appointments, the deciding factors will be personal qualities and experience rather than representation of particular interests.

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): Can my hon. Friend advise us of the sort of salaries that the 30 members of that wonderful board are likely to receive?

Mr. MacKay: I am not sure whether my hon. and learned Friend asks that question out of interest or disinterest. However, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland will give the figures if we come to any conclusion on the matter at the end of the debate.

As to the staff of the board, personnel at present engaged on legal aid work will have the opportunity to transfer and the appropriate safeguards are set out in schedule 1. Part I and schedule 1 which relate to the establishment, functions and operations of the board, including its financial duties, are broadly in line with the provisions for other non-departmental public bodies.

Part II covers advice and assistance, and part III civil legal aid. Apart from the transfer of supervisory responsibility to the board there are few changes of substance.

I now turn to part IV which deals with criminal legal aid, and I should take the opportunity to explain how we propose to introduce assistance by way of representation for certain criminal cases.

The arrangements for criminal legal aid in the more serious cases dealt with under solemn procedure will remain essentially unchanged. The responsibility for considering applications will continue to rest with the courts. As at present, the courts will have to consider the financial criterion of whether undue hardship will be caused to the accused or his dependants, but not whether the award of legal aid will be in the interests of justice.

As for summary cases, there have always been doubts as to how far the courts which try cases should be involved in the award or refusal of legal aid on interests of justice grounds. There is accordingly a good case for transferring responsibility from the courts. Indeed, my understanding is that this will be welcomed by many sheriffs. As I have mentioned, the main concern is that this might in some instances result in delay in court business. This is why in developing our proposals we are paying special attention to the need to reduce to a minimum the time taken for the submission and consideration of applications. It should be practicable for the board to deal with urgent applications in a matter of days and other applications within a time scale that should not materially delay court proceedings.

Mr. Dick Douglas (Dunfermline, West): I confess that I am not an expert in these matters, but representations have been made, particularly during the miners' strike, about the anomalies in the granting of legal aid. May I take it that there will be a more uniform standard in Scotland and that legal aid will be granted more expeditiously?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Gentleman has drawn attention to something that has been raised before. He is right to suggest that, if consideration of granting legal aid in summary cases is taken away from individual courts and given to this body, there is every possibility that the granting of applications will be done on a more uniform basis throughout Scotland. Some of the criticisms of Opposition Members will then no longer be valid.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): We all have at least some respect for the principle of consistency. The figures were given by the Lord Advocate in the House of Lords, so that the Minister will be aware that the granting of legal aid for summary cases in the sheriff courts varies from a 90 per cent. to 58 per cent. success rate. Has the Minister formed a view about what the success rate will be under the new system?

Mr. MacKay: The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) rightly draws attention to the variations. The success rate is sometimes over 90 per cent. I should not like to form a view because that will be a matter for the board to decide. It will have to try to impose a uniform system throughout Scotland. Clearly the rate will be between 60 per cent. and 90 per cent.—that is logical.

The hon. Member for Garscadden appears to agree that variations of 60 per cent. to over 90 per cent. show that we should have a more uniform system. The board's independence is important. If I said that the rate would be 80 per cent. or 72 per cent. hon. Members would immediately say that I was preordaining what the board should do. I am not doing that. I would expect something between the two extremes.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): The Minister refers to the time that the board might take to determine applications. Has he considered what may happen if a foreign skipper is brought into Orkney or to the Western Isles because of a contravention of a sea fisheries regulation? His catch might be left rotting on the quayside. How quickly could that skipper's application for legal aid be settled?

Mr. MacKay: I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman's premise is right, because means have to be taken into account. I am not sure whether a foreign skipper with a large catch would be able to apply for legal aid. That is a bad example, but the hon. Gentleman makes a reasonable point. We must ensure that legal aid decisions are given quickly. We shall be looking to the board and the management consultants to find a way of administrating the scheme so that no undue delay is involved.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): I am sorry to involve myself in Caledonian matters, but what would happen to an Everton supporter who had been to watch Celtic playing and it was alleged that to finance that expedition he had robbed or burgled in Glasgow and he was arrested? According to the Minister, the board would deal with the matter in days. What would we do with that Everton supporter? Would we lock him up during those few days or would the matter be dealt with as it would be in England where a duty solicitor would appear for him —or is the solicitor supposed to do the job for nothing?

Mr. MacKay: My hon. Friend intervenes at the right moment because I was about to deal with the question of people in custody. People in custody will receive automatic legal aid until the conclusion of the first diet at which a plea of guilty or not guilty is tendered. In cases where the accused is in custody and pleads guilty, he will be entitled to automatic legal aid up to the final disposal of his case. Where the accused remains in custody after a not guilty plea at the first diet, he will be entitled to receive legal aid from the time he submits an application until the application has been determined. This should help to avoid delay in the preparation of cases.

Mr. Fairbairn: That is not in the Bill. How are we supposed to know that that is the idea?

Mr. MacKay: I am always cautious about crossing swords with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), but I draw his attention to clause 22 in which I hope he may find something that will help him.

As at present, solicitors will be able to provide advice and assistance to those charged with an offence. Where an accused being dealt with under summary proceedings is not in custody, the intention is that criminal legal aid should be available in general after the accused has pled not guilty at the first diet. For other proceedings we are proposing to introduce by regulations made under clause 9, assistance by way of representation — inelegantly described as ABWOR. Where the accused pleads guilty at the first diet he will receive ABWOR, if certain requirements are met up to the final disposal of the case. The intention is that the decision whether ABWOR should be provided should rest, initially at least, with the solicitor who will have to satisfy himself that the applicant is financially eligible and that the provision of ABWOR is justified in accordance with prescribed criteria. These criteria are likely to be related to the factors taken into account in determining whether the interests of justice criterion is met, insofar as they are relevant in the case of a guilty plea.

Mr. Fairbairn: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Minister referred me to clause 2 of the Bill——

Mr. MacKay: Clause 22.

Mr. Fairbairn: I am sorry, I must have misheard, but that is no better.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman had better work it out and come back.

Mr. MacKay: While the decision will rest with the individual solicitor, he will require to obtain the approval of the board in any case where he wishes to exceed the prescribed financial limit, as for other advice and assistance cases.

Those accused who plead not guilty at the first diet will, after any necessary consultation with their solicitor, make their applications to the board on a form which will in effect require the applicant to provide information designed to show that the relevant criteria are met — notably those relating to the interests of justice and undue financial hardship. Consideration of interests of justice where a legal opinion is required will be undertaken either by the board's legal staff or, more probably, referred to a reporter—a solicitor in private practice—for his view. The board will issue its decision in the light of any recommendation on interests of justice and of its own consideration of the financial factors. We shall be bringing forward in Committee an amendment to clause 24 to spell out factors to be taken into account in considering whether the interests of justice criterion is met. The granting of legal aid is not dependent on the accused person's criminal record.

Mr. Porter: Why is a not guilty plea treated as rather more important than a plea in mitigation of a guilty plea, which appears to be of significance in the Bill? That has not been my experience over 20 years. I should have thought that pleas in mitigation by people who have pleaded guilty are as important, if not more important, than pleas of not guilty.

Mr. MacKay: I have already dealt with that matter in the proposals for ABWOR. That deals adequately with those who plead guilty.

[Mr. MacKay]

Part V deals with the employment of solicitors by the board. It is largely based on part II of the Legal Advice and Assistance Act 1972 which has never been brought into operation. Nor is it the intention that part V should be brought into operation at an early stage, although it is desirable to retain this reserve power to supplement legal aid arrangements if this should be required some time in the future.

The miscellaneous provisions in part VI are again largely based upon those in existing legislation – for example, those covering the arrangements for legal aid in proceedings arising out of children's hearings and in contempt of court cases, those setting out the responsibilities of solicitors and counsel and powers to regulate procedure, fees and other matters.

While I have not covered all the provisions in the Bill, I trust that the House will agree that it was right to concentrate on the major changes. I am confident that the House will agree with the main aims of these changes – to achieve greater consistency in the award of legal aid to increase efficiency, effectiveness and economy in the system, and to eliminate the possibility of abuse.

Although I have no doubt that hon. Members will wish to examine certain provisions of the Bill in greater detail in Committee, I very much hope that they will give general support to measures which are designed to improve materially the legal aid arrangements in Scotland. I accordingly commend the Bill to the House.

4.10 pm

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"This House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which does not adequately safeguard the independence of the proposed Scottish Legal Aid Board, provides no satisfactory appeal procedure for an applicant refused legal aid; and offers no effective guarantee that the right of the individual citizen to legal representation in the civil and criminal courts will not be eroded under the Government's policy of public expenditure restraint by the use of the powers given to the Secretary of State for Scotland to regulate such matters by order."

Even the most unpromising Scottish debates always turn out to be diverting in the event. This debate is improving at the sight of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary promising us ABWOR from SLAB. I have every sympathy with the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) who seems to be having some difficulty with his two times table. I know that there are occasions when all of us see double, but on this occasion he seems to be seeing single. That must be disconcerting.

I start by lodging something of a muted protest. I think that the Minister would agree that the time for the debate is short. We are being invited to dispose of an important Second Reading debate in some haste. I recognise that one reason for that is the debate on shipbuilding. I certainly welcome the fact that there is to be discussion of the serious and tragic consequences of the announcement by British Shipbuilders. However, I certainly do not welcome the fact that this debate is being telescoped into about three hours. Many of my colleagues who would have liked to be here are engaged with constituents. In fact, a group of stewards are down from my constituency. Obviously I have to be present for the debate, otherwise I would be in the same position. I know that protests were made about that, but they were blocked or ignored and the word came back that the Government felt that they might not be able to sustain a full debate on this matter. That was the rumour. I sympathise with them. I know that in many areas of Scotland Conservatives are not thick on the ground. They are about as common as a breeding colony of great auks.

We work in rather special circumstances in the House. Conservatives are more plentiful and they are artificially protected, at least until the next election. I should have hoped that there would be enough to sustain a full —

Mr. Porter: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there any chance of the hon. Gentleman getting to the content of the Bill?

Mr. Dewar: All I can say is that I have read the Bill, as the hon. Gentleman may discover. That is certainly more than he has done, judging from his earlier intervention.

I regret that we do not have more time. I am sure that the Minister will accept that I regret the fact that the Secretary of State for Scotland will not be with us during the debate. I understand that he is in Scotland. It may be that he is looking for Tory supporters and in that case, like Captain Oates, he may be some time. This is an important piece of legislation and it is unfortunate that the Secretary of State has not decided to take part in the discussion of one of the few Bills that is part of the Government's Scottish programme for this Session.

Before I turn to the merits of the measure, I should declare an interest. I am still a partner in a Glasgow firm of solicitors which, although it has a wide and varied practice, undertakes a certain amount of legal aid work. I am also, of course, as are other right hon. and hon. Members, a member of the Law Society of Scotland. Therefore, I have at least an indirect interest in legal aid in Scotland and, who knows, at some future date I may have a direct interest.

The Minister has represented the Bill as a sensible reorganisation and has predictably prayed in aid the Royal Commission on legal services in Scotland chaired by Lord Hughes. Although I accept the case for the independent Legal Aid Board, I do not think that it is an animal which is in any way related to the Legal Services Commission proposed in the report of the Royal Commission. I think that anyone who has read or remembers that report will agree. Of course, there is a case for making sure that there is no conflict of interest or, perhaps more accurately, apparent conflict of interest. That should always be avoided.

I think that it is a little bit of an anomaly that the Law Society of Scotland should have been in sole charge of the administration of legal aid when its own members so clearly had a direct interest in how that duty was discharged. I hasten to say that, not against the background of any criticism of the Law Society but merely because I believe that independence must be a public and visible virtue. I accept that, against that background, there is an argument for the transfer of the responsibility to an independent Legal Aid Board for Scotland. Therefore, I give my broad support to that key proposal, which I accept is the foundation of the Bill.

Having said that, I must remind the House that we have some doubts about how the change is being introduced and what lies behind the rather spare outline of reform that

appears in the legislation. The reasoned amendment reflects our caution and our substantial reservations on a number of points. I intend to invite my right hon. and hon. Friends to divide on the reasoned amendment, although not on Second Reading, at the end of the debate.

I shall try to run through my doubts rather quickly. This is very much an enabling Bill. It is only a sketch. I think that it is an example of a dangerous trend whereby the House delegates an enormous amount of power to Ministers. There are wide areas in the legislation which will have to be defined by administrative order and it is possible that if the Minister was so minded he could do what he likes when he likes, irrespective of opinion from other interested parties and bodies. I know that there is a check of parliamentary scrutiny but in the world in which we operate, one and a half hours, often squeezed in after 10 o'clock, with no prospect of amendment, is not an adequate or important safeguard. We would be left with a brief and, no doubt, symbolic outbreak of lamentation from the Opposition. We would become professional mourners, no more than that, if the Minister abuses the power that is proposed in the legislation.

I suspect that there will be widespread support for my next point, even from Conservative Members. We do not know a great deal about how this will work. I keep asking the most fundamental questions of colleagues who have been involved in negotiations and discussions with the Government, and they say "We do not know the answer." It is bad to ask us to put legislation on the statute book when we do not know about the nuts and bolts and have no real vision of what will happen. I hope that the Minister will be able to make draft regulations available either during or before the Committee stage so that those hon. Members who are engaged in the detailed consideration of the Bill are in a happier position than we are now.

The measure has been through the House of Lords and perhaps I could take a moment to pay a tribute to the work that was done by some of my colleagues. Lord Morton of Shuna was making his debut on the Front Bench on a law reform Bill. His expertise is certainly of great help to me. Lord Wheatley has retired from the rarefied atmosphere of the courts. We certainly value his views on these matters, whatever other people may think. The Government have had a good deal of time to prepare the regulations. I do not think that it is unreasonable at least to see drafts at this stage.

I want to raise one or two points, if only to give the Minister notice that they will almost certainly come up in Committee. I do not think that he will be surprised by them. We are proposing to take the granting of criminal legal aid from the courts. I think that I understood this from the Minister's speech, but I want to confirm that it is proposed that there should be a local solicitor who will get the application as the delegated man from the Legal Aid Board and, presumably, he will take the initial decision as to whether legal aid should be granted. Perhaps I have an interest as someone who used to work professionally with the children's panel system, but I am not sure that the term "reporter", which the Minister used and which is often used, is the happiest. That may be a small point to which some further thought could be given.

I would still put in a plea to the Minister—again I think that I will have widespread support—that there should be a residual power to the court to grant legal aid in criminal cases. It will, of course, exist for a plea in mitigation if the court is thinking of a sentence of imprisonment and it will exist in solemn procedures where the courts will retain their present primacy of position. It is possible, without any great ingenuity, to imagine many cases in which circumstances may arise which would not be known to the reporter—if that is his term—when he initially considers the application but in which there might apparently be a pressing need for representation at the trial. It would be wrong if the sheriff could not deal with such an emergency.

The applicant may have a handicap, either a speech or hearing defect. Perhaps the witnesses are children and there are special difficulties about young children. It might become evident to the sheriff that it was in the interests of justice that legal aid should be granted. As I understand it—and I am open to correction—that power would not exist as the Bill is presently drafted. The Minister should consider that omission.

I hope that in the Minister's reply we shall hear something about the negotiations and discussions that have taken place between the justices of the peace. I know that they were looking for a departure from the principle of the Bill and I suspect that the Minister will not be prepared to make that change. The justices of the peace wanted the magistrates to continue to be the main granters of legal aid in district courts. I should be interested to know what happened in the discussions and whether any accommodation or agreement was reached with that important group.

The Opposition are keen to see the definition of the interests of justice. I have seen many ingenious shots at defining the interests of justice. We will want to consider that closely in Committee and it is important that those Members who will be members of the Committee should have an early opportunity to consider the Government's attempt at defining what some would consider to be the indefinable.

I recognise the case for consistency of approach in courts over the granting of legal aid. I accept the point about the variations. The 90 per cent. that I mentioned in my intervention is the all-Scottish figure. The Lord Advocate mentioned variations between 99 per cent. and 58 per cent. Anyone who was aware of the proper anxieties that existed during the miners' strike will know that the Opposition have sympathy with the idea of that variation and that the evident injustices that arose during the miners' strike, based upon geographical charts, should not be tolerated.

A consistent approach must depend on a right of appeal; I stress that point very strongly. In civil legal aid, as the Bill is presently drawn—again, I am open to correction—the right of appeal will be lost. At present, someone seeking aid who is refused by the local committee can go to the central committee. There is no such provision, as I understand it, in the Bill as drafted. That provision should be restored and extended. All of us have experienced cases where a sheriff or, under the new proposals, the reporter, has refused legal aid and the constituent has gone to his Member of Parliament. Many of us have felt that such people have had a raw deal, that the person is at risk, that the charge is a serious one and that the person involved will find it very difficult to finance his defence.

If we are to change the position, it is important that we should include a right of appeal. That should be to an independent body, but if that is too ambitious there should be a right of appeal to the legal aid board, or some sub-committee of that board. There should be an internal

[Mr. Dewar]

review from the reporter's decision. That would strengthen the liberties of the subject and would be an important improvement. We will push that point hard in Committee.

I believe that the Committee stage will be interesting. Although I might be accused of putting forward a vested interest, there will be an argument about whether the Bill should contain a commitment of fair and reasonable remuneration. That has been strongly resisted by Ministers. I would not have thought that fair and reasonable remuneration was a challenging concept. However, the adventures of Lord Hailsham in courts in other parts of the world, and the possible arrival of the applied right to consultation, have sent a shiver down the Department's collective spine. The Opposition will want to probe that point.

It is universally accepted that there is a need to ensure the independence of the board. I welcome the concessions that have been made about membership. As I understand it, the Minister went a little further in his speech today when he said that there would be direct consultation with the Law Society, the Faculty of Advocates and other institutions. We will want to consider the Minister's words to decide whether that formula is satisfactory. I hope that the appointments, and particularly that of chairman, whatever the salary, will not simply be a matter of plucking someone from the top of the queue of the departmental list of the great, the good and the simply deserving. That is an important matter, and I hope that the Minister will give careful attention to those appointments.

In Committee we will have to take a hard look at clause 3(4), to which the Minister referred. The clause states:

"The Board shall have regard . . . to such guidance as may from time to time be given by the Secretary of State."

The Minister went on proudly to say that there is a proviso to that and that that will not prejudice the consideration of an application. I take the Minister's point. However, we are worried that the guidance that may be laid down by Ministers will prevent many people and certain classes of people from making applications. If there are no applications to consider, because people are ineligible, it is little consolation to say that applications should not be prejudiced by that guidance.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak, but I have several other matters to which I shall refer in passing. They are of a general nature, but they are important. The Minister may believe that my colleagues and, may be said, I myself, take an unduly suspicious and grudging view in our approach to this legislation. I recognise that many of the powers are contained in the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967. However, we must decide whether we can trust the Government and their attitude on these matters. I am not making a personal judgment about the Minister; I am talking about the policy which he must implement. Like all junior Ministers, he receives messages from on high. The policy he must follow has some dangerous overtones.

There should be an adequate and comprehensive legal service and any citizen who has a legitimate interest to pursue or who is at risk in the courts should genuinely be able to promote his own defence or representation. If he is not able to do that, there should be the provision for him to do so. That is the bottom line. I want to be sure, during the remaining stages of the Bill, that the Government share that priority.

There have been some worrying signs and there is an atmosphere of hostility about legal aid. There has been talk of escalating costs, about value for money and the need for control. In its most perjorative form, it would seem that, when talking about legal aid administration, the Minister was addressing himself to local government in Scotland. I cannot think of a more damaging way to express that.

I have an uneasy feeling that the reorganisation might be an excuse to cut expenditure and put the right to representation at hazard. I concede immediately that there is no doubt that there has been a massive increase in legal aid costs. The Minister quoted the figures, and his are more up to date than mine. I have the figures for 1979-80 and 1983-84. Criminal legal aid costs rose between those years from £5·7 million to £18 million and civil legal aid rose from £3·9 million to £13·4 million.

I accept that those are formidable figures. However, they must be put into perspective. When we consider the figure of £18 million for criminal legal aid in 1983-84, it is worth remembering that the procurator fiscal service Crown office in that year cost more than £11 million. That is also a large sum, but no one grudges it. I am sure that only a small proportion of that figure was taken up by the activities of the Solicitor-General.

As one of my hon. Friends has said, legal aid is bound to be on a rising curve as crime increases. I will not get into a slanging match about who is responsible for that. However, on the same time scale of 1979-85, there has been a 36 per cent. increase in crimes reported to the police in Scotland. That is bound to work its way through into legal aid costs. The applications over four years rose from 43,077 to 68,402. Court appearances have risen and the prison population has increased and that will have an impact upon legal aid requirements. Sometimes we quote the legal aid figures in a vacuum and that can create an alarmist picture of what is a genuine problem but is explicable and perhaps inevitable in many ways.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman says that there has been an increase in crime of 36 per cent.—my figure is 40 per cent.—over the past six years. Surely legal aid cases should similarly have gone up by 40 per cent.

Mr. Dewar: No. That is too simplistic. We could argue the matter at length, but I am merely putting the matter in a broader context.

Mr. John MacKay: I appreciate some of the points that the hon. Gentleman is making, but between 1978-79 and 1984-85 the number of people assisted in criminal proceedings rose from 84,000 to 96,000—a 14 per cent. rise, which is not on the sort of scale that the hon. Gentleman was surmising from the crime figures.

Mr. Dewar: I was putting the figures in context and saying that there are factors that must be given weight. I accept that there is a problem and I am not trying to sweep it under the table. The Minister and I may disagree about the weight to be given to various factors, but we are all concerned about the same matter.

The argument is almost always about criminal legal aid, but I find the civil legal aid figures a great deal more alarming. Those costs have increased from £3·9 million to £13·4 million in four years. The cost per case rose from £298 to £615. The rise per head—if that is the right term—on the civil side, is very much higher, and a

number of anxieties follow from that fact. People of modest means faced with a legal aid contribution of £500 or £600 do not know how to meet that cost.

There is a genuine and sharp cause for anxiety about the cost of litigation, a wider issue, which we cannot discuss now but which we should note. Criminal courts receive considerable public scrutiny but what happens in the more genteel and labyrinthine passages of civil litigation sometimes escapes attention.

No one wants to ignore the problem of cost, but the answer is not to reach for the Treasury axe. That would put liberties at risk. We must have a more subtle and graded approach.

We ought to consider court proceedings and methods of charging fees as well as the level of fees. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross has taken a particular interest in procedure matters and I have never been convinced by the argument of the Law Society, of which I am a member, that there is no profit in looking at English experience on the availability of statements. A number of such areas might merit continuing study.

I hope that our worries are not justified, because I recognise that the Bill will reach the statute book. Our worries have been reinforced by the Minister's consultation paper, in which some fairly extraordinary suggestions were canvassed about the number of times that someone had received legal aid in the past being a consideration in whether he should be granted legal aid in the present and about attempts being made to gauge the likely penalty in a case and to weigh its seriousness against the cost to public funds. Some of those suggestions were marks that were set up to be knocked down, but they caused anxiety and I do not believe that we have been too suspicious in mentioning them.

The Legal Advice and Assistance (Financial Conditions) Regulations 1986 provide that many people, particularly those in need, should be disqualified from benefiting from the legal aid advice and assistance scheme. That action was taken almost by administrative fiat. The Government said that, when income was being assessed, the offset for dependants should be reduced from 50 per cent. of the supplementary benefit scale to 25 per cent. The certain result of that is that very many people, often from the poorest groups in society, will be deprived of contact with a solicitor or other legal advice when they are considering whether they have a defence or a claim that should be pursued.

The Government's decision was petty and mistaken. It was penny-pinching of the worst sort and will cost a considerable price. It will bring into Scotland and other parts of the United Kingdom unmet need with a vengence. If that is the shape of things to come, our suspicious scepticism of some of the proposals on the table is justified.

I have made a long speech, and perhaps I am compensating myself for not serving on the Standing Committee. However, I think that the length of my speech has been justified, because this is an important subject and the Government have proposed a major reform.

The key is the attitude of Ministers and the Government. The Bill is a neutral framework and we must examine what the Government intend to do. One argument in the consultative document that was never knocked down and was the basis of the Minister's approach to legal aid was deeply mistaken and I hope that it will not taint his view of how matters should develop. It was the argument that legal aid

> "should permit those of insufficient means the same opportunity to pursue or defend their rights as is available to those of moderate rather than abundant means. It should not in general be available in a case which would not be pursued by a person of moderate means."

The trouble is that we are reaching the stage when many good cases cannot be pursued by a man of moderate means, because of the cost of litigation. The cost of proving oneself innocent in a criminal court, when the system provides no recompense to a person who is acquitted, is a serious matter which is not addressed in the Bill.

If the consultation paper approach to legal aid is carried through, it will have serious consequences. Rights will not be enforced, because it will be too expensive to enforce them, and courts will be faced with many people who are unrepresented. That will be bad for justice, because a person who is not represented does not put forward a proper defence. It would be even worse if more people pleaded guilty and paid the fine or served the sentence of 30 days as the line of least resistance, because the prospect of raising £300 or £400 for their defence was beyond their energy or beyond their means.

The Lord Advocate said in the House on 20 February that there were discrepancies. He quoted the figures and said that people were not receiving what they might obtain elsewhere. That is obviously true in the sheriff courts where there are 60 per cent. success rates for legal aid applications. The Lord Advocate said that somewhere there had been injustice. I agree with him. The problem is how to cure the injustice. It is implied that we must move one way or the other, and it is not good enough to say that we shall stand in the middle and that there will be an arbitrary figure to which the legal aid board will have to conform, irrespective of the circumstances.

It is important that we accept that legal aid is demand-led and that the legal aid board or its reporters should have the right to use their judgment. That is not a frivolous point. The section on the financial effects of the Bill includes a phrase that is not reassuring. It says:

> "greater consistency in the award and refusal of legal aid may result in savings."

The word used is "may", but the person who wrote that is clearly hoping that by getting greater consistency we shall save money. That suggests that there is an assumption that legal aid will be refused to a large number of people who would receive it at present.

Mr. McQuarrie: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Dewar: No; I am just finishing.

If legal aid is to be refused to more people, our suspicions are justified and the right to representation is in danger. It is fundamental to freedom that those at hazard in the courts and from the complexities of our legal system should receive the aid that their situation deserves. We are determined to ensure that everything that we do throughout the remaining stages of the Bill is aimed at achieving that end.

4.39 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): I congratulate the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) on his speech. I regret that both time and,

[Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn]

probably, his interest prevented him from putting many matters more robustly, but he has done the House and Scotland a service by raising the issues that he mentioned.

No doubt I, too, should declare an interest, which is that, when instructed by the hon. Member for Garscadden and his partners and others, I have been the recipient on occasion of legal aid funds. In mitigation, I am bound to say that whereas criminal legal aid was authorised for Scotland and England in 1949, it was not effective in Scotland for 11 years, until 1960, and I defended many people for capital murder for the sum that one then received of £1·98 travelling allowance. It cannot be claimed that anything that I say on this matter is inspired by my interest in the fees that I might have received.

There has been a tradition in Scotland since King James V passed his Act in 1424 that

"sic a man"—

speaking of a man accused by the Crown—

"shall have a wyse and lyl advocate to pled his cause."

The honourable tradition of Scotland is that no man goes without the best lawyer, whatever charge is made against him, presuming as we do his innocence. If the Crown is to be represented by a lawyer, as it is in Scotland, even on the most minor occasion, it is right that the accused man, whose innocence is presumed, should also be entitled to be defended by a lawyer.

I was not elected at the last election to enlarge the number of quangos. I am against quangos. It was argued by the hon. Member for Garscadden that the Law Society appeared to be offending against the great principle of natural law, that it is judex in sua re—judge in its own cause—in granting legal aid. That is not a proven case, and I have not heard any complaint about it. The Law Society and those who serve on it have conducted the granting of legal aid with judgment, parsimony and humanity.

I have never heard complaints about the Law Society's administration of the legal aid fund. I want to address my remarks to the Prime Minister, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) is listening and will transmit them to the Prime Minister, because I know her views on these matters. We are setting up a new quango. Any hon. Member who wishes to find out about the motivation of a quango will find that it is inadvertently included in the introduction, the explanatory note as it was called, to the Bill. Perhaps it should be called the indiscreet note. It says on page IV:

"The Bill should reduce the number of staff working in the Scottish Office by about 50."

No doubt the permanent secretary will be able to say, "Prime Minister, I am a great guy. I have decreased my staff by 50."

The Bill goes on to say:

"These posts, and around 220 Law Society posts will be transferred to the Board"—

that is not our board, so we will not accept responsibility for adding 270 people to the Civil Service, and no doubt somebody will be rewarded for that enlargement—

"which will initially employ about 300 staff including those transferred."

I understood that the Government were supposed to be reducing numbers in the Civil Service, but by a complete fraud they have managed to increase the number from 220 in the Law Society to 300 extra civil servants.

I want to know from the Minister what salaries these people will be paid. It is all very well for the hon. Member for Garscadden to say that it is marvellous that there will be a toffee-apple merchant and a consumer and a one-armed bandit on this board because that will be awfully fair. I have never held the view that we should have quangos on which everybody who is anybody or nothing is able to have a voice. I do not regard that as a sane way of running the granting or refusing of legal aid. I can say who the 30 people on the board will be: they will be the bored. They will get the jobs and some of them will probably receive the rises recommended in the top people's salary review. They will be the people deciding whether Mrs. Pennysmith, who is charged with stealing a postal order worth 5p, should get legal aid. I find that offensive and absurd.

I was not elected to pass legislation which has no meaning and which is not for the decision of this House, but merely says that we will set up a game of draughts and the Secretary of State — whether he is a Socialist Secretary of State, God help us, or an alliance one, which is a fantasy anyway, or a Conservative Secretary of State —will invent the rules. He will tell us whether all the draughts will be of the same colour, whether there will be only seven squares or whether the board will be triangular. That is what the Bill will allow, because it attempts to set up a statute which any person who understands English and has the intelligence required to win Mastermind could not understand. It sets up a situation in which 23 subsidiary opportunities of regulation are supplied by the Secretary of State.

I do not know who the Secretary of State will be, but whoever he is, whether he is a Labour, Tory or alliance Secretary of State, he will not write the regulations. They will pass across his desk with a whisper of wind and then come to the House. At 11 o'clock at night, after we have been voting on whether we should have bombed Libya, they will pass through the House without notice.

The questions raised in the Bill are fundamental, because the Bill says that the lawyers will get fair and reasonable remuneration. What is fair and reasonable? I understand that the words fair and reasonable are used. Let us assume that it is defeated lawyers who define a reasonable man, perhaps a man on the top deck of a Clapham omnibus, which does not help us in Scotland. I have always taken the view that the phrase "beyond reasonable doubt" is an amazing concept in the law of Scotland, where we have majority verdicts. If eight people think the chap is innocent, or if seven think he is guilty, or the other way round, I should have thought that that was a fair doubt.

Mr. John MacKay: My hon. and learned Friend made a point about fair and reasonable remuneration. Where is that in the Bill?

Mr. Fairbairn: If it is not in the Bill, why not? That is the point that I am making, and I am thrilled to know that, having slowly dug a little trench, the Minister fell into it.

As the hon. Member for Garscadden said, there may be many occasions in a summary trial when the grant of legal aid ought to be immediate. Difficult points of law or evidence may arise, and if the sheriff must then go to the board—given that it is a bureaucracy, and particularly if there are 30 more members than at present all subject to these huge salaries—it will be no more than a farce.

One of the great traditions in Scotland is that a man in custody on a summary charge must be tried within 40 days. How many of those days will be taken up while this wretched board considers whether legal aid should be granted before those who represent the person can investigate the crime or know that they will be paid for doing so?

Clause 22 appears to contradict what I have said, but as the hon. Member for Garscadden said, the concept is that this will save money. How will it do so? When the concept of cash and the interests of justice come into conflict, in which way will this glorious universally representative board jump? We need only look at clause 3(4), which states:

"The Board shall have regard, in the exercise of its functions, to such guidance"—

it sounds like a meeting of Jehovah's Witnesses—

"as may from time to time be given by the Secretary of State; but such guidance shall not affect the consideration or disposal of applications for legal aid or advice and assistance."

What will the guidance be about? Will it say, "You are only allowed to talk in turn; you will have to have green hair when you turn up at board meetings, but it will not affect your decision."?

The Bill is a bluff that says nothing comprehensible to the sensible person. It is not addressed to principle. Its purpose is to save money on the legal aid scheme.

Mr. Donald Stewart (Western Isles): Cuts again.

Mr. Fairbairn: It is not cuts again. It is a wrong approach to a correct attitude, which is how to save public money being wrongly spent on lawyers. I can tell the House how to do so, but the last way in which I would do it is to do what is proposed in the Bill. If legal aid was given to everyone who applied for it, and if we cut the leash of all lawyers and they ran for ever, be it in respect of planning inquiries or whatever, the money spent on the administration that the Bill introduces would be saved and legal aid would cost less. I believe that to be a truth.

There are abuses and wrongs in the legal aid system, and there are advantages in going to trial when one should not. There are advantages in giving a client advice that should not be given, which I trust neither I nor the hon. Member for Garscadden have ever done. There are methods which I have consistently suggested to my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for Scotland, and which I proposed when I was Solicitor-General for Scotland — which have never been in doubt — which could stop such abuses.

The Bill is not the way to do so. It will enlarge bureaucracy and decrease justice, and it misunderstands the concept of equity which King James V introduced as long ago as 1424, and which the lawyers of Scotland were happy to do for nothing.

This is a bad Bill. Justice will not be done, because since 1979 the fees paid for legal aid have fallen substantially by 40 per cent. I do not want to see bad justice. I do not want to see lawyers advising their clients to go to trial because the fees are so low that they would benefit from doing so, or because the fees are so low that they have to benefit by doing so.

This is a bitter and wrong circle that is contrary to the principles of equity and justice. I am sorry that this scheme has been proposed. It is bad. It inspires a bureaucracy that is interested in its own enlargement and mitigation. It will do nothing for justice. Let us not forget the principle of justice in Scotland, which is who matters most. Each of them is accused by the state.

4.56 pm

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): Following the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) and the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), I find that many of the most formidable points against the Bill have already been made.

I share the view expressed by the hon. Member for Garscadden. It was disappointing that the Secretary of State for Scotland did not introduce the debate on this extremely important Bill. Instead, that was left to the Minister who, when he moved the legal advice and assistance regulations in November 1984, had difficulty in distinguishing between the green form under the English procedure and the pink form under the Scottish procedure. From his knowledge of ABWOR and so on, the Minister today showed that he is not as green as he was on that previous occasion. However, it is a pity that for such an important piece of Scottish legislation the Secretary of State was not present.

Any Bill that deals with the individual and his relationship with the administration of justice is by definition of importance, the more so when the provisions of a Bill such as this amount to a fundamental reform of our legal aid system. We are dealing with an insidious Bill, not only for what it says in parts but more significantly for what it does not say. In effect, it is a Trojan horse of a Bill. On the outside it does not look particularly dangerous, but once it is enacted all sorts of regulations might come tumbling out that could badly affect the interests of justice in Scotland.

Almost one in two of the clauses provide for secondary legislation. It is undoubtedly much more convenient for the Executive to operate by way of secondary legislation particularly, as is the case with some of the Bill's provisions, if the negative procedure is to be used. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross referred to the fact that regulations may well be discussed at 11 o'clock at night, but in some cases, particularly under the negative procedure, they may be shunted upstairs to a Committee, where hon. Members cannot possibly deal with the issues, where the regulations are incapable of amendment and where effectively they cannot be stopped. It would amount to an abdication of our duties as a legislature if we left almost entirely in the hands of the Executive the circumstances in which one may qualify for legal assistance or the criteria for determining whether it is reasonable for a person to receive civil legal aid.

Turning to the provisions for criminal legal aid, where a person's liberty, livelihood or reputation may be at stake, it cannot be right to give the Secretary of State a free hand, as clause 21(2) purports to do. It says:

"The Secretary of State may, by regulations made under this section, prescribe by reference to such considerations as appear to him to be appropriate any class or stage of proceedings in connection with which criminal legal aid shall or, as the case may be, shall not be available."

That will not necessarily apply to the present Administration. Even if one were dealing with a Secretary of State on whom one could rely to be benevolent, it would still be important that the House should have a positive input on these matters and that regulations should not be left on a "take it or leave it" basis.

[Mr. James Wallace]

Even if we have a benevolent Administration today—which is perhaps—we cannot be sure about what will happen in future. Any class of proceedings for which legal aid might be made available could, if a future Secretary of State wished, exclude offences arising out of an industrial dispute. That might not happen, but one has to provide for circumstances in which there could be political motivation.

In April last year, in answer to an oral question from the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), the Solicitor-General for Scotland said:

"The hon. Gentleman reveals what I have always suspected. He believes that the prosecution system should be used for political purposes."

Replying to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton), he said:

"Once again, the hon. Gentleman shows that he wants to introduce a political element into prosecutions."—[*Official Report*, 17 April 1985; Vol. 95, c. 260.]

It may be unlikely that either of those hon. Gentlemen will ever occupy the position of Secretary of State for Scotland, but it is not impossible. If the Solicitor-General for Scotland fears that they might use the prosecution system for political purposes, might they not use the legal aid system for political purposes? We must be on our guard against that, and we cannot do that effectively by leaving so many important areas of eligibility for legal aid to secondary legislation.

The very minimum that many of us will want in Committee will be the affirmative resolution procedure for some regulations which are currently to be subject to annulment by either House. As an example, I cite clause 9 which deals with the regulations on eligibility for legal advice and assistance. Amendments will be tabled to attempt to circumscribe the secondary legislation. In other cases amendments should set out expressly what the regulations should include.

Reference has already been made, particularly by the Minister in opening the debate, to the interests of justice. There are some advances in the Bill on what happens at present, because there is wide diversity in the granting of legal aid applications by sheriffs in different parts of the country. It is unsatisfactory that in some smaller sheriffs' courts the sheriff who is asked to determine whether it is in the interests of justice to grant legal aid will also be the sheriff who will subsequently preside at the trial.

There is merit in the case for greater consistency, but I would rather not have this qualification in the Bill. As the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross has indicated, if the full weight of the Crown is being brought against an individual, with the Crown using a qualified lawyer to prosecute the case, then, particularly having regard to the penalties which might follow, it is only right, if the financial qualifications are satisfied, that the accused person should be granted legal representation.

If the phrase "interests of justice" is still to be considered by the board, it should not be left to be determined by the Executive by means of regulation. The suggestions in the consultative document do not fill one with great confidence about what may happen. The consultative document suggested that it might not be in the interests of justice to give legal aid to people who have had legal aid on several previous occasions. I see no reason why persistent offenders should not be given the same presumption of innocence as others.

Mr. John MacKay *rose*—

Mr. Wallace: If the Minister can assure me that that will not be in the regulations, I shall gladly give way.

Mr. MacKay: I can only assume that the hon. Gentleman did not listen to what I said. On the two points that he has just raised, I made it clear in my speech that in Committee we shall be bringing forward an amendment to clause 24 to spell out the factors to be taken into account in considering whether the "interests of justice" criterion is met. Immediately after that I said:

"The granting of legal aid is not dependent on the accused person's criminal record."

Therefore, I do not see the point in the hon. Gentleman's raking up these matters again.

Mr. Wallace: I apologise to the Minister. I listened carefully to his speech but I did not hear him say that. I thought he was indicating that there would be draft regulations. I did not understand that he intended to table an amendment. I am pleased to be corrected. Nevertheless, it does not detract from my main point. I do not think that the "interests of justice" should be a qualification when dealing with the granting of criminal legal aid in summary cases.

I endorse what has already been said about the absence of any appeals mechanism following the refusal of legal aid. Attention must be given to that in Committee. We must also consider the scope of legal aid. Increasingly the matters on which individuals have their rights challenged, or on which they wish to make claims, arise in areas where legal aid is not available, such as industrial tribunals, medical appeal tribunals, and the many other tribunals which have proliferated recently. Those often affect individuals in their everyday life, so we should consider how the scope of legal aid might be extended.

Small businesses, as corporate bodies or sometimes as unincorporated partnerships, may find themselves involved in taxation cases and feel that they cannot go the whole way in challenging the Inland Revenue because of lack of resources. An examination might be made of how such firms could qualify for legal aid.

I have had complaints from people in my constituency who have been non-assisted parties and who, when they have won the case, have not been able to get their expenses back, so they have been much worse off at the end. The severe hardship test, which exists at the moment and which is to be re-enacted, is not necessarily the fairest way of dealing with such a person.

The board will be a major innovation following the 36 years during which the Law Society of Scotland has administered legal aid. The Opposition Front Bench and the Scottish Consumer Council, in letters to all Scottish Members, have said that it is not right that the professional body that manages the legal aid scheme should at the same time have what might be seen as a competing professional interest. It is only fair to record that during the period when the Law Society of Scotland has administered the scheme, there have never been specific charges of mismanagement or substantive evidence of impropriety on the part of the Law Society in the administration of the fund. The only justification for the establishment of the board, therefore, is that not only should justice be done but that it should be seen to be done.

If independence is important, it is equally important that the board should be seen to be fully independent of

the Secretary of State for Scotland, not least at a time when an increasing number of actions are being brought against the Secretary of State for Scotland or other Ministers because of the increasing availability of judicial review. Nevertheless, the Government have decided upon a board, to which the Secretary of State will appoint the members, to which he will appoint the chairman and to which, under clause 3(4) he will give guidance. We have heard that guidance will not affect individual applications for legal aid. I should be interested to know from the Minister or the Solicitor-General for Scotland what sort of guidance is envisaged under clause 3(4). In Committee, we shall wish to satisfy ourselves that, when set up, the board will be as independent as possible from the Government.

It is important to look at the purposes of the Bill, apart from the establishment of a board which may be seen to be independent. One always comes back to the financial constraints and the give-away in the explanatory memorandum regarding the Bill's financial effects which has already been quoted. There are undoubtedly ways of improving efficiency and getting better value for money for legal services in Scotland. In recent years we have seen the development of divorce actions moving to the sheriff courts and now involving a minimum amount of work. That is one way of saving money. There are now a number of fixed penalties for motoring offences, and there is a diversion from prosecution, and the motor vehicle rectification schemes. They all save money. We should look to save money through our procedures rather than through the mechanism of legal aid.

The long title of the Legal Aid and Solicitors (Scotland) Act 1949 said that the measure sought

"to make legal aid and advice in Scotland more readily available for persons of small or moderate means."

Yet the consultative document that preceded this Bill said that legal aid should in general not be available in a case which would not be pursued by a person of moderate means. That is contradictory. I fear that in a number of cases people of moderate means will feel that they cannot assert or fully defend their rights because of the present structure of legal aid. As legal aid limits have failed to keep pace with inflation, some people have found themselves beyond its scope.

As the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross said, the legal profession in Scotland has a long tradition of making its services available free, particularly for criminal legal aid. I fear that the Bill goes a long way to undermining that tradition.

For the reasons given, my right hon. and hon. Friends and I will happily support the reasoned amendment.

5.12 pm

Mr. Michael Hirst (Strathkelvin and Bearsden): I accept that I am a fairly unusual animal on the Government Back Benches, in that I have no direct or indirect interest in the law. However, as a graduate in law from a Scottish university, I have been intrigued to discover how many of my acquaintances from 20 years ago have sought to renew that acquaintance, and, in particular, to ensure that they have access to my right ear. I must pay tribute to their skills of advocacy, because the many lawyers in my constituency—the cream of the west of Scotland legal fraternity—have been singularly effective in lobbying me during the past few months. Indeed, they were so well organised that they started the lobbying process last summer even before the Bill was published.

In a year in which I have constantly been lobbied by many interest groups, I must compliment them on having done so in the most civilised way possible. They got themselves together, organised a most agreeable buffet supper, and over a second helping of excellent salmon mousse I agreed to make robust representations on Second Reading today. In fairness, they presented their case most succinctly and honoured their bargain not to bombard me with lengthy letters that would require long answers. That was before they deployed their secret weapon—a most agreeable and charming young lady who put the points to me most effectively. *[Interruption.]* Fortunately, everything that I say in the House is privileged, and the legal community has no right of recourse against me.

I accept the need for a review of the system after 36 years, and the Minister cogently argued why reform was needed. It would be wrong of me to delay the House by saying anything further on that point. However, the separation of the powers of the judiciary and the Executive should in no way be compromised. That is a vital constitutional principle. I understand the fears that have been expressed on both sides of the House about the extent of the use of regulations under the Bill. Equally, I can appreciate the problems if, instead of regulatory powers, the Government were to try to introduce in primary legislation a prescriptive structure for legal aid. The disadvantage in that is that it would not allow the legal aid system to respond to the undoubted changes that will take place in future. I have argued that the content of the regulatory powers seems to be about reasonable.

I should like my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General to assure me that there will be appropriate parliamentary control over these regulations. I have looked quickly at the Bill, and it seems that relatively few of the regulatory powers which are being granted involve an affirmative resolution of the House. I should like to know what is in the Government's mind regarding some of the areas where there will be regulations. I seek reassurance that the regulations will not be used in any way to exclude a category of crime from eligibility for legal aid.

The paragraph on the financial effects of the Bill confirms the expectation of higher administration costs, which it is hoped, will be offset by savings and a greater throughput of cases, but it then states:

"greater consistency in the award and refusal of legal aid, in particular criminal legal aid, may result in savings."

I repeat the point expressed by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar), that many lawyers and members of the public fear that there is an intention to cash-limit legal aid. To summarise the weight of representations that I have received from many lawyers in my constituency, there is an impression that the intention may be to cash-limit legal aid. I have assured them that that is a misconception, but I invite the Solicitor-General to assure the House that there is no intention to deny legal aid in any way because of that.

The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden referred to Dumbarton district court. According to my figures, 99 per cent. of applications for legal aid there are granted, whereas only about 60 per cent. are granted in the Dundee district court. He questioned how there could be justice when in one area the level of awards granted is high, and in another it is low. There may be special circumstances of which I am unaware, but in a constituency case, which I have referred to the Minister, when three young men

[Mr. Michael Hirst]

were accused of a crime in identical circumstances, two were granted legal aid, and one was not. For the sake of my constituent and for my information, I should like to know why that was so.

Questions have been asked about the composition of the board, and the importance of its independence has constantly been reiterated. I notice from the Bill that two of its members will be members of the Faculty of Advocates and two will be members of the Law Society. I hope that there will be appropriate consultation to establish in advance the breadth of experience and suitability for the job of those who represent those interests on the board. I echo the point made about the need for independence of the board.

The Minister was asked about the speed of reaction of the board. It is critical to establish that. My hon. Friend showed a touching, and I hope justified, faith in the ability of the management consultants to come up with a scheme which allows speedy approval or otherwise of applications for legal aid. I beg him to forgive my cynicism about what management consultants can achieve. Bearing in mind that legal aid applicatons in summary cases will go straight to the board and bypass the court, I want to be satisfied that there will be no question of the board's not responding sufficiently quickly and of the person facing the problem of obtaining a suitable defence before he appears in court.

Is there any case for a residual power in the court to grant legal aid, instead of it being hog-tied to the board? It is perhaps because many hon. Members tend to get cases from aggrieved constituents for whom the system has gone wrong that we recognise the fallibility in the organisation of administrative structures. It is important in the interests of justice to be sure that the boards can take appropriate action to let the accused or the person involved in litigation know precisely where he stands on a legal aid application.

I am well aware that there has never been a right of appeal against the refusal of legal aid in criminal cases in Scotland. I notice that such a right of appeal exists in England and Wales, and, unlike the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), who always perceives a slight upon the Scottish people, I simply raise this point to seek some information as to why there should be no right of appeal in Scottish cases.

For example, I should be interested to know how many cases in England and Wales result in an appeal against the refusal to grant legal aid. I should further be interested to know in what proportion of these cases the appeal is upheld, because if these figures are significant it would show that the system is a vital safety net in the right of appeal. In that case, I should want an assurance that my hon. and learned Friend will at least consider whether a similar arrangement would be appropriate in Scotland.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend should know, and I dare say that the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson), although he always casts slights on the people of Scotland, will know, as a solicitor, that there is a right of appeal in civil legal aid cases, which the Bill takes away.

Mr. Hirst: I have no doubt that my hon. and learned Friend, as a member of the Committee, will follow up that point. I am seeking to fly a kite for the right of appeal in criminal cases. I wonder whether, if a formal right of appeal is not being given, there can be a review of the procedure.

Clause 15 deals with financial conditions, and perhaps it is appropriate that somebody who escaped from the law to the accounting profession should automatically turn to this clause. It deals with the financial limits in civil legal aid. I notice that a person may be refused civil legal aid if his disposable capital receipts are £4,710—a modest sum of money—or if his disposable income does not exceed £5,415 a year after making allowances for his domestic circumstances, mortgage and the rest.

The clause gives me slight unease, because we have established in the legislation a prescriptive limit which, in the case of an individual whose disposable income is £1 above the limit, will bar him from eligibility. I notice the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) shaking his head. If my hon. and learned Friend the Minister cannot give me clarification, perhaps the hon. Gentleman would like to do so.

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): I shall do it later.

Mr. Hirst: I am grateful.

Mr. Dewar: As I understand it, these limits are similar to the ones presently in operation, so there will not be a change in the system. If the hon. Member has a grievance about it, I am surprised that he has not cleared it before now.

Mr. Hirst: I am aware that this is a replication of what we now have. However, a Second Reading debate allows Members to raise points of principle about the continuation of the system after we move on to the new arrangements. I have frequently made the point that the people who have middling incomes are those who are probably least able to embark on litigation, for the simple reason that they could be exposed to substantial costs. I should be interested to know how disposable capital is defined. This has produced a novel concept. For example, a man who, like myself, has tried to make provision for his family and has invested in a retirement policy, or a life assurance policy, may find that such policies are regarded as disposable capital because they have a potential surrender value. Will the man who has stuck some money into a bank or building society against a rainy day find that he will be discriminated against for legal aid purposes?

Would it not be more reasonable to make legal aid available, provided that one can establish probabilis causa, subject to the litigant being required to make a contribution depending on his or her circumstances, as determined by the board? I appreciate that that would have a revenue implication, because it would bring into the net people who at the moment are debarred. The House has properly shown a concern for the rights of a person without a modest income to obtain legal aid, and I hope that in its wisdom it will not overlook those who, because of their material circumstances, do not qualify, and will not under the new Act, but who nevertheless do not have the resources to embark with confidence on satisfying their rights in a court of law.

I have no brief from the legal profession to raise the point of its members' financial remuneration. However, I was interested in the amusing exchange between my hon. and learned Friend the Minister and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn). The latter asked about fees for those engaged in legal aid work. I understand that in English legislation it is

necessary for fees to be "fair and reasonable", but Scotland has never had such a definition, and the Bill simply restates that position.

Will my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General address himself to this problem and introduce something in the Bill about the fairness and reasonableness of fees for those engaged in legal aid work? If the figure of remuneration drops below a reasonable and realistic level, there must be a danger that more experienced legal practitioners will cease to take legal aid work and will pass it on to much less experienced junior people.

I recognise that a balance needs to be struck, and I am aware that many people who went through university with me were able to found firms, and invariably nowadays seem to be extremely prosperous, on legal aid, which in a sense has helped them on their way. However, I should not like to think that the remuneration from legal aid would be such that competent, talented and experienced legal practitioners, who could give the defendant or the accused the chance of a decent experienced representation, would be deterred from undertaking the work, and the cases would be left to the mercy of relatively junior and inexperienced legal practitioners. I am sure that the Minister will agree that the interests of justice would not be best served in that way.

I seem to be adopting an alliance sense of fairness and balance. The argument that legal aid cases are not being dealt with by skilled practitioners has not been made positively, nor has it been established.

It has perhaps been a little indulgent on my part to have bored the House so long with my points. Because of my membership of the Committee discussing the Finance Bill, there is probably no chance of my being on the Committee on this Bill to move amendments and raise these points. However, in view of the fact that I represent many legal practitioners, I feel strongly that the points of concern that they have represented to me should be aired in the House, and I am grateful to the House for letting me do so.

5.29 pm

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton (Fife, Central): I am modest enough to believe that I am well qualified to speak in the debate, first, because I am an Englishman; secondly, because I am a layman; thirdly, because I do not like lawyers very much; and, fourthly, because I am a Socialist. It is well to approach the matter in that mood. I have occasionally met lawyers whom I respected and liked a little, but I could count them on the fingers of one hand. I have considerable affection for the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn), not least since he spoke earlier in the debate. Everyone who has spoken in the debate has adduced reasons why we should treat the Bill with the gravest of reservations.

I echo the tributes paid by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) to Lord Morton, Lord Wheatley, Lord Wilson and Lord Hughes—

Mr. Fairbairn: And Lord Ross.

Mr. Hamilton: And Lord Ross. English peers such as Lord Foot and even Lord Denning have expressed the gravest reservations about the Bill.

The worries might be encapsulated under four headings. The first and most important is the questionable independence of the board. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) made an extremely valid point. It is critical that the judiciary is seen to be separate from the Executive, but the Bill is a big step in the opposite direction. Secondly, the Secretary of State has enormous powers in this area. He is almost saying, "You get on to the field and play the game and I will decide the rules as we go along. Moreover, we shall decide the rules at midnight, when most hon. Members have decided to go to bed."

Thirdly, many hon. Members have said that the right of appeal is being eroded.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): No.

Mr. Hamilton: I hope that the Solicitor-General will make it clear that the right of appeal is not being eroded. It is certainly not being extended. The Scots are in a worse position on this matter than are the English. Where the Scottish law is inferior to the English law, we should not allow it to continue a moment longer.

The fourth cause for concern relates to my point about being a Socialist. I have long believed that, in 1945, the Labour Government should have treated legal aid in the same way as they treated health, so that every man and woman had the right to protect himself, his honour and his reputation in the law courts in the same way as the individual had access to medical treatment, irrespective of means. That is not possible now. I doubt whether any Government would lift their eyes up to that height and that ideal in the foreseeable future.

On 2 July last year, the Scottish Grand Committee debated the law and legal services. My hon. Friend the Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) asserted that we wanted an independent body to administer legal aid. He specifically said that we did not want a Government quango where legal aid would be restricted by the annual edict of the Treasury. That is precisely what we are getting. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross was right. My hon. Friend's fears have been realised in the Bill.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland—the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram)—had not spoken for more than a few minutes in that debate before he began to moan about the escalating cost of legal aid. The figures that he quoted, excluding administrative costs, were about £7·5 million in 1978-79 and about £33·5 million in 1983-84. Despite the challenge from my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden, the Minister said that he did not know what the causes were. The Minister who spoke today, the hon. Member for Argyll and Bute (Mr. MacKay), mentioned the escalating cost again without referring to the causes or how to eliminate or reduce the causes of the escalation.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, South (Mr. Malone) has been elevated since he spoke in the debate. He had similar misgivings about the contents of the consultative document and the Government's real intentions in the matter. Does he have the same reservations now that he has seen the Bill? His reservations should have been fortified by the contents of this wretched Bill.

In replying to that debate, the Solicitor-General said nothing special — that is not unusual for him — but quoted again the Government's alleged motives for introducing the legislation, including the ominously repeated Government phrase, "the need to get value for money." When I hear a Minister use that expression, I

[Mr. Hamilton]

reach for my gun, because it is another word for slashed expenditure, whether on education, housing, health or local government.

The Bill got a rough reception in the other place. On 20 February, on Second Reading, the Lord Advocate repeated the expression "value for money", the threat or the promise to put available resources to better use and pointed further to the scope to eliminate the possibility of abuse, although there has been no sign in this debate or then of where that abuse occurred. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross made it clear that the abuse lies in the high charges of the lawyers, and I entirely agree with him.

Mr. Porter: Justify that.

Mr. Hamilton: I am not here to justify it. The lawyers are better able to justify it, although I suspect that they will not. The trade union leaders have much to learn about organisation and greed from the lawyers. I have never seen a poor lawyer.

Mr. Porter: Is there the slightest possibility of the hon. Gentleman adducing some evidence in support of that assertion? Does he have any idea how much solicitors are paid in Scotland, England, Wales or Timbuktu? Does he have any idea of the legal aid rates for counsel in Scotland, England or Wales? If he does not, will he kindly shut up?

Mr. Hamilton: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's courtesy. I shall reply to him in kind. He is here as an English lawyer — he is not especially interested in Scottish matters—but he is not a poor lawyer. I repeat that I have never seen a poor lawyer.

Mr. Porter: If the hon. Gentleman addressed his remarks to the managers of the Midland bank, he might find that they had something different to say.

Mr. Hamilton: I shall ignore that as I wish to continue my speech.

None of the seven peers who spoke in the Second Reading debate—from both sides of the House—gave the Bill his wholehearted support. I think I am right in saying that they were all eminent lawyers. I had a great affection for them as I read their speeches. Lord Morton of Shuna said:

"It is far from clear how the proposed arrangements are to improve efficiency and effectiveness." — [*Official Report, House of Lords*, 20 February 1986; Vol. 471, c. 762.]

The Lord Advocate made that claim also. Lord Morton continued——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. It is not permissible to quote directly from the House of Lords record of the current Session, other than to quote a Minister.

Mr. Hamilton: I had hoped to escape that, through ignorance in certain quarters.

There is no doubt that almost every one of those peers expressed his reservations about the matter. Lord Hughes, who had been the chairman of the Royal Commission on legal services in Scotland, whose report was published in May 1980, expressed the view, contrary to the claim made by the Lord Advocate, that the Bill did not encapsulate the recommendations of the Royal Commission. The Lord Advocate sought to create the impression that they proposed the board that the Government now proposes. They did nothing of the kind. Indeed, they went out of their way to say that the board must be independent of the Executive and of Government. He concluded, despite his reservations, by saying that the Bill might be amended sufficiently to make it acceptable to him and the House. How wrong he was. During the Committee, Report and Third Reading stages, not a single amendment of any substance was accepted by the Government.

The Government intend to scrap the existing system of legal aid in its entirety and to substitute an instrument that is wholly and solely in the Executive's control. Moreover, the Government intend to do so by a whole series of regulations about which the House knows nothing. I suspect that in Committee we shall still not know anything about the regulations. In other words, we are legislating in the dark, thus enabling the Government to get on with their dirty work.

All members of the proposed Legal Aid Board will be appointed by the Secretary of State for Scotland. One Member of the House of Lords, which is a civilised and moderate place, used the expression "Executive stooges". One Member said that any man of honour and respectability would not serve on the board, because he would be expected to be guided and directed by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State will have complete control over legal aid and cash limits. I suspect that cash limits will be decided annually by the Treasury. There is bound to be an increase in the legal aid bill for all sorts of reasons. The Treasury will then say, "You will not get more than £X million". It will be just too bad if a man or a woman in Scotland wants legal aid. If the money has run out, they will have to do without it.

That is why virtually every organisation in Scotland which is interested in the Bill — the Law Society of Scotland, the Scottish Consumer Council, the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, and so on —have expressed grave concern and anxiety about the contents of the Bill. There are built-in reasons why the legal aid bill is bound to increase.

Mr. Fairbairn: It should not be assumed, if we are to start cutting out the cheaper or more trivial cases, that the principle involved in each of them is any less important than the principle involved for those who will receive legal aid.

Mr. Hamilton: I entirely agree. The hon. and learned Gentleman and I had better be on the Committee which considers the Bill, because I, as a layman, and he, as a skilled lawyer, are thinking pretty much along the same lines. I am an enthusiastic amateur in that respect. The hon. and learned Gentleman cannot claim that. However, the basic concept is right. Every individual in Scotland and Britain must have available to him the advice and guidance of a lawyer, irrespective of his ability to pay for it. The Bill is a missed opportunity in that sense. We should have looked at the whole basic principle, about which the hon. and learned Gentleman intervened, to see how a system could be worked out to underpin that basic principle.

It is well known that the law of our land is necessarily voluminous and perhaps needlessly complex. I often think that Bills have been drafted by lawyers for lawyers, because the more complex they are, the bigger the pickings for the legal profession in the law courts. It is difficult for the average layman to comprehend the law

which he is expected, and adjured, to obey. He is also rightly fearful of lawyers and their colossal expense. In my view, the principle of equality of all men before the law has always been a joke in very bad taste. One gets the justice for which one can afford to pay. I fear that the basic principle on which legal aid was originally introduced in Scotland is being seriously eroded by the Bill.

I return to the point I made about the inevitable in-built escalation of costs for legal aid. The combination of the growing crime rate, increasing unemployment and poverty, and the large and increasing number of workers on low pay, will increase costs. Lord Wheatley made the point in the other place that there has been an increase in the number of court cases as a result of legislation introduced by the Government. Acts such as the Tenants Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980, the Matrimonial Homes (Family Protection) (Scotland) Act 1981, and the Rent (Scotland) Act 1984 give more scope for litigation. That combustible collection has led, and will inevitably continue to lead, to an escalation in the demand for and cost of legal aid.

Mr. John MacKay: The hon. Gentleman has said time and again that the Government are about to indulge in great cuts in legal aid. I draw his attention to page iv of the Bill, which deals with the financial effects of the Bill. The last sentence states:

"It is not possible to forecast what the effect will be on legal aid expenditure, which is demand led."

There is nothing there that would allow the hon. Gentleman to make the assertions he has made.

Mr. Hamilton: Indeed there is. The Minister did not read on. It continues:

"but greater consistency in the award and refusal of legal aid, in particular criminal legal aid, may result in savings."

It might result in increased expenditure, but the record of this Government during the last seven years leads the Opposition and an increasing number of people to believe that the purpose of this exercise, as in so many other instances, is to cut public expenditure. The basic purpose of this legislation is to give control to the Treasury over cash limits and to say, irrespective of the needs of the individual who might be suffering injustice, "You will not get it."

Mr. McQuarrie: Is it not fair to say that one of the greatest dangers might be that the cuts will be made by an independent board, not necessarily on instructions from the Government?

Mr. Hamilton: I am not referring to instructions from the Government. I am dealing with what, in my view, will happen. The Treasury will impose a cash limit. Irrespective of the merits of individual cases in Scotland, they will be subject to limits and controls and to the possible refusal of aid.

The Bill attacks the fundamental principle upon which legal aid ought to be based. For that reason, if for no other, the Opposition will oppose it.

5.51 pm

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) says that all lawyers are evil and wicked and that the English versions are even more evil and wicked than their Scottish counterparts. If he were able to refer to the manager of a certain local branch of the Midland bank, he would find that I am not a rich lawyer. He may wonder, therefore, why I am taking an interest in this debate.

I am English. However, it seems to me and to the Law Society, for which I do not speak but which has drawn my attention to this matter, that what is likely to happen in Scotland could impinge upon the legal aid system in England and Wales. As an Englishman, I suppose that I have as much right to plead an interest in Scotland as the hon. Member for Glasgow, Cathcart (Mr. Maxton) who, certainly in this generation, is as English as I am. At least my father served in the 1st Battalion of the Liverpool Scottish and later in the 51st Highland Division, and a kilt of an indeterminate hue still hangs in the family wardrobe. That has very little to do with this debate.

My interest in the debate does not relate to the fees that lawyers receive either in Scotland or in England and Wales. My view is that legal aid fees for lawyers in England and Wales and, I assume, in Scotland are fair and reasonable. They are neither over-generous not under-generous, but nobody who is concerned with criminal matters can complain about that.

I suspect that this Bill is no more than a cost-cutting exercise. I have no particular objection to that, except that I believe that it is being approached from the wrong direction. I want no part in trying to prevent those who are perfectly entitled to it from obtaining legal aid.

Another method of approaching an exercise of this nature has been put forward by the Law Society for England and Wales. Nobody denies that the expenditure of £300 million on legal aid justifies investigation. One could say that public money should not be spent to uphold restrictive practices that are not in the public interest. Furthermore, the money paid to solicitors while they waited for cases to come on accounted last year for 20 per cent. of legal aid expenditure. More sensible listing procedures would reduce that expenditure. We should also consider the simplification of court procedures in substantial trials, both criminal and civil. Again, that would reduce legal aid expenditure.

I do not understand why a Government who are committed to the protection of the individual and to the right of the individual to be properly represented in both civil and criminal cases should adopt this view. However it may be presented, the board that is proposed will not be regarded as independent. It will be a Government body. There are to be many regulations, but I do not intend to reiterate, to the point of boredom, what has already been said about that in the other place, or in this House today.

We do not know what the regulations will be. I doubt whether we shall know what they will be, even when the Bill has been considered in Committee. They will be in the hands of the Government. It has already been said that this is all in the minds of Ministers. They may be similar to the convivial, genial fellows who are here at the moment, but what happens if uncongenial, unconvivial Ministers, Conservative, Labour or alliance, replace them? We cannot adopt a system that depends upon the whims of those who happen to be sitting on the Treasury Bench. That would be absolutely ridiculous.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend does not seriously imagine, does he, that Ministers write regulations? If so, he has not watched "Yes, Minister" with sufficient perspicacity.

Mr. Porter: I did not intend to go as far as that, but I take my hon. and learned Friend's point. I am sure that the present Ministers deal with their civil servants in a vicious and hard-headed way. However, I take his point that other Ministers would not have the same backbone as they display. That makes my point for me.

Another matter of concern to me is that, in this Bill, guilty pleas are to be treated as though they are of no consequence. The Law Society has put that point of view to me. It has been said that guilty pleas can be left to magistrates, sheriffs or social workers and that those who plead guilty do not need the benefit of legal advice. After 20 years' experience, I believe that is absolutely contrary to any kind of justice, and I hope that is not what the Bill means.

I object to the fact that Ministers will have the power to decide that in any kind of criminal case, or at any stage within a case, legal aid should not be made available. If I am right about that, it is appalling.

My last point is even more appalling. Under this system, an accused person might not have the right to choose his own advocate and adviser. That is not right. We should be moving towards the establishment of state defenders. After 20 years' experience I know that those who have consulted either my partners or me—most of whom have pleaded guilty on one occasion or another, although on other occasions they have pleaded not guilty—have chosen those whom they respect and honour and whom they have known over the years. They do not want an "odd bod" whom they have never seen before to be forced upon them. The Bill cannot and should not deprive them of the right to choose.

On those bases, I have little confidence in the Bill. Perhaps the Whip will take notice that my invitation to dinner at 7 o'clock will be honoured.

5.59 pm

Mr. Gordon Wilson (Dundee, East): The Bill makes a fool of the legislature. The primary complaint that any of us can make in dealing with legislation is that it does not give us an adequate clue as to the powers that a Government are seeking to obtain. By every standard of parliamentary draftsmanship the Bill fails. The draftsmen, or the Ministers who authorised the Bill, should hang their heads in shame. If one reads through it one gets the odd clue as to what the Government might be about, but, again and again, we are told that regulations will be prepared. We all know the farcical way in which the House, through its procedures, deals with regulations. Statutory instruments cannot really be controlled by us. We cannot alter them in any way. At the end of the day we have to vote for or against them, and it is usually the Government's majority that passes them into effect. However, basically, we do not have the time or the opportunity to deal with them.

A material criticism of the Bill—a criticism which was justified in the other place—is that the Bill is a blank cheque. In no way does it seek to lay out the changes that the Government have in mind. One could argue—the Hughes commission said that there should be a change in the administration of legal aid—that the Government are justified in what they are about. But, in the absence of any information in the Bill, we must assume that there is a reason why the Government do not wish to come clean with the House.

In answering the criticism of lack of information about what they intend, the Government have made the rather peculiar suggestion that a firm of management consultants is now working on smoothing out the procedures to see whether savings can be made. If they intended to do that, they should have done it before the Bill was brought before the House so that we could try to quantify what the changes might be.

Another thing that I find rather peculiar about the Bill is that it seems to break every rule in the parliamentary rule book on the way in which these things should be done. It is particularly disquieting that the Government have sought the kind of legislation that attempts to railroad through substantial changes without giving hon. Members an opportunity to debate them in the full knowledge of what the Government intend.

The first major change in the Bill is the proposal to set up a Scottish Legal Aid Board. The Hughes commission proposed that there should be an independent board and that the administration of the legal aid system should be taken away from the Law Society. I was not over-enthused by that recommendation. When such a change is made, one should be able to point to its administration and financial advantages.

The Minister is a great adherent of privatisation in the National Health Service. He has said many times that savings could be made on cleaning and other facilities in the Health Service and that such things should not be left to the public sector. The Bill is a complete and utter reversal of Government policy. In plain language, the Government are nationalising the legal aid system and taking it away from a private contractor. It would be interesting to see how the Government can justify that in ideological, if not financial, terms. It is rather amusing that this Minister of all Ministers was responsible for that.

Mr. McQuarrie: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that as legal aid has been run efficiently and effectively in Scotland since 1949, a Bill of this nature is not justified at this time?

Mr. Wilson: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has made that point.

I speak for myself, not as a nominal solicitor. I am on the roll and I am a net contributor to the finances of the Law Society every year, for which I receive a magazine. That is the sole benefit. In all fairness, I have to say that I have rarely come across any complaints about inefficiency or delay in the way in which the Law Society of Scotland organises the legal aid service. There have been plenty of complaints about the nature of the legal aid system. Plenty of complaints have come in from people of limited means, particularly those involved in matrimonial cases, who have to pay a share of the costs, which they find difficult, particularly if they have married a second time. There have been complaints from those who have been refused legal aid with no redress. But little complaint has been made of the administrative procedures, or, indeed, the way in which the Law Society has carried out that function.

If the Government really wanted to make a change, they should have considered the possibility—I am not blind to English experience, although I do not necessarily approve of it automatically—of adopting one particular example. In England, the Lord Chancellor has an independent policy advisory committee which helps him

to adjust the overall distribution of legal aid—to extend it in other ways and perhaps to withdraw some of it from matrimonial causes as the procedures made recourse to legal action less likely. We do not have that system in Scotland. The Scottish Legal Aid Board will have to accept instructions from the Government rather than have a policy advisory role. I am not convinced that the board will necessarily be independent. Those who are appointed to it and accept office will find that they are given instructions by the Government as to what should be done. They will be managerial and executive by nature, rather than policy formulators.

The Minister has explained to me to some extent how the Government intend to deal with the tens of thousands of legal aid applications for summary criminal cases, but I am still perplexed about the practicability of that. At present in a sheriff or district court, when the application for legal aid is presented, it is possible for the sheriff to ask what the defence is, which can be stated then and there, and other questions can be asked to ascertain whether the application is in pursuance of justice. When it has to be put down on paper and referred to a reporter, who will no doubt have to make his recommendation back to a centre, which will have to cross-check it in order to make sure that uniformity is being adopted and that all the criteria are essentially available, one can see that growing.

The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) pointed to the provisions in the Bill which affect manpower. He made great play about the transfer of staff from the Scottish Office, over and above the existing 220 members of staff in the Law Society. That is hardly paring away at manpower. There is also the question of another 300 staff. But who will pay for the reporters and solicitors who carry out the adjudication? Have the extra staff per year been worked out? I would like to know what the overall manpower requirement will be, taking into account the man hours of solicitors who will have to be paid for looking at the tens of thousands of summary legal applications that presently go before the courts every day.

I also take the point forcefully, vigorously and effectively made by the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), that when it came to costs, one should remember the sinister sentence at the end of the passage on the financial effects of the Bill:

"It is not possible to forecast what the effect will be on legal aid expenditure"—

I am not sure whether that is true, and it may be indelicate for the Government to specify the possible effects, but I am sure that they have a shrewd idea of the savings that they hope to make—

"which is demand led"—

that may be so at present but it may not be in future—

"but greater consistency in the award and refusal of legal aid, in particular criminal legal aid, may result in savings."

The Minister rightly pointed to the astronomic increases in legal aid caused by the very success of the system. If savings are to be made, where are they to be found? Are they to be made from a reduction in the cost of administration? On the very information that we have been given about effects on manpower, the Bill will lead to an increase in the cost of administration.

The Government complain about the variations in the cost of legal aid. However, paragraph 3 of the consultation paper put out by the Home and Health Department says:

"The need for change arises also from the Government's policy of improving accountability for, and the control and monitoring of, expenditure for public services including those like legal aid which are demand-led."

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Under "Financial effects of the Bill", we read:

"the provision of more detailed management information will increase initially the cost of administering legal aid by a small amount."

The Bill does not specify how small that amount is, but there will be some increase in the administrative cost.

Mr. Wilson: The Bill says that the cost will be increased by "a small amount", but, as extra people will be needed, the cost will obviously increase. If the present system can be operated by the Law Society, why do civil servants have to be transferred from the Scottish Office? Is it that they might otherwise be made redundant, and that that would not be acceptable to the Government?

Mr. John MacKay: The civil servants who are involved from the Scottish Office are those currently in the Home and Health Department who are looking at the financial aspect of eligibility. They will be transferred, because financial eligibility will be covered by the Scottish Legal Aid Board.

Mr. Wilson: It remains to be seen what the final effect will be. When we start looking at the accounts for that department in a couple of years, I think we will see that the cost has rocketed out of control.

Even if the costs of administration are neutral, which I do not accept, how will savings be made? The figure of between 58 and 90 per cent. has been given for the range of refusals and grants of legal aid. Does consistency mean that the 58 per cent. figure will be brought up to 90 per cent., or that the 90 per cent. figure will be dragged down to 80, 70 or even 60 per cent? A tremendous amount could be saved by doing that. One of the briefing papers on the Bill says:

"Those cases that are left become by definition major cases where a man's liberty, livelihood or reputation may be at stake."

If the aim is to increase the refusal rate in legal aid cases, substantial savings will obviously be made, but perhaps at the cost of justice. No hon. Member, apart from those on the Government Front Bench, would want that.

Mr. MacKay: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way again. Is he quite happy for 60 per cent. to be accepted in some places and for 99 per cent. to be accepted in others? Is he quite happy about such inconsistency continuing?

Mr. Wilson: The Minister shows signs of excitement and overheating. I am perfectly willing to deal with that question, as I was about to touch on it. From the outset, there should have been a system of appeal for criminal legal aid. Those refused legal aid could then appeal to another body instead of having their case heard before a sheriff. That would introduce more equity into the system. But as far as I can see from the Bill, the Government want to reduce the number of successful grants of legal aid at the expense of justice.

The Government should have looked further at ways in which the system could be adapted. I do not intend to spell out all the criticisms that could be made, but I have a copy of the observations of the Criminal Sub-Committee of the Joint Committee with the Faculty of Advocates in relation to the smooth running of the Supreme Court in Scotland. A saving could have been made right there, by using a

[Mr. Wilson]

shorter title. That committee made it clear that there are tremendous problems that add to the cost of the prosecution service, even though the Government rightly decided that more cases could be taken on indictment for those involved in the sale or spreading of drugs.

The Government have had plenty of opportunity to attack those aspects of the process of justice that inhibit the system and that add to the cost that is ultimately met by the state. There is also an impact on the Crown. Both tabs are, of course, picked up at the end of the day by the taxpayer. The Government could have made plenty of other reforms if they wanted to reduce costs. I have always thought that a benefit of our legal aid system was that it helped those who would otherwise not have the ability to express themselves in court or to hire legal aid. As a result of the Bill, legal aid applicants will not be any better off. Indeed, the reverse is true—they will be worse off. The Government, by disguising their intentions, are deceiving the House disgracefully.

6.15 pm

Mrs. Anna McCurley (Renfrew, West and Inverclyde): When I first see a Bill that is proposed by the Government, I look for the good in it. I have tried very hard to find the good bits in this Bill. As I read it, and as I listened to my hon. Friend the Minister this afternoon, I was reminded of the word "chutzpah". My simple dictionary defines it as "effrontery". Although it has far more generous and subtle connotations in its normal application, and is a term of admiration rather than condemnation, I believe that in this case it took some chutzpah to bring a piece of primary legislation to the House that is quite so devoid of detailed information.

No doubt some flesh will be put on the bare bones in Committee, but there are some questions that need serious answers which may or may not be given. I proposed to go into the aspects of legal aid that concern those on the financial margins, but I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) for having already outlined the plight of some people who are not poor but who can be impoverished by the legal system and who do not qualify for legal aid. I doubt whether this legislation will assist them.

Of course I believe that the legal aid set-up as it exists is not wholly satisfactory, and appears to be uneven in its application throughout Scotland's courts, but I wonder whether the Bill ensures that it will be satisfactory, without destroying the very concepts under which it was established—equity, efficiency and economy. I wonder what the definition of economy is in this case. From my reading of the Bill I could not decide whether it meant a reduction in the administrative costs of legal aid or that there was to be a reduction in awards.

As primary legislation, the Bill leaves a lot to be desired and a great deal to chance. It is open to political manipulation. Perhaps I should not say that, as generally I am a supporter of the Government, but I am thinking not for now but for the future. How can we wholly support a Bill if we do not know exactly how the Secretary of State will apply the system?

Schedule 2 provides that the new board is to be independent. How independent is independent if the Secretary of State operates extensively by regulation? Will laymen be represented on the new board, and will they be independent? Would it not be a good idea to include by right, in addition to the two solicitors, the two advocates and one other legal expert—as set out in clause 1(5)—representation from some of the important bodies in Scotland such as the Scottish Council for Civil Liberties, the Scottish Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Scottish Consumer Council?

I do not believe that the Bill is a cost or manpower-cutting exercise. Arithmetic was never my strongest talent, but, according to the preamble to the Bill, this nice new quango is to employ more than 300 people—an increase of 30 rather than a decrease of 50, as stated. Perhaps my arithmetic is similar to that which the Chinese invented, but if I slide beads to different parts of the abacus it makes no difference to the number of beads making the tally. On this abacus I find 30 extra beads. I think that the Scottish Office should take note of that ancient and worthy system.

What about efficiency? Will the Bill ensure a better job than that which is done under the current set-up, which is reasonably efficient? It is completely computerised and all the committee work is centralised already.

On equity in criminal legal aid, by regulation, what is the definition of "class"? Surely one cannot make regulations to control class or type of proceedings. Should not legal aid be available to everyone who qualifies financially? The state pays for the prosecuting system. Should it not also be prepared to pay for legal representation? What is meant by the term

"in the interests of justice"?

Will that be defined in Committee? The Bill certainly is not precise enough.

The issue of appeal in criminal cases has been well argued by my hon. Friends, and I agree with their views. I worried when the Minister became bogged down in the percentages of approved cases. It sounded as though a covert quota system was to be applied. What do percentages matter so long as each case is judged on its merits?

I welcome some aspects of the Bill. I believe that everyone should have access to justice. Although the Bill does not state this, the spirit is embodied in it. Public confidence in representation needs to be improved. I hope that the Bill will operate to the advantage of the hard-pressed legal profession.

Mr. Fairbairn: My hon. Friend might imagine that the new Legal Aid Board will operate to the benefit of the hard-pressed legal profession, but she must remember the creation of the Scottish courts administration which, for the first time, is now headed by someone who is not a lawyer but is responsible for the administration of the courts. That has created a huge bureaucracy which is not satisfactory to the legal profession.

Mrs. McCurley: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend for his comments. I have no detailed knowledge of the matter, but I know that some members of the legal profession do not come into the category which the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) described. There are lawyers and lawyers. There are the rich and the not so rich. If a firm takes on an extensive case under legal aid, cash flow problems can arise because there might be a delay of several months before the bill is paid. The bigger bills tend to be pushed aside while the smaller bills are

attended to. The large bills look horrific and are cast aside, so the firms have to wait. I hope that that problem will be solved.

If my questions are answered satisfactorily, I can assure the Minister that I shall have no hesitation in supporting the Bill.

6.26 pm

Mr. William McKelvey (Kilmarnock and Loudoun): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) on his pugnacious speech. He showed that he had no great love for lawyers. The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter), who is a lawyer, made a fine speech which revealed that he pursues the course of justice, as do the majority of lawyers. I like lawyers. I am fond of honest and good lawyers.

The Minister has missed yet another opportunity. There are flaws in the present system of granting legal aid in Scotland. I am not a lawyer, but I might be regarded as an amateur lawyer because of my trade union activities. Mine was a great trade union and I was an honest trade unionist.

We are discussing a lousy and scabby Bill. I am a man of simple words. I do not know who conjured up the Bill or who its author was, but it is a smokescreen. I am looking forward to the Committee and I volunteer for membership of it. I shall be a willing prisoner.

Once again, the Secretary of State for Scotland is not content with the immense powers that he has already seized. He is entering another domain to seize even greater powers. How on earth can he say to the people of Scotland that the body – including the chairman – which is to administer legal aid in Scotland should be hand-picked by the Secretary of State and that not one elected representative will be on what is supposed to be a democratic body? We are asked to believe that the Secretary of State will not try to influence that body, yet some of the cases with which it will have to deal will be brought against the Secretary of State. The board will have to put to one side the fact that its members have been hand-picked by the Secretary of State and make an honest judgment. That simply cannot be done. It will put a tremendous pressure on the members of that board.

Mr. Fairbairn: If the hon. Gentleman, or any other hon. Member who has attended this debate, and I were to put on the back of an envelope the names of the sort of drips who should be on the board the names submitted by each hon. Member would be very different.

Mr. McKelvey: Of course they would be different. The names should be put to the appropriate bodies so that they can be elected as representatives. Earlier an hon. Member suggested that representatives should be elected from bodies such as the citizens advice bureaux. If such representatives were elected, we should then have a truly representative body. Why should we not have a secret ballot since the Government are pushing for such legislation? On this occasion I would support them.

The Bill is shrouded in terms which leave much to the imagination, yet the Minister shakes his head vigorously when we conjure up what we regard as horrors and defects in the Bill. All those defects will be picked out in Committee and, if we are not satisfied with the answers, we shall vote against Third Reading.

I now return to the question of the formation of the body, the manner in which it will operate and the cost. Some hon. Members have referred to the figures showing the effects of the Bill on public service manpower. It may be that there will be no more people employed, but the Bill says:

> "The Bill should reduce the number of staff working in the Scottish Office by about 50."

That does not mean that 50 jobs will be lost; we do not have to worry about that. Those 50 staff will be transferred, along with 220 Law Society posts, to the board, which will initially employ about 300. I am not an expert at figures, but 220 plus 50 is 270. If one takes that away from 300, it leaves 30. Therefore, I assume that there will be an additional 30 staff.

This is one area in which the Bill has some merit. We are at last producing jobs. They may not be real jobs, but at least they are jobs. My worry is that 30 salaries may have to come from the budget. If that happens, 30, 50 or 100 appellants may be refused legal aid simply because the necessary finance is not available. I am seriously concerned about that.

For years there has been anxiety in various establishments about the cost of legal aid. Some years ago lawyers were accused of milking the system, of lining their pockets and of suggesting that clients should first plead not guilty and then guilty when they appear before the bench. Lawyers had been warned by the Government to keep their house in order or there would be cuts. They did not keep themselves in sufficient order and these cuts are to be made.

The purpose of the consultative process was not to find defects in the legal aid system but to find a way of cutting costs. There was a great opportunity to change the system. One of the defects was that there was no right of appeal if one appeared before a sheriff and did not receive legal aid on the ground that it would not be in the "interest of justice". That is a marvellous phrase, and I look forward to having it explained to me in Committee.

We know what happened in Kilmarnock where some people were refused legal aid. There were differences across the country on how legal aid should be applied. The problem was that one had no right of appeal. I want to know what kind of appeal body we will have under this system and who the appeal body will be. The Secretary of State is already to pick the committee to administer the legal aid, and, if there is to be an appeal body picked by him and answerable to him, it makes the whole system a mockery. It is a complete injustice, and the best thing we can do is to scrap it and start again.

6.33 pm

Mr. Harry Ewing (Falkirk, East): It must have been a tremendous relief to the Parliamentary Under-Secretary and to the Solicitor-General for Scotland to hear the hon. Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley) say that she supported the Bill. It is significant that the hon. Lady is the only Member who has said that she supports the Bill. The hon. Member for Strathkelvin and Bearsden (Mr. Hirst) said that if he had satisfactory answers he would consider supporting the Bill. One thing about the hon. Gentleman is that he always asks questions to which he knows he will receive satisfactory answers.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Mr. McKelvey) put his finger on the nub of the debate. The Government have lost a golden opportunity to reform the legal aid system. Very few argue that there should not be some change in the administration of the

[Mr. Harry Ewing]

legal aid system in Scotland. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton), in a reference to my contribution to the debate in the Scottish Grand Committee, put our position clearly. We argued then, and our reasoned amendment argues now, for an independent board to administer legal aid. The Under-Secretary says that we have that, but we have not. Clause 1 provides for a board that comprises no fewer than 11 and no more than 15 members, all appointed by the Secretary of State. Two of them are to be appointed in consultation with the Faculty of Advocates, two in consultation with the Law Society, and one must have qualifications or qualities in relation to court administration and court work. The other 10 – it need not be 10 – will come from some other source, all appointed by the Secretary of State. That may be good or bad.

If the Secretary of State were to make the 11 or 15 appointments and then leave the matter, there would be a strong argument for claiming that it was an independent board. The hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) made it clear that the Bill provides an opportunity for 23 different kinds of direction to be given to what the Solicitor-General and the Under-Secretary are trying to convince us is an independent board. Some of those directions are very dangerous.

The Under-Secretary has intervened in speeches from both sides of the House on the question of a reduction in the resources available for criminal and civil legal aid. The financial memorandum is quite clear. It was quoted by my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) and for Fife, Central and by the hon. Members for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) and for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson). It makes it clear that it is expected that the amount spent on legal aid, not administrative costs, will be less than the present sum.

The Under-Secretary says that it is demand-led. Of course it is demand-led. However, there are various ways to control something which is demand-led. Clause 24 provides opportunities to create a situation in which one can control a demand-led service. Under clause 24 the Secretary of State will define certain conditions under which criminal legal aid will not be available. We look forward with keen anticipation to seeing what those conditions are.

Mr. Fairbairn *rose——*

Mr. Ewing: I shall give way shortly.

The Minister has twice said that he will bring forward an amendment to clause 24. I do not know what that amendment will be, and I suspect that the Minister is not yet clear about it. However, I would guess that the amendment will cover the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Garscadden in seeking to give a definition of what is not in the "interest of justice". As my hon. Friend said, we have seen attempts over the years to produce definitions of what is not in the interest of justice. The definition of what is not in the interest of justice would dictate the number of people in criminal cases who qualify for legal aid.

Before I leave my comments on the board, may I say that a false impression may be created that the board will consider applications for legal aid. The board will not do that. The reason for the increase in administrative costs is that the board will employ people to consider the applications.

The most interesting points made by the Minister were made in interventions. It would have been better if the Minister's good points had been made in his speech. He said that the financial qualifications were important. He also said that the reason for 50 members of staff being transferred from the Scottish Office to the board was that these people were the staff in the Scottish Home and Health Department who dealt with financial qualifications. They were to be transferred to the board.

Does the Minister mean that the responsibility for deciding financial limits, if and when the Bill reaches the statute book, and for deciding disposable capital and income levels will be transferred to the board? That responsibility has always rested with both Houses of Parliament. If the Minister is not saying that, he will have to produce a different explanation as to why the 50 members of staff are being transferred to the board. Parliament must always have a say in financial qualifications for legal aid. With great sincerity, I must say that that was not the impression that the Minister gave. We will have an opportunity to discuss that in greater detail in Committee.

I have already argued for an independent board. I would be the first to admit that successive Governments ought to have introduced an appeal procedure when criminal legal aid is disallowed and I take my share of the blame for that omission. In recent years there has been even greater trouble about the refusal of criminal legal aid by the sheriff or the justice in the district courts.

There has always been an appeal against the refusal of civil legal aid. The applicant would apply to the local committee for civil legal aid and, if his application was refused, he had the right of appeal to the central committee. As the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross said, the Bill removes the right of appeal in cases of civil legal aid. If the Bill reaches the statute book in its present form, applicants for civil legal aid will no longer have a right of appeal. The Solicitor-General for Scotland is shaking his head, but that is what the Bill will achieve. It will remove the right of appeal for applicants for civil legal aid.

Never has there been a more opportune moment to introduce an appeal system for criminal legal aid than in our consideration of the Bill. I give advance notice to the Ministers who will be dealing with the Bill that we will pursue this point in Committee.

We will be pressing for the restoration of the appeal mechanism in cases of civil legal aid applicants and for the introduction of an appeal mechanism for applications for criminal legal aid. We will pursue many other points in Committee. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun said, the House will be guilty of missing a first-class opportunity to bring our legal aid system up to date if we do not get the Bill right.

Over the years we have reviewed and extended the system of criminal and civil legal aid, and we have extended the system of tribunals and appeals. We are not suggesting that the system does not need modernising, but we will not accept a cheap way out. We believe that the Bill presents those who use the legal aid system with a cheap option, and that is not acceptable to the Opposition.

6.46 pm

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Garscadden (Mr. Dewar) put his finger on the central point when he said that the existing arrangements for the administration of legal aid in Scotland and the Law Society's role was, contrary to the way that he approached that matter in the Opposition's amendment, something of an anomaly. He said that the Bill provided a neutral framework.

The starting point for these matters can be found in the provision and recommendation made by the Royal Commission headed by Lord Hughes which reported in May 1980. As the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) said, removing the power from the Law Society of Scotland is not an attack on the society. Nor is it accurate to say that there have been gross abuses by the Law Society in the past.

The Royal Commission, in paragraph 8.68 of its report, states:

"No one has suggested that anything the Law Society has done is improper, nor have we found anything to suggest that. Rather the argument is that lawyers benefit financially from legal aid, and it is not proper that their professional organisation should be seen to be the body responsible for administering it. We think that the principle of this argument is sound."

Some indignation has been expressed during the debate, but I have not perceived in the arguments advanced that in principle the line taken by Lord Hughes and by the Government is in any way essentially unsound. Although hon. Members have received many representations from lawyers in Scotland, the Scottish Consumer Council has said that in principle it believes it is appropriate that there should be an independent board.

A number of criticisms have been made of the board. Some hon. Members believe that in some way the independence of the board is not properly guaranteed. In answer to that criticism, I must stress that clause 1 states:

"The Board shall consist of not less than 11 and not more than 15 members".

I must tell my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) that there will not be 30 members on the board. We would not permit that kind of growth. There will be two members of the Faculty of Advocates, two members of the Law Society and one member who has experience of the procedure and practice of the court. There will be a minority of people therefore with legal experience. I believe that that is the right balance.

As my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State said in answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Renfrew, West and Inverclyde (Mrs. McCurley), we will arrange to consult those interested bodies, such as the Scottish Consumer Council and the Scottish Association of Citizens' Advice Bureaux, to determine who they might put forward for inclusion on the board. It is not a substantial argument that a body of people would always be present as placemen of the Secretary of State, simply to do his bidding. It is important to examine the extent to which they can be subject to the Secretary of State's discretion and control in the running of the board.

A number of hon. Members have referred to clause 3(4):

"The Board shall have regard, in the exercise of its functions, to such guidance as may from time to time be given by the Secretary of State".

We may wish to examine that provision in Committee, but I should tell hon. Members that it is intended that the guidance will deal with administrative matters and will be mainly intended to safeguard the position of those in the Scottish Office who are responsible for accounting matters. It will be connected with the setting out of accounts, the arrangement of internal audits——

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's interest, but I do not have time to give way.

The guidance will be to do with the matters that I have outlined rather than to tell the board which cases it should deal with and which applications it should not deal with. I should have thought that it was clear from that clause that the guidance should not affect the consideration of applications for legal aid.

It has been suggested that, by the introduction of a board, the Government are trying to reduce the amount of legal aid that is granted. Detailed consideration has been given to the section headed "Financial Effects of the Bill". With customary skill, the hon. Member for Fife, Central (Mr. Hamilton) read the first part of the first sentence, but missed out the last parts of the second and third sentences. That section states:

"It is not possible to forecast what the effect will be on legal aid expenditure, which is demand led, but greater consistency in the award and refusal of legal aid, in particular criminal legal aid, may result in savings."

That is the most that could be said with regard to expenditure being demand-led. Indeed, it is arguable that, if there is consistency between the courts that allow legal aid in 58 per cent. of cases and those that allow legal aid in all cases, there may be an increase in the sum spent on legal aid.

We look for savings in the existing arrangements for the administration of legal aid. I was a little surprised that some hon. Members think that there has never been criticism of that administration. A number of independent lay members of the legal aid central committee have criticised the arrangements from time to time.

Mr. Dewar *rose*——

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I am sorry, but I cannot give way. I have only a few minutes in which to reply.

Clause 40 requires the Secretary of State to pay to the board

"such sums as are required . . . to meet payments out of"

the legal aid fund.

It has been suggested that too much is left to regulations that Parliament cannot adequately scrutinise. I appreciate that it is some time since the hon. Member for Dundee, East (Mr. Wilson) was in private practice, but even he must recall that many arrangements for legal aid are promulgated through schemes under the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act and are made by the Law Society. Those provisions come nowhere near Parliament and there is no requirement on the Law Society to put them before Parliament. We shall ensure that there will be a requirement to make regulations covering about 23 topics, and the core regulations will be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.

It might appear to those who know nothing about the existing framework and have little regard for its present operation that greater powers are being given to the Secretary of State to make regulations, but he is not taking

[The Solicitor-General for Scotland]

greater regulatory powers to deal with matters that were previously covered by primary legislation. I challenge the hon. Member for Falkirk, East (Mr. Ewing) to find any area in the Bill where the Secretary of State is taking additional powers. Great play has been made of the number of powers that the Secretary of State has, but no one has said where those additional powers are to be found.

Mr. Ewing *rose—*

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman can rise to that challenge in the weeks that lie ahead.

The hon. Member for Garscadden had anxieties about clause 21(2), but the power there is a repetition, with one slight modification, of a power that has been available to every Secretary of State for Scotland since 1949, when civil legal aid was first introduced. The regulation-making power will be used primarily to set up a dividing line between summary proceedings covered by criminal legal aid and those covered by assistance by way of representation. I do not accept that our proposals are a significant innovation.

Under clause 24 we shall make regulations setting out the factors to be taken into account in determining "the interests of justice". I repeat for the third time, to ensure that there is no further confusion, that the granting of legal aid will not depend on the criminal record of the applicant.

As the debate drew to a conclusion, it seemed to be suggested that we were trying to restrict the circumstances in which legal aid could be granted and that that was being done at the bidding of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to ensure that there were fewer successful applications for legal aid in Scotland. I ask hon. Members to look at what Lord Hughes said in his report:

> "We therefore recommend that the criteria for granting criminal legal aid to defend a summary prosecution should be laid down in statute."

We intend to follow that route.

There has been confusion about appeals. A number of my hon. Friends seem to be under the misapprehension that the existing right of appeal in civil cases is being removed. That is not the case. The difficulty arises because the existing right of appeal is contained in regulations. We intend to introduce new regulations that will continue to allow a right of appeal in civil matters. I understand how the confusion arose, and I hope that I have reassured hon. Members that we have no sinister motives.

We have made it clear that we do not expect to introduce a formal procedure for appeal in criminal matters, but we can discuss that matter further.

I do not have time now to answer all the points put to me, but I shall attempt to do so in writing or in Committee.

I emphasise that the primary aims of the Bill are, first, to improve the administration of legal aid in Scotland by bringing together under the control of the board the various functions which are at the moment fragmented between several different bodies; secondly, to increase consistency in the award of legal aid; and, thirdly, to clarify, simplify and consolidate legal aid legislation in Scotland. Contrary to some opinions that have been expressed during the debate, I have little doubt that once this legislation is on the statute book it will be widely welcomed in Scotland, because it will allow members of the public — not lawyers, but people who need legal aid — to defend themselves in the criminal courts or to pursue their actions in the civil courts. They will recognise that we are introducing a wise and proper provision.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 266.

Division No. 191] **[7 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Ewing, Harry
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*

Ryder, Richard
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. John McWilliam and
Mr. Chris Smith.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Bennett, Rt Hon Sir Frederic
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Mudd, David
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raffan, Keith
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Trotter, Neville
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 41 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading) and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee, pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

Ordered,

That, notwithstanding anything in paragraph (2) of Standing Order No. 63 (Constitution of Standing Committees) and Standing Order No. 72 (Scottish Standing Committees), the Bill be considered by a Scottish Standing Committee.—*[Mr. John MacKay.]*

LEGAL AID (SCOTLAND) BILL [*LORDS*] [*MONEY*]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of moneys provided by Parliament of—

(a) such sums as are required (after allowing for certain payments into the Fund) to meet payments out of the Fund under the Act;

(b) such sums as the Secretary of State may, with the approval of the Treasury, determine are required for the other expenditure of the Board;

(c) the amount required to make up any deficit in the Legal Aid (Scotland) Fund established under section 9 of the Legal Aid (Scotland) Act 1967 on the winding up of that fund;

(2) the making of payments into the Consolidated Fund;

and for the purposes of this Resolution the expressions 'the Fund' and 'the Board' shall be construed in accordance with any Act resulting from the Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill.—*[Mr. Lennox-Boyd.]*

Shipbuilding Industry

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): We now come to the debate on the shipbuilding industry. Mr. Speaker has selected the amendment. I should also inform the House that 18 hon. Members, apart from the Front Benchers, have already intimated that they would like to catch my eye. The debate will end at 10 o'clock, and I therefore ask for brevity.

7.13 pm

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry and President of the Board of Trade (Mr. Paul Channon): I beg to move,

That this House notes the massive slump in demand for merchant ships which has led to cutbacks in shipyards throughout the world, regrets that this has inevitably led to contraction in the United Kingdom's own merchant shipbuilding industry despite the Government's extensive and continued support for British Shipbuilders (including over £1,400 million since 1979); and welcomes the Government's package of measures to provide special assistance to those affected.

In view of what you have said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I shall try not to detain the House for too long, although this is a very important topic.

The crisis in the shipbuilding industry has been with us since the mid-1970s. It began when world demand fell in the wake of the first oil price shock just as massive and efficient new capacity was coming on stream. In 1973 the world order book stood at 129 million gross tonnes. At the end of 1985 it stood at only 26 million gross tonnes. The latest estimate suggests that there is about 30 per cent. excess capacity in shipping world wide, despite a record rate of scrapping last year.

After a number of years during which orders for new ships had remained at low levels—some 12 million to 13 million compensated gross tonnes—new order levels fell last year to less than 11 million cgt, with a distinct worsening between the first and second halves of the year. In the first six months of 1985 new orders world wide amounted to 5·8 million cgt, and in the second six months the figure was 4·9 million cgt.

First estimates suggest that the situation was no better in the first quarter of 1986. The only firm figures that we have are for January of this year, which have been given in a written answer. Although we should not take one month's figures too seriously, they nevertheless show all too clearly how difficult the market has now become. We took only 6,000 cgt, the French 1,000 and the Germans 9,000. These figures speak for themselves.

The House must face the fact that the outlook is bleak. No one believes that an upturn is in prospect before 1990. Indeed, many people believe that the recovery will be well beyond that date. It is not only British Shipbuilders which has had to cut back in these circumstances. The Germans have cut capacity, the French are cutting capacity, and the Swedes have effectively abandoned merchant shipbuilding, despite having some of the most modern facilities in Europe. The Dutch have refused to support their industry in building the sister ship to the large North sea ferry won by Govan. The Japanese are having to adjust and have cut 10,000 jobs since the beginning of this year. Another 20,000 could go — perhaps 30,000 in all. Even the Koreans have lost jobs and have cut back plans for new capacity.

Therefore, British Shipbuilders is not alone. The bulk of British Shipbuilders' present order book was won in the

first half of 1985, when BS secured orders for some 160,000 cgt. BS has won very little since because, with few exceptions, the orders have not been available. That is not a question of lack of Government support, and I emphasise that. The Government have given support to British Shipbuilders on a quite unprecedented scale since 1979 — more than £1,100 million by way of public dividend capital to cover the corporation's general operations, and more than £230 million by way of intervention fund support for individual merchant orders. BS orders have also been supported by the home credit scheme to the tune of well in excess of £100 million.

The House must recognise that very considerable support has been given, and of course we are anxious to do all that we can from now on. The House recently agreed a Bill, which is now in another place, which will enable the borrowing powers of BS to be increased by a further £200 million.

Because of the world situation, BS has had to make very painful decisions. The corporation looked at a variety of options. Its aim was to take the option that would in these difficult circumstances provide the best chance for merchant shipbuilding in this country. It chose an option which, as the House knows, unfortunately involved closures and redundancies, because British Shipbuilders simply did not believe that it made commercial sense to retain more capacity than orders could be found for.

BS recommended this option to me, and I accepted it as offering the best prospect for the business as a whole. The changes that BS plans over the months ahead will make it fitter to face the future, but the future depends on new orders, and the House may be assured that we shall do all that we can to ensure that those orders are won.

BS has announced a fall in employment from 10,000 to 6,500 by next March, but by no stretch of the imagination is this the end of merchant shipbuilding in this country, as some hon. Members have suggested. The House should not forget that about 2,000 people are also employed in private sector merchant shipbuilding in Great Britain. This sector has largely maintained jobs over the years by supplying such ships as small coasters, fishing vessels and so on. There are also more than 4,000 people employed at Harland and Wolff, and about 27,000 in the newly privatised warship yards.

I now come to the whole question of public sector orders. Some people suggest that these should be brought forward, and others seem to believe that such orders can be conjured from thin air. Over the past year the Ministry of Defence has placed a number of very important orders. In 1985 and the first quarter of 1986, ship and submarine orders to the value of £1·86 billion have been placed. This includes the three Upholder class submarines from Cammell Laird, two type 22 frigates — one for Cammells and for Swan Hunter — the first AOR for Harland and Wolff, three mine counter-measure vessels, and a nuclear fleet submarine and the first Trident submarine, both from Vickers at Barrow. That is an impressive list, which will be augmented by type 23 frigate orders and by the second AOR order, for which Swan Hunter has been given a favourable opportunity to bid.

The recently privatised warship yards have also had successes beyond the Ministry of Defence orders for the Royal Navy to which I have just referred. For example, Brooke Marine at Lowestoft is in the advanced stages of negotiation of four separate contracts worth some £14 million, which will keep its labour force of over 500 employed for the next year. It is also pursuing a number of other contracts. Vosper Thornycroft UK Limited has recently won a further contract from Oman for a fast strike craft of the Province class worth well over £30 million. It is also negotiating a major naval contract in Pakistan with the support of the Government. I hope that that will be successful.

On the purely merchant side, there are orders coming shortly for a fisheries protection vessel and two ferries for the Scottish islands. I am delighted to announce that the Government intend to finance from the aid programme a newly built ship to provide adequate services for St. Helena. That ship will be built in a United Kingdom yard. Tenders for a replacement ship for Tuvalu, also financed as aid, will go to our yards in the next two to three months. This is good news. It is quite unrealistic to invent orders, or to build ships simply for the sake of building ships. There is no sense in that.

I have heard it suggested by some hon. Members that our support for the industry is less competitive than the support in other countries. It is not always easy to make direct comparisons between the support given by different countries. It is certainly misleading to focus on just one aspect of support given in one country — say, credit terms — and to compare that element, either favourably or unfavourably, with the credit terms available here, without also considering how other elements of support compare.

In the United Kingdom our main method of support is the shipbuilding intervention fund — a direct production subsidy. By agreement with the Commission, under the Community fifth directive on aids to shipbuilding, we have the ability to offer support at up to 20·5 per cent. of contract price to help BS or private sector yards match far east prices.

In addition, favourable credit terms are available under the home credit scheme. These conform to the terms of the OECD understanding on credit for ships. We are able to offer credit on 80 per cent. of the ship price at 7·5 per cent. interest for eight and a half years. These match the terms generally available elsewhere, though some countries which offer less or no direct production aid compensate by offering more favourable credit terms. Finally, we are ready by use of the aid and trade provision to offer considerably better credit terms in appropriate cases to match competition from other countries. I am anxious that we should do so.

Within the Community, state aids to shipbuilding are currently covered by the fifth directive, which expires at the end of the year. Although discussions have begun on a new Community regime, no proposals have yet come forward from the Commission. We are therefore pressing the Commission to table proposals which take full account of all the aids currently available, both direct and indirect including tax incentives, to shipowners and to investors in new ships, as well as aids to shipbuilders. We are determined that the new Community aid regime should be fair and should allow shipbuilders in this country to compete on equal terms with their European rivals.

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): In the negotiations, will the Secretary of State try to ensure that intervention fund assistance does not carry with it the requirement that British Shipbuilders must break even on every contract? Private and foreign competitors are not subjected to that

[Mr. James Tinn]

requirement. It is not easy to see why British Shipbuilders should have to meet it. Will the Secretary of State do something about that?

Mr. Channon: I shall examine the point that the hon. Gentleman has made. I cannot unilaterally make a change in the rules of the European Commission. The Commission has not yet put forward proposals to the Community for the next stage. The point that the hon. Gentleman has made is very important, and we shall bear it in mind during the negotiations.

Now I want to turn to the measures that I announced last week to help deal with the redundancies resulting from the contraction of British Shipbuilders. In regard to the support of up to £5 million to enable it to set up a new subsidiary, British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd., I can now tell the House that the new company will be in operation in July.

In the steel industry areas, 30,000 jobs have been created by BSC Industries, and 20,000 more are forecast to follow. In coal, NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. has already created 6,000 jobs in 18 months of operation. BS employees facing redundancy will know that skills and resources are available on hand to help. There will be money to help take advantage of retraining and redeployment opportunities, and money and advice for those wishing to take the initiative of setting up their own businesses. British Shipbuilders is pressing ahead with the arrangements.

The head office, with the chief executive, will be based in Middlesbrough. There will also be regional directors for the north-east on the Wear, and for Scotland at Strathclyde. BS Enterprise will therefore be particularly well placed to help the men of Smiths dock and their families, as well as those at other yards, including Troon. In addition, I explained last week that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has asked the Manpower Services Commission to provide a further £1 million specifically for the retraining of BS redundant employees, in direct co-operation with the new enterprise corporation.

I can well understand the feelings of hon. Members, particularly those from the north-east, at the latest news. The north-east of England continues to receive large sums in support of the regional economy there, and that is right. In that area, 97 per cent. of the working population are within assisted areas eligible for schemes of regional aid. More than £800 million has been spent on regional assistance since 1979 in the form of regional development grants and regional selective assistance. This massive injection of funds has helped to create or safeguard 79,000 jobs.

Over the same period, the Manpower Services Commission has spent £300 million, and the Department of the Environment has funded economic, social and environmental projects to the value of £300 million.

Mr. Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, East): May I draw the Minister back to shipbuilding? Yesterday, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Wallsend (Mr. Garrett), the Prime Minister said:

"There are not many public orders to be brought forward, apart from the naval shipyard orders that are coming forward." —[*Official Report*, 20 May 1986: Vol. 98, c. 178.]

Is that a commitment by the Government to bring forward the naval shipbuilding programme?

Mr. Channon: I have already described the naval shipbuilding orders that are coming forward and that have come forward in the past few months; for example, the second AOR that we have talked about for Swan Hunter and, I hope, the type 23 frigate.

As the House knows from the announcement last week, new measures to help cope with the shipbuilding crisis also include an extra £1 million for the city action team, £1 million for the reclamation of derelict land and a further £2 million to be added to the urban programme allocation for the region.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): On the question of the involvement of the Manpower Services Commission, may I point out to the Secretary of State that community enterprises in my constituency find the MSC less than helpful when they make applications for help to create jobs for unemployed shipyard workers? Will he ask his right hon. Friend to look into that?

Mr. Channon: I shall certainly put that to my right hon. Friend, with whom I have already discussed the problem. He is anxious that such problems should be resolved and that we should have a flexible system between all Departments of Government that are involved in the exercise, so as to ensure that there are no difficulties such as the one the hon. Gentleman mentioned.

I have already tried to describe to the House the position on orders, not only in the United Kingdom, but throughout the world.

The Manpower Services Commission will work closely with British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. — *[Interruption.]* I should have thought that the House would be interested in learning this. *[Interruption.]* I have already told the House the position on orders throughout the world. The House may find it unpalatable, but it is the truth. British industry is in exactly the same position as industry throughout the world, and we are blinding ourselves if we imagine that that is not the case.

Mr. Robert C. Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne, North): I am sure that the Minister does not want to mislead the House or the country. What about the three Ministry of Defence orders a year that we want? If British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. was 10 times as successful as NCB (Enterprise) Ltd., it would still be a disaster for the shipbuilding areas.

Mr. Channon: I am telling the House of the measures which I believe will be of substantial help to the north-east. I hope that that will prove to be the case. I have already described the position on orders that have been made and are coming, including Ministry of Defence orders and merchant orders. I have already announced two further orders. *[Interruption.]* I announced them a few moments ago. I cannot invent orders for which there is no demand. I can tell the House where orders are, and of orders which are coming.

The Manpower Services Commission is important and will work closely with British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. to ensure the effective retraining of redundant BS employees. With regard to the extra sums for reclamation and the urban programme, the Departments concerned are writing to local authorities in the area concerned —

Tyneside, Wearside, and Teesside — asking for bids against this allocation. Preference will be given to projects which are directly job-creative or supportive.

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): While we are on the subject of assistance for those made unemployed, may I bring my right hon. Friend back to his point about development area status? Appledore, which is the first name on British Shipbuilders' programme, does not enjoy that status. Similarly, the numbers being reduced there are so relatively small that the cost of various aid programmes may outweigh the so-called value in the savings. May I point out that the smallest order of any size ship would be a substantial salmon in our part of the world, but a mere minnow up country? Will my right hon. Friend bear that in mind when the minnow orders come through?

Mr. Channon: I understand what my hon. Friend says. At present Appledore is building two dredgers, and I understand that there are good prospects for a third dredger from a new customer to the yard. I hope that that order is won. I recognise the force of my hon. Friend's comments. It is extremely difficult to alter the map, and once I start doing that there will be a great many arguments in different areas.

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): Answer the question.

Mr. Channon: I have already answered my hon. Friend's question and I think that he is satisfied with it. *[Interruption.]* Let him speak for himself.

BS Enterprise Ltd. will also operate in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland is urgently considering additional help for the areas affected north of the border. *[Interruption.]* I have already explained to the House the measures that I am proposing in the north-east, and my right hon. and learned Friend is proposing similar measures for Scotland.

I disagree strongly with the Opposition's amendment that conditions in merchant shipbuilding are the result of Government neglect. I have explained that this is a worldwide crisis from which we cannot be immune. Opposition Members who are complaining must face the fact that an injection of £1,500 million during the past seven years is a curious definition of neglect.

Mr. John Smith: That figure has been used constantly. It is normally a figure of £1,400 million, but the Secretary of State has added £1 million to it. As we are debating merchant shipbuilding, will the Secretary of State tell us how much of that sum was investment in merchant shipping?

Mr. Channon: About £230 million was spent on the intervention programme, and the other £1,100 million is the main part of Government help for BS during the past seven years. *[Interruption.]* Let me tell the House the exact position. BS has received nearly £1·5 billion from the Government since 1979. Public dividend capital of more than £1,100 million has funded BS's general operations. Intervention fund money amounting to £236 million has been spent as a subsidy on contract prices to help BS win orders against far east competition. *[Interruption.]* I have already told the House the figures for BS as a whole.

Mr. John Smith: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Mr. Channon: I must press on. I have given the House the figures, and they relate to BS operations since 1979. If the House challenges me on them, and I shall be surprised if it does, I can tell it that that is a great deal more than was spent under the Labour Government.

Mr. Smith: The Secretary of State was asked a precise question: how much of the much-quoted figure was investment in merchant shipbuilding yards? If he does not know the answer, will he please tell us?

Mr. Channon: I have told the House the answer perfectly clearly. Incidentally, the total support for shipbuilding under the Labour Government was £130 million. *[Interruption.]* Members may well laugh. It is because they feel guilty. We have invested 10 times that sum and more.

As I have told the House, during the past seven years support for BS has been nearly £1·5 billion, which is 10 times as much as in the past. Anyone who says that that is neglect is completely misreading the position. I am determined to support BS.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Channon: No, I must continue.

We are prepared to spend a great deal of money supporting BS, and we are keen to support the business.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): The taxpayers are.

Mr. Channon: Indeed, the taxpayers are. We are keen to inspire the confidence of owners in the industry's ability to compete, build and deliver on time. The House knows how vulnerable confidence in a business can be in these circumstances. It will not help if hon. Members in any part of the House—I make no allegation of this—talk down the industry at present. *[Interruption.]* The House has a clear choice this evening. I say that the British merchant shipbuilding industry will survive, and I hope that no hon. Member will challenge that. I believe that the orders on which BS depends can be won.

The Opposition have asked for a task force. My hon. Friends the Ministers at the Department of Trade and Industry and, indeed, all Ministers, including myself, will miss no opportunity to support BS in its efforts to secure the orders that it needs. That is the right approach. The Opposition talk about a maritime strategy. As the House well knows, the problem is that there is massive over-capacity in shipping world wide. There are many cheap and modern secondhand ships available at all-too-attractive prices to meet most needs. General investment incentives to British shipowners do not seem to be the answer to the problem. Making ships ever cheaper risks exacerbating the difficulties in the shipping market, which can only delay the upturn in shipbuilding itself.

In these difficult circumstances, I believe that no sensible alternative could have been devised. This is widely appreciated in informed circles outside the House, and I suspect that it is widely understood inside the House, whatever hon. Members may say. I ask the House to support the Motion.

7.38 pm

Mr. John Smith (Monklands, East): I beg to move, to leave out from "House" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"deplores the crisis facing the British merchant shipbuilding industry and the closures and redundancies caused by Government neglect and indifference; notes with dismay the

[Mr. John Smith]

disastrous contraction in the British merchant fleet since 1979 with its consequent adverse effect on shipbuilding, believes that an island nation requires a strong shipbuilding industry for its trade and defence; and calls upon the Government as a matter of urgency to establish a task force to secure sufficient public and private sector orders at home and abroad to maintain as a minimum the existing capacity and workforce of the industry.".

Few people would have thought it possible that after recent announcements a Secretary of State for Trade and Industry could make a speech in the House which did not mention even one of the three yards which is scheduled for closure. I hope that it was, perhaps, a sense of shame which held him back from reminding us that Smith's Dock, the Ferguson-Ailsa yard at Troon and Clark Kincaid at Wallsend must close completely. It is incredible that they were not even touched on in his speech.

Let me remind the Secretary of State of the facts of merchant shipbuilding. When the Government came to power in 1979, 30,000 people were employed in merchant shipbuilding—few enough. The number declined, until, prior to the present announcements only 10,000 were working in merchant shipbuilding. As a result of these announcements, the work force will be cut to 6,500. In one naval yard, Vickers at Barrow, far more people are employed than in the whole of the British merchant shipbuilding industry, so shrunk has it become.

The Secretary of State keeps telling us about new measures in the wake of shipbuilding closures. I remind him that some of the areas that will be affected by these announcements already have the British Steel Corporation (Enterprises) Ltd., the NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. and the recently announced British Rail (Enterprise) Ltd. Now they will have the British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. If the Government would give half the attention that they give to such schemes to saving jobs in existing industries, they would not have to bother running around creating enterprise schemes as a result of every closure that flows from their policies.

I shall try to speak briefly, because many hon. Members representing British merchant shipbuilding areas will want to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker. The point of the debate is that the Government must reach a clear political determination that they will maintain a merchant shipbuilding industry. I did not discern any sense of purpose or dynamism from the Secretary of State's approach to this matter. He was rather laid back and said that it was sad that orders had declined, but he was not sure whether many more were coming, although he would do what he could. He added that he hoped that the industry would survive and that Labour Members would not cause a loss of confidence in the industry.

The Government should show some confidence in the industry. It was their folly, in splitting off the naval yards from the merchant yards, that put the latter at the heart of this crisis. The former chairman, Sir Robert Atkinson, and not just hon. Members, described that as a national disaster. The Secretary of State referred to the naval shipbuilding yards. I do not know what message he was seeking to give us, but he knows quite well that the type 23 frigates and possibly the single-role minehunters could be put back into the ordering programme.

I am not sure what the right hon. Gentleman meant when he said that these orders were coming forward. Does he mean that the ordering time has been brought forward? "Coming forward" is an ambiguous phrase. I hope that he is not misleading us, because the naval yards are deeply concerned about the timing of the programme. The Secretary of State should know from the defence review in the White Paper that, because of the cost of Trident, all the rest of the naval ordering programme is put in difficulty. It is likely that there will be substantial delays and perhaps workers will be laid off only to be brought back after some time, with a consequent need for further training, together with the disruption to their lives in the meantime.

At the same time as the crisis in the shipbuilding industry there is that in merchant shipping. I remind the House of the numbers of ships that were British owned and registered in 1979 – 1,194. Now, in 1986, there are 617. Half the ships in the British Merchant Navy have disappeared since 1979. The figure is paralleled in the number of million tonnes deadweight. There were 36·6 million in 1979, but it is now down to less than half that figure, at 15·5 million tonnes. We have lost half our merchant shipping fleet, so it is no surprise that we have a crisis in the merchant shipbuilding industry.

To lose half our merchant fleet and to put at risk the very existence of merchant shipbuilding is a folly in an industrial trading nation. The Government must resolve to do something about it, and then take action.

The action proposed in our amendment, which was put forcefully to the Secretary of State by Labour Members earlier this week, is that we should establish a task force. It should incorporate all the relevant Departments — Trade and Industry, Defence, Transport and Overseas Development. If the Prime Minister would say that it was the Government's priority that this work should be done, the task force might produce some action to get the necessary orders. The Secretary of State was interviewed on radio on Monday and asked about this idea, as to have such a task force would require a clear aim. That is true; but the Government do not have a clear aim. They should find one.

A task force should tackle three urgent priorities. The first is the bringing forward of public sector orders. The Secretary of State raises his hands and says that public sector orders are not there, but if they were there they would solve the problem. We know that it was this negligent Government that let the Trinity House lightship order go abroad and be built in a foreign yard. It was this negligent Government that allowed the Pacific nuclear carriers, the majority shareholder in which is a publicly owned industry—British Nuclear Fuels Ltd.—to go to Japan, which had only a minority interest in the company. These are two orders that should have gone from the public sector to help British shipbuilding yards.

There is no energy, action or initiative in the Government in seeking out public sector orders, for say, survey ships, fishery protection vessels and fleet auxiliary vessels. An imaginative Government could have brought forward orders for these ships, even though they might not be needed at the end of this year, the middle of next year or even the year after that. They could be used to meet the crisis in British merchant shipbuilding.

Secondly, the Government should improve the packages of support. The Secretary of State says that it is difficult to compare the packages of support as between one country and another. That makes it easier for the Government to claim that they are meeting the international average. Our industry is fighting for its survival, and the Government should have the best

packages of support in a fiercely competitive world. It is unthinkable that British Shipbuilders should go in to bat for the Chinese shallow draught containers or the Cuban refrigerated vessels and, because of a slight difference in loan or credit provision, lose these substantial orders, with the result that even more shipyards go out of business. The Government should resolve, whatever the international competition, to beat it in terms of support for loans and credits.

If I heard the Secretary of State say something like that at the Dispatch Box, I would begin to have some confidence in the Government's handling of the industry. If he wants to see confidence return to the British shipbuilding industry, let him do something about it. Let him make a statement such as that, which would give confidence not only in the industry but in those who place the orders.

Thirdly, the Government must urgently examine ways of bringing forward orders from British shipowners to be placed in British shipyards. The Government know, because they have been told by British shipowners, of the effect on the industry of some of the changes in taxation. The point has been made clear time after time, and occasionally Conservative Members have reminded the Government about this. Time is urgent and the Government should examine ways in which extensions can be given and orders brought forward to be placed in British yards. Unfortunately, in the past, too few orders have gone to British yards, but this is a crisis that should be met with an adequate response.

Today, workers have come from all over the merchant shipbuilding industry to lobby Members of Parliament. They have come from Devon, the Clyde, Teesside and Wearside. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of them today and I knew many of them before. To look at the faces of these people, whose lives and families are dependent on there being a merchant shipbuilding industry in this country, is, for me at least, a humbling experience. To know that generations of crafts, skills and training and dedication are represented by families whose lives are dependent on the merchant shipbuilding industry is also humbling. It is for their sake that we ask the Government to take urgent action.

Our case goes well beyond what some might call, although I would not, the narrow interest of those who live in our merchant shipbuilding communities and who have faced so much travail in recent years. The whole of the nation will be diminished significantly if we lose our merchant shipbuilding capacity, or if it is brought down so low that it cannot maintain the essential research, design and engineering capability and a dedicated work force and management.

What is more, our strategic interests which, as an island nation, have always depended on a strong merchant fleet to protect our trading groups will be diminished. The case for urgent action by the Government is overwhelming. I am sorry to say that the Secretary of State's response was thoroughly inadequate. I call on Parliament and the people to make the Government change their mind.

7.49 pm

Sir Edward du Cann (Taunton): Before I comment in detail on what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, perhaps I may make a general comment. This is the ninth and probably the last Parliament in which I shall serve as a Member of this House. That is nothing in terms of service by comparison with the Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan), whom it is good to see this evening. However long one serves here, one reflects upon the history that one has seen. During my time in the House I have watched the decline of many manufacturing industries and the extinction of others—motor cycles, television, radio, optical instruments, motor cars and so on. Too many have declined and too many have gone. We choose many fancy words to describe the process—and rationalisation is one. To me, it has been a history of industrial disaster.

Sometimes the circumstances have been bitter, as when the great Sheffield company producing engineering steels, of which I was chairman for a time, was smashed into oblivion by unfair competition from its British state-subsidised competitor. That was unforgivable. Today a parallel exists with British shipbuilders fighting off unfair foreign competition. Future generations will never forgive us if we do not say that this process of attrition in British manufacturing industry has gone far enough. It is time to cry halt.

Perhaps some problems for many of Britain's industries were inevitable in the highly competitive world market. Perhaps there were too many complacent managements. Perhaps the entrepreneur and manager have not had and still do not have a sufficiently honoured place in society. Socialism has not helped here, nor for that matter has our education system. Perhaps the Conservative party has not been constructive enough in outflanking a hitherto recalcitrant trade union leadership by advancing ideas of industrial co-partnership—perhaps many things, but all that lies in the past.

British shipyard workers have been steadily putting their house in order and becoming more competitive. There have been huge advances in productivity, which is up 15 per cent. in the last two years. The absurdities of demarcation are largely a thing of the past. Nowadays there is almost interchangeability of crafts. As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, these fine, skilled men who work in the shipyards deserve our support. Once their skills are lost, they will be lost for ever.

I am sure that the House appreciated the assurances and the obvious good will of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. What was surprising—I put it no higher than that—was how little he could say about how shipbuilding might be helped. What depressed me in recent exchanges in the House, when my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was obliged to make his announcement last Wednesday—he is not responsible for the position in the shipyards, but he has to account for it—when the Prime Minister answered my question last Thursday, and even more when I listened to the shipyard workers from Middlesbrough and Wallsend speaking on the radio, was the mood of apparent fatalism. I challenge that. Indeed, I repudiate it. We can mitigate the current trends and perhaps arrest or even reverse them. We must make the attempt.

If I have a quarrel with the Government—in general, I am a strong supporter of the Government's economic policy, not least the medium-term financial strategy, and I applaud the successes and realism that it has brought—it is because I see some of my senior colleagues failing to offer a clear perception of what strategy we should adopt in respect of Britain's maritime affairs. The

[Sir Edward du Cann]

Government are failing to offer constructive overall support to our maritime industries, and failing to set an example of determination to conquer their problems. God knows, the problems are large, but the Government could attempt to conquer them and to project what our nation so urgently longs for—a sympathetic leadership.

It is our duty to give our people hope. What is to be done? We all know the causes of the problem. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State described them succinctly and accurately. World trade has increased eight times since the end of the war. The world's trading fleet is twice the size needed to carry it. Too many ships are chasing too few cargoes. There is no disagreement about the analysis of the problem.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East spelt out the appalling decline in the British merchant fleet, which in 1965 was the largest in the world. I wish to complete the scenario that he was painting as he did not project the figures ahead. If the decline continues at the present rate, in 10 years' time there will be only 200 to 300 ships on the British register. One distant water trawling fleet has already been decimated. Fewer than 50 per cent. of the offshore supply vessels servicing British rigs are British.

I can put in a sentence what we should be advocating. More orders for British ships to be built in British yards will not be obtained until ship owning in Britain becomes more profitable. The first thing that we must do is to make ship owning in Britain profitable.

A vast range of marine industries are providing employment and earning wealth for our nation. They include shipbuilding, ship repairing, finance, insurance, ship broking, chartering, marine engineering, electronics and a host of others. Those industries depend for a large part of their prosperity on a thriving and substantial British merchant fleet. The premier requirement to achieve full export potential in any industry is, and always has been, a strong home base. That we could and must provide.

Responsibility for maritime affairs spans a dozen Departments of state. Here I part company with the Opposition amendment. The Departments responsible for maritime affairs span transport, energy, agriculture and fisheries, defence, the Foreign Office, trade and industry and even education. Nations such as Japan, France and others co-ordinate their approach to maritime affairs, and so should we. Why is this not done?

The Government should not create a task force. That may be a step in the right direction, but it would be better if one Minister of Cabinet rank had supreme responsibility for maritime affairs. Working through the Cabinet Committee system there would be three main areas for his effort. The Father of the House took a step in this direction at the end of his premiership. I am sorry that it was not followed up.

The first of the three main areas of the Cabinet Minister's efforts would be domestic—to bring together and co-ordinate the maritime research effort. That is vital, because the new ships which may be sold in the future will be sold only if they are the most modern. The Minister could ensure a benevolent fiscal regime for shipowners. In 1984, it was sheer folly to remove the only fiscal advantage existing for shipowners in Britain. Why not give incentives to British owners who place orders in British shipyards?

If it is true that well over 95 per cent. of all our trade goes by sea, and if it is true, as alas it is, that 75 per cent. of our exports are transported in foreign-owned ships, we face an emergency. The problem is not only economic. It applies to the defence aspects of the matter. So emergency measures are necessary. Let us place advance orders. Let us ensure that our credit facilities, about which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State spoke, are not merely available on a scale to match competitors, but are better than those of our competitors. Why should we not go better?

As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said, it is a disgrace that we should allow orders to go to foreign yards on the instructions of Ministers.

If we do not take action, ultimately we shall have no yards at all. Much taxpayers' money will be lost, compared with the theoretical savings, comparatively speaking, of a few pounds which we might have gained in placing the Trinity House order in Korea rather than in the United Kingdom. Men of the world know very well that sometimes people must invest a little more to protect what they have already risked.

It should be the duty of the senior Minister to get the United Kingdom a fair deal in Europe. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) has spoken many times in the House with prescience and good sense about the way in which cabotage arrangements in Europe are wholly unsatisfactory from the point of view of the United Kingdom. That is a scandal which must be ended promptly. The Minister should also see that substandard ships are kept out of European harbours. Why should we have to compete against those who do not put the same premium on safety as we do in Europe?

The House has already debated the transport papers which were prepared by the European Commission. I do not think that we need repeat that debate. I thought that the papers were weak and inward looking. However, they were a start. Strong European Community policy is crucial. What is the point of belonging to the Community if we do not use the powers that that alliance of nations should confer? After all, the European Community does 25 per cent. of the world's trade. It ships from its ports more than twice the volume that is shipped from the ports of the United States and more than three times that of Japan. We have great clout in the Community. That is supposed to be the great advantage of being a member. However, we do not use that strength anything like as constructively in international affairs as we might.

There is another area where I would wish to see Britain taking a stronger lead in the world. In the 1950s, Britain was the largest mechant shipbuilder in the world. Since 1961, Japan has dominated the world's shipbuilding industry. Japan built over half the world's ships in 1984-85. In 1985, yards in the far east—Japan, Korea and other countries—accounted for 70 per cent. of the world's shipbuilding. Europe accounted for only 16 per cent., and the United Kingdom for less than 1 per cent.

Shipyards in the far east have built and are building ships without regard for the genuine needs of world shipping. They are the real villains of the piece. This folly must be brought to an end, and promptly. If it is not, our shipbuilding industry is doomed. That is an unacceptable prospect. However, it is not inevitable. We must take the lead with Europe and the United States to rationalise the world's shipbuilding industry and to increase the rate of scrapping, by legal means or by giving financial

incentives. Speculative shipbuilding must be penalised. We must be ready to retaliate against those nations which do not co-operate. If the Japanese or the Koreans will not co-operate, let us stop buying their motor cars, radios and televisions.

Those are long-term aims. Until the supply of ships available to trade is brought back into balance with the volume of cargoes to be carried and there is equality of opportunity, shipowning will never be fully profitable. We should start work on those aims today. I long to hear my right hon. Friend say that that is precisely what we will do.

I am not prepared to accept—I am sure that our Government and country are not prepared to accept—as an immutable law of the free market the crisis that affects our maritime industries, including shipbuilding. If present trends continue, our merchant fleet will decline to almost nothing. Our shipbuilding industry, except for some highly specialised functions, will disappear, and so probably will shipbuilding throughout the whole of Europe. As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East said—I agree wholeheartedly with him — a substantial and prosperous merchant fleet is indispensable, strategically and economically, to the United Kingdom and the European Community. There has been too much hand wringing and too little determination and imagination in policy regarding the maritime industries. The time for action is now.

8.5 pm

Mr. James Callaghan (Cardiff, South and Penarth): The right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) said that he could not vote with the Opposition tonight because we would lose in any case. I hope that hon. Members who are not present will forgive the right hon. Gentleman if he continues to make speeches like the one that he has just made. Over the past few years he has consistently made every effort, with considerable criticism, to draw the attention of the Government to the position into which we have fallen.

I know that my hon. Friends who represent shipbuilding constituencies are anxious to leap at the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. I shall not stand in the way of them getting at their prey. However, I wish to say a few words. I hope that my hon. Friends will forgive me, and I promise that I shall not speak for long.

The only conclusion that I could draw from the Minister's speech was that he has given up the ghost. The Government's policy—I do not know whether that is the right way to describe it — is limp, lethargic and whingeing. The air of defeatism that pervades the Government Front Bench over shipbuilding shows that it has no conception of the nature of the problem and the magnitude of the disaster that will befall this country.

The average life of a merchant ship is 20 years. The world's fleet turns over, on average, every 20 years. Therefore, the majority of the ships that will be carrying the trade of the world at the beginning of the 21st century, in 14 years' time, have not been built. They are still to be built. We do not know what their ownership will be, we do not know who will finance them, we do not know in which yards they will be built, and we do not know under which flag they will sail. That presents the Government with an opportunity. There is no reason for defeatism.

Why should we not have a substantial slice of building those unbuilt ships? I put the proposition the other way round. We must have a substantial slice of those ships. Millions of tonnes will be built in the next 20 years. If only I could inject into the Minister some energy, some atmosphere of understanding of what is required, perhaps we could have more hope, as the right hon. Member for Taunton said, about the future.

It is claimed that 50 per cent of the running costs of any ship are absorbed by capital charges. If that is the case, here is an obvious means of helping shipbuilding. Yet, as the right hon. Gentleman and my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith), pointed out, the Chancellor took away the 100 per cent. depreciation allowance. That measure was especially favourable to British shipowners because they were allowed to take it in any year. The measure was deliberately destroyed in 1984. If the two cases that I have given are correct, surely there is an opportunity for this country to play a full part again?

What should we do in the meantime? People have rubbished my proposal about returning to a scrap-and-build programme, similar to that of 1935. I shall illustrate what happened at that time. The industry was in a similar position. There was a tremendous surplus of ships. Ships were laid up and rusting in ports. I remember that, and some of my hon. Friends and hon. Members will have read about it. Shipowners were given a capital subsidy, or a loan at a cheap interest rate, for a new ship provided that they destroyed two tonnes for every tonne they built. That was the scheme. It resulted in many old ships being destroyed and replaced with a new, young fleet, and we reaped a considerable benefit from it. In fact, 186,000 gross tonnes were built under that scheme. Does the Secretary of State know the gross tonnage ordered last year from British yards? It was 8,600 tonnes, but under the much criticised scrap-and-build scheme, 186,000 tonnes were ordered.

Of course the scrap-and-build scheme is not a remedy, but is it not a palliative? Would not such a proposition be put forward by any active Government to lessen the magnitude of the disaster that will overtake us? I do not know why the proposal has been rubbished. The shipbuilding industry may offer different proposals. Any assistant principal in the Department of Trade and Industry could produce, within a couple of hours, a dozen different proposals by which the Government could subsidise and offer incentives to shipowners and the shipbuilding industry. There has been a total failure to use any imagination in dealing with the problem.

The Secretary of State tells us that the Navy has brought forward orders, but what about the orders that it withdrew? The Minister is a pretty fair controversialist, but I challenge him to answer this question: was not the invitation to re-tender for the three type 23s merely a delaying device to ensure that the Navy did not overrun its budget in the financial year? We know that it was. It was done deliberately for that purpose. When that happens, how can we believe that the Government are in earnest or that they are trying to match the size of the problem with what is required?

I should like to re-emphasise the comments of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East on the Navy. It is not just a matter of asking the shipbuilders to resubmit tenders. The Navy could expand the hydrographic service and build a guard ship for Gibraltar. Coastal protection is inadequate. There could be a new class of frigate. We could re-invent the corvette, which did such wonderful service 45 years ago. They were

[Mr. James Callaghan]

cheap and there were many of them. What is more, the new ships would require crews. The Navy would be assured of manpower. On the naval and on the merchant side, plenty could be done, and one job in the shipyards supports three outside.

Why do the Government seem to be so myopic about the present position? I do not want to disturb those Conservative Members who may support some of my comments, but I must ask whether the trouble is the fact that the Government are relying on market forces. This seems to shine through everything that the Secretary of State says, such as, "It is a great shame the world market is too big. The ships are there and there is nothing we can do about it."

I urge those Conservative Members who are listening to me to wake up the Government, at least on this issue if not on others. The Government must wake up to the fact that if market forces are allowed to operate unchecked —I recognise that some help has been given—they will destroy our merchant shipping fleet and, in due course, our shipping industry. The House is beginning to say to the Government, "We have had enough. We shall not stand for your supine attitude to this problem. You must get off your backside and do something about it." Action could be taken, if only the Government would take it.

If there is one mistake that the Government make in this and other matters, it is that they are trying to present a false choice between running down our manufacturing industry and applying high technology. I beg Ministers to believe that that is a false choice. High technology is necessary, but it will be successful only if it is built on the back of a successful manufacturing industry. High technology does not replace manufacturing industry—it is designed to bring manufacturing industry into the 21st century. It should be applied to shipbuilding.

The Government should knock together the heads of the shipowners and the shipbuilding industry. The shipowners are no angels. They always want to have their cake and eat it at the same time. I agree with the right hon. Member for Taunton that there must be profits in that industry but the shipowners must contribute something.

I agree with the idea of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Monklands, East for an integrated task force to bring shipowners and the industry together. Conditions should be established under which both can profit satisfactorily.

If the House will take the Government by the scruff of the neck, we will begin to sound the tocsin and make them recognise the value to this country of a shipbuilding industry, and also recognise that the shipping industry and the Royal Navy are vital to our future prosperity and welfare.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) for his brevity. I hope that his example will be followed, because many hon. Members are desperately anxious to address the House.

8.15 pm

Mr. Piers Merchant (Newcastle upon Tyne, Central): My concern first and last in this matter is for the ordinary shipyard worker and his family. He is a tradesman with pride in his work and skill in his fingertips and his expertise has produced the finest ships that sail the seven seas. The quality of his work is unquestioned, his breadth of skill undiminished and the depth of his pride unfathomable. Anyone who has seen at close quarters the launch of a locally built ship, a destroyer or merchantman, cannot escape sharing in that pride.

Therefore, I want as much as any hon. Member to see the yards humming with activity, new ships being built, British shipowners ordering new British ships from British yards because they are the best and dozens of foreign orders being placed because of our worthy reputation and competitive prices. That has been done in the past, and there is no reason why it cannot be done in the future.

It would be the cruellest of delusions to pretend that that can happen at this time, if the facts clearly speak otherwise. It is right that Government policy should be directed fundamentally to the interest of the people in the yards, and that interest requires, first, that people are told the truth. It is the ultimate deception to keep thousands of men frozen in employment in an industry on false promises of future expectations. It is an insult to their skills to expect them to continue to build ships that no one wants at prices that no one is prepared to pay. It would be fatally demoralising to build for stocks when we all know the extent of world over-capacity. To perpetrate such a deception would be a final betrayal, and not an act of kindness, for the men in those yards. Better to know the truth and face the unpalatable today than to live on illusions now and face a far worse collapse when it inevitably comes.

The best interest of the shipyard worker surely lies in a healthy economy. A healthy economy is a flexible one which can adapt swiftly and effectively to changing world conditions, demand and markets. However sentimental it may be, it does no good to preserve merely for the sake of preservation or artificially to delay change knowing that it must come sooner or later.

But to say that is not to preach against state aid. I am not against money being made available for a period to tide over a cycle in demand. That has been done, and rightly so, since before 1979, with £1·5 billion being made available, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said. However, if there is no prospect of recovery in the foreseeable future, one cannot expect profitable industry —for it is from there that the money comes—elsewhere in Britain to jeopardise its future and employment prospects by carrying for ever the enormous and growing burden of continuing subsidies in another sector.

That there is no prospect of a clear upswing is evident from example after example. The world surplus in shipping vessels which has been quoted in the House today —and it is massive in bulk carriers, for example—is proof enough. So is the parlous state of the order book, not to mention the heavy over-capacity in production facilities and the difficulty of competing with the cheap labour options of Third world countries.

The reaction of other countries to their shipbuilding industries is also indicative. Catastrophic cutbacks in shipyard employment have been made elsewhere. In Japan, for example, Hitachi Zosen is to reduce its work force by a third—5,000—by March 1987. I am tempted to say that, if the Japanese are having to do that, what hope is there for other countries? The Japanese shipbuilding industry as a whole expects to cut back by 18,000 jobs. In Korea, redundancies and restructuring are on the cards.

It is interesting to note that Korea, which to a large extent was responsible for stealing the orders that might otherwise have come to British yards, is talking, because its economy is so flexible, of restructuring its shipbuilding industry and moving its capital and its work force into other sectors of heavy industry.

Mr. Stuart Bell (Middlesborough): The hon. Gentleman referred to the cutback in numbers in the Japanese and South Korean shipbuilding industries. However, does he accept that Japan and South Korea have captured 65 per cent. of the world's shipbuilding market and that our share of the world market is less than 1 per cent.? Therefore, is not the cutback in our work force more significant than the cutback in South Korea and Japan?

Mr. Merchant: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, but what is most significant of all is the position in which we find ourselves today because of our failure in the late 1950s and in the 1960s and 1970s to grab and to maintain our share of what was then a very large market. We have allowed the Japanese and the South Koreans to establish that leadership. We are now paying the price for our dereliction of duty.

In Spain, 17,000 jobs are likely to be lost in the near future. In the United States, 50,000 jobs have been lost in the last few years. I make no mention of the tens of thousands of other jobs that have been lost throughout Europe. I quote those figures to show that this is not just a British problem. It is a severe, world-wide problem. This is not the time to talk about throwing further huge sums of money into the industry when it is clear that other countries have come to the conclusion that the only way to deal with the crisis is by retrenchment.

It is also absurd and wrong to pretend that the situation will be otherwise in the near future, or to mislead people by pretending that everything will suddenly change for the better. The reality has to be faced by the Government and by the industry, just as the previous Labour Government faced the beginning of this crisis in the 1970s when, as has already been mentioned, it oversaw the loss of 20,000 jobs in the industry.

It is also pretty futile to try to cast blame on the Government for the present crisis. Much of the change of fortune in British yards has been due to circumstances beyond our control: to Third world labour costs, massive new investment abroad and tough competition which previously did not exist. In the 1950s, many of these other yards did not exist, and could not therefore provide any competition.

However, we can still learn two lessons. First, much of the management in our yards was antiquated, slow to invest, bad at marketing and offhand to the point of being Victorian in its industrial relations. Secondly, the unions in the yards were equally backward-looking and inflexible, unwilling to change their work practices and imposing senseless demarcation lines. They were suspicious about promoting a new partnership in the industry, and in dispute after dispute they were aggressive to the point of destruction.

I am glad that in the past few years—but it is only in the past few years — much of this has dramatically improved. However, the situation has not been entirely remedied, and it is wise, therefore, to bear that in mind. A recent study that I carried out in Tyne and Wear revealed that in the past 30 months there have been 14 recorded disputes that led to strikes, walk-outs or overtime bans and, therefore, to the loss of orders. It goes without saying that partnership rather than confrontation in the 1960s and 1970s would have led to far fewer redundancies, greater competitiveness and healthier yards in the 1980s. It is too late to salvage many of the jobs that have been lost, but it is not too late to learn and to preserve something for the future. I believe that that is what this Government are doing.

Mr. Bob Clay (Sunderland, North): Will the hon. Gentleman explain how it is possible that disputes have led to the loss of orders when, according to the Secretary of State, there are no orders to be had?

Mr. Merchant: I was referring to the past when many orders were available. Surely the hon. Gentleman appreciates that, if a yard goes on strike and damages its reputation, those who place orders are unlikely to place them with that yard. Furthermore, if by destructive disputes a yard becomes uncompetitive in cash terms, or in terms of meeting deadlines, foreign buyers will not place orders with those yards. I was pointing to the past when there were many such examples.

I began by saying that, first and last, we should consider the plight of the shipyard worker. He is now facing the imminent prospect of life without work, income or prospects after possibly years of stable and productive employment. Therefore, it is right that we should do all that we can to find new work and alternative prospects for him.

I welcome the Government's initiative in making available a special aid package of about £10 million to help to cater for this problem. It has been far too easily brushed aside as insignificant. This package is generous and it will achieve a great deal. Palliative action is necessary, and much of the funding will be for that. But there is more, too. A good deal of this funding will go towards providing new work, new jobs and new enterprise.

I repeat my earlier request, which was made at the time of the statement. I ask my right hon. Friend to look very carefully at the application of this funding in order to ensure that it is used most effectively. I repeat also my request that he should consider giving the overall responsibility of emergency economic aid and relief in these areas to a nominated Minister. It is important for the Government to demonstrate their real interest in the problem by such an appointment. It would also enable the Government to effect easily and constructively a co-ordination of roles in the north-east, for example. At present, that is sadly absent.

There is more that can be done. I do not ask for a heavy increase in regional aid or subsidy. However, I think that there is a case for the selective concentration of aid and incentives in specific areas that have been hit by such industrial restructuring. The rich farming areas of Northumberland do not need special status, but the narrow strip of industrial dereliction along the banks of the Tyne, for example, needs help.

I think that my right hon. Friend could help by directing his policy in the north-east less to the region as a whole, in so far as it has a clear definition in any case—and different people define it differently—and more to the specific problem areas that are clearly identifiable. An enhanced package of enterprise zone incentives and reliefs, coupled with direct investment aid, marketing and

[Mr. Merchant]

Government schemes, could transform an area relatively swiftly which otherwise will be tainted for years by an ill wind which has made an industry vanish almost as fatally as the Marie Celeste.

8.28 pm

Mr. James Tinn (Redcar): I am tempted to refer to what has already been said by a number of right hon. and hon. Members, particularly Conservative Members, who are concerned about the future of two great industries. However, in deference to those hon. Members who have particular constituency responsibilities, I shall refrain from doing so.

Those of us who went to see the Secretary of State last Monday were grateful to him for his courtesy, though not for his message. On many occasions in the past, together with other anxious colleagues, I have been to that Department on similar errands, but I have to say, without any touch of exaggeration, that I can remember no time when we met with a more negative response.

I pointed yet again, as I had done the previous Wednesday, to the remarkable record of survival of the Smith's Dock on Teesside and to the fact that right up to the time of the closure announcement an energetic and enterprising management was chasing the few orders that were available. I believe that the managing director was in Cuba at the time. So often in the past, with remarkably astonishing results, the yard has fought back from near disaster to survival. Only last November the then chairman of British Shipbuilders wrote to me accepting and agreeing with similar words of praise to mine for the achievement of everyone at the yard. In that letter the only criticism that he had was of one or two loose words that had got into the press, hinting that there might be some problems for the yard in future, which he said was nonsense.

Therefore, it seemed reasonable to ask the Minister whether such a yard would be allowed to take up any orders that it might be able to obtain even at this late stage and even with this notice of execution hanging over it. Three times I asked the Minister, because I did not want in any way to misunderstand or misquote him, and each time he said that there was no hope, or words to that effect. I am sorry to say that that was confirmed to me last night by the chairman of British Shipbuilders. He told me that if, against the odds, the yard was able yet again to obtain orders to enable it to carry on, they would be passed to other yards — presumably assuming that the customer would accept that—and the execution would proceed as planned. Smith's Dock, the largest of the yards to close, is the soft option chosen by the Government and by British Shipbuilders.

Nevertheless, I tried to get some comfort for the future, even if there is none to be had for the present. Bearing in mind the cyclical nature of the shipbuilding industry, which means that today's over-capacity is likely to be tomorrow's much-needed and highly profitable plant, I asked the Secretary of State about the fate of the equipment in the yards after they had been closed. I asked whether it would be mothballed. It seemed that the one positive moment in our talks came when he assured me—I am sure in good faith—that it would be kept available on a care and maintenance basis. That, at least, held out a glimmer of hope for the men of Smith's Dock and Troon and for their youngsters who hoped to follow them. It was at least a crumb of comfort, but, sadly, even that disappeared when I talked to the chairman of British Shipbuilders last night.

There is no prospect of the yard being maintained. The most useful and attractive pieces of equipment will be transferred to other yards and the rest will be sold off—grassed over like the Consett iron works where I used to work many years ago; grassed over like a graveyard without gravestones. The last lingering hope of a shipbuilding presence on the Tees, the country's third largest port, will disappear. I cannot help wondering why the Minister was not told, because I am sure that he did not know when he spoke to me the day before.

The early reactions on Teeside were excellently expressed in an editorial in our local *Evening Gazette* yesterday. First, it referred to my anger and warning earlier in the week to the Minister of possible consequences in terms of civil unrest on Teeside. It pointed out, as I did, that compared with others, such as Liverpool and Belfast, which have had Government benefits heaped upon them whenever they have stepped violently out of line, Teeside's reputation for calm and constructive acceptance of industrial decline has invited only further body blows.

The paper describes how Teessiders have learned to live with the contraction of their basic industries, even some of their post-war modern industries, and how, for instance, steel on Teesside is breaking records with output, productivity and quality. Meanwhile, displaced workers set up businesses and scour the world for work because there is none here at home. There are few construction or industrial sites in the middle east, for instance, without a sizeable contingent of Teessiders separated from homes and families.

Yet, as yesterday's editorial went on to say, since the Government came to power, and almost with their first breath, one of their first actions was to cancel the Property Services Agency development in Middlesbrough. The editor said:

"It has squeezed Teesside until the blood ran"—

a justifiable figure of speech only, until now. The Minister's assurance that British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. will be set up in Middlesbrough is little more than an offer to open up a branch of undertakers to help the bereaved.

I understand that the Minister is to come to Teesside tomorrow and, instead of merely driving past the yard, as had been intended, he is to stop for half an hour. He will not stop at the yard itself, but at least he will meet one or two representatives. Half an hour for 1,400 men who have lost their jobs is perhaps some measure of his priorities in his busy day. A two-minutes silence might have been more apt.

I make no apology for talking almost exclusively about my area. It is my responsibility. I am conscious of the number of other deeply worried hon. Members waiting to speak. However, the Government have a wider responsibility, and that is to listen to the House. They should listen to the voices on both sides, to their own supporters, such as the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) and the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), as well as to my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan).

Will the Minister listen to the British Maritime League, of which many of us are supporters? Will the Prime Minister recognise the interdependence of shipbuilding

and shipping and so reorganise areas of Government responsibility that our vital strategic needs as a maritime nation can be better protected than under the present system of fragmented responsibility between Departments? Above all, if the Government really cannot do anything to protect and redevelop those vital national interests, will the Prime Minister render just one last service, still well within her power, and go? The people of Teesside have had enough. The Minister said that he supports shipbuilding, presumably in the same way as a hearse supports the coffin on the way to the grave.

8.37 pm

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): I am sure that the House listened to the hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) with great interest and sympathy. He and other hon. Members who represent the north-east will know that I used to have a working connection with Teesside in the days when I played a more constructive role, helping to develop the sites at Wilton and Billingham. As the hon. Gentleman knows, I also had experience in the 1960s as a Minister at the Board of Trade and I can honestly say that we brought new industry to the north-east. Therefore, I listened to the hon. Gentleman with great affection.

I want once again to place on record the fact that I have a constituency interest in shipbuilding and in shipping. I also have a personal interest. I should tell the House that the shipping companies with which I have a connection were the only British shipping companies, as far as I know, to take delivery of new ships from British yards last year. I want to place that on the record. Therefore, I am speaking about what I am doing.

I think that the House knows that I have a deep interest in the future of the British maritime industries, as does my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan). I care about it passionately. I use the word "care". It is not just a matter of calculation but something that one feels deep down inside. I say that as someone who served in the Army rather than the Navy, so I picked up that feeling later.

There is no doubt that the problem facing British merchant shipping stems in the first instance from the decline in the British merchant marine. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made his statement on this subject I intervened to make that point. Indeed, I do not think that it is controversial. But my right hon. Friend is correct to say that it is the excess capacity in shipping and shipbuilding worldwide which is largely responsible for the crisis in British merchant shipbuilding.

However, the degree of unfair competition involved is not sufficiently understood. That competition comes from Japan and Korea. During the past 10 years, Japan has never dropped below 46 per cent. of new deliveries of all world ships. Its yards produced 53 per cent. of the total world output in 1984-85. Together, the yards of Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and China accounted for almost 70 per cent. last year. By contrast, the whole of Europe produced only just over 16 per cent., and the United Kingdom produced less than one per cent.

Many of the far eastern prices are lower than the cost of materials in Britain. One does not need to be a sophisticated lawyer or economist to know that that is dumping and unfair competition. It is obvious that shipbuilding cannot survive unless ships are built. But as a result of that far eastern competition, both the British and the European industries are near to closure. People may ask whether that matters. The answer is that it does, in both the short and long term. We must retain a minimum shipbuilding capacity in Britain and in the other European countries. We can argue among ourselves as to what that minimum should be, but we must take action against Japanese dumping, and such action would be more effective if we took it in conjunction with our European colleagues. That would be in the national interest.

In the European context, we sometimes criticise our officials for being purer than the pure. We say, "Let's play to French rules." In this instance, we should play to Japanese rules. They consist of going to great international forums, signing the most impeccable treaties of free trade, entertaining world leaders, burning joss sticks before the altar of Adam Smith and then proceeding to run a thoroughly mercantile policy. It is in our interest and in that of our European partners to take action against the Japanese. I come from a generation who do not view the Japanese with the total objectivity with which the younger generation may do. If it was witihin the rules of order, I would use a precise description of the Japanese which we soldiers used.

It is essential that we in Europe take countervailing action against the Japanese and Koreans. Other measures might be useful, but that action would go to the guts of the whole thing. I invite hon. Members to join me and to take the consequences. Given Japan's trade policy and the way in which it treats our exports, I believe that we could easily take that risk. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton and the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth said, there are palliatives that are not as fundamental but that can and should be taken now. They are the classic measures of placing orders for Government vessels, warships and auxiliaries in home yards, facilitating orders for export, such as the five container ships projected for China, the matching of credit terms for legitimate orders, and the retaining of orders over which the Government have control in this country. However, I accept that the latter are limited.

Last year, the Trinity House lightship went to South Korea—[HON. MEMBERS: "Shame."] Was that really necessary? I know that Trinity House did not want to place the order there, but it had no support from the Government. We could take those measures now, although they would not go to the guts of the problem, which is unfair competition from the far east. That must be dealt with.

We have been talking about merchant shipping, but I must declare a constituency interest because of my shipyard of Vosper Thornycroft, which is dedicated to naval orders. I beg the Government not to put back the present naval ordering programme. We have a particular set of orders on the single-role minehunter. We have got the lead vessel, but if we do not get the follow-up orders, as agreed with the Royal Navy, we will be in trouble. Whatever the constraints on the Ministry of Defence's finances, I beg it not to cut back on the agreed ordering programme.

We must retain our industrial capability. I speak as an industrial engineer and as one who will, tomorrow, have served the House for 31 years. I warn the House to beware of the Treasury argument. The Treasury does not change, regardless of who is in government. It argues that the

[Sir David Price]

cheapest is best. At times I suspect that the yard that the Treasury sneakingly prefers is not the shipyard but the graveyard. That is a future which I reject.

8.47 pm

Mr. Bruce Millan (Glasgow, Govan): I am pleased to speak after the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price). Indeed, in shipping and shipbuilding debates I often speak after him. He has a keen interest in the industry and a commitment to the health of the shipping and shipbuilding industries. He is one of the few Conservative Members of whom that can be said—more is the pity. I agreed with everything that he said.

The Minister gave the impression that the Japanese industry was in crisis. Some crisis! It has a total order book of 9·7 million tonnes. It has 4 million tonnes that it has not even started to build. The South Koreans have 4·7 million tonnes on the order book, and 2 million tonnes that they have not yet started to build. British Shipbuilders does not have a single ship in its order book that is not already being built. By spring next year, every one of them will be completed. Some of the yards that are being retained will run out of work long before then. That is how grave the crisis is.

It is not just the Government's defeatism that depresses me, but the fact that we are going over familiar ground. Only three weeks ago we pointed out the impending crisis in the industry. On 28 April, we warned the Government what would happen because of the parlous state of British order books. A month or two ago the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) spoke in a debate on the European Commission's proposals for shipping, and attention was drawn to the fact that a lack of a maritime policy in this country was disastrous for economic, industrial and strategic reasons.

The Government have not listened. We met the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on Monday and he said that shipping policy was nothing to do with him. That is the problem. A Minister responsible for shipping did not believe in shipping. I wonder whether his successor will be any better. The Government have had no shipping or maritime policy and they have not tried to bring together the shipping and shipbuilding interests.

As my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) said, British shipowners bear a responsibility for the present situation. They have been adept at producing schemes for financial assistance for shipping, but they have never been willing for those orders to be tied to British yards. Any assistance scheme for British shipping should be tied to ordering in British yards.

Not a single Japanese ship ordered over the last 10 years or more has been built in other than a Japanese yard. We have not had that home base for the industry. I do not want to burden the House with statistics, but they demonstrate that the British shipping industry has the poorest record for home ordering in Europe. It does not compare with what has happened in Japan and a number of other countries.

We want what happens in Japan to happen here. British shipping orders—there have been few recently—should, except in exceptional circumstances, be filled in British yards. That would give us a base for our shipbuilding industry. Ways of achieving that have been described repeatedly, but they have been ignored. The Minister said the other day that scrap and build had been tried but had failed. That was an example of abysmal ignorance. The scheme was tried first in the 1930s. Only a year or two ago in shipbuilding debates did Ministers state that the scheme was worth pursuing in the Common Market. Protracted discussions took place within the Community on the scrap-and-build policy. Some of us urged that if the discussions could not be brought to a successful conclusion we should introduce the policy unilaterally. At that time the Government responded a little, but nothing happened. Today the policy is dismissed out of hand, as are the task force and public sector orders. All that we hear from the Minister is a catalogue of reasons why we should do nothing to help the shipbuilding industry in what could be a terminal crisis.

Much could be done about public sector orders. The Ailsa yard at Troon is not clapped out. It is modern, and has had much money spent on it. It is small, but for its size it has excellent facilities and it has been the subject of much capital expenditure. It is faced with closure, but surely it is not impossible for it to gain public sector orders, if not others, so that it can be saved for the sake of the community and of the shipbuilding industry.

The intervention fund policy until recently allocated money, but it was never spent because the restrictions were such that the orders could never be obtained. It looked good for all that money to be available, but it was never spent. The last figure was £25 million. The Government talk about £1·5 billion as if all that went into merchant shipbuilding, but it also involves naval yards and capital investment. In the last year £25 million has been spent in intervention fund assistance. There is flexibility now, but it has come too late.

The Minister mentioned the aid and trade provision. One would have thought that that was an initiative which had been part of Government policy for years, but it was announced only in November 1985. The damage had already been done. Limited action by the Government always comes too late and it is always ineffective in dealing with the crisis. The crisis is far worse than it has ever been, even for an industry which has suffered cyclical trends, with boom periods and times of great difficulty.

The orders are there to be won. Govan is an excellent yard with first-class facilities, excellent management and a work force which has co-operated in terms of delivery and industrial relations and which has done well in recent years. We are desperately anxious to obtain the order for the Chinese container ships. The order would go partly to Govan and partly to the north-east. We need an absolute Government commitment. We are talking not about a private enterprise company, but about a state-owned company supported by the Chinese Government. We are talking about a Government-to-Government negotiation. The Chinese will drive a hard bargain, but the order can be won. I hope that it will be won and that we shall have an absolute commitment from the Government to ensure that we get that order.

The Govan yard is also tendering for the Brittany Ferries order from France. I know enough about the French Government to know that they will do everything possible to ensure that the order stays in France and does not come to Britain. A number of other yards outside Britain are also interested. We shall achieve that order only if the British Government make a commitment which is at least equal to the commitment that the French and Japanese Governments make to shipbuilding and other

industries. Almost every industrial country makes commitments to its basic industries. The idea of leaving everything to the free market and free competition and then we shall somehow survive is absurd.

When the Government announcement was made last week they thought that the problem would go away; that it was a seven-day wonder and that no one would care. Ministers said on television that we must look to the future, and that the industry was clapped out and out of date. *[Interruption.]*

It is no use the Secretary of State shaking his head because the Secretary of State who was supposed to be in charge of employment said that on television. I think that the Government believed that the problem would go away and that there would be no reaction, but the crisis has struck a chord in the public's mind. People are worried about our shipbuilding industry and about our future as a maritime nation.

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, at its meeting in Edinburgh today, passed a resolution asking for a maritime policy. It was full of good sense. It demanded a response from the Government. Tonight we are demanding that response—before it is too late—to save the merchant shipbuilding industry.

8.58 pm

Mr. Neville Trotter (Tynemouth): It was interesting while preparing for this debate to dig out from the archives the report on British shipbuilding by Booz-Allen which came out in 1972. I believe that it was the first document I perused when I first took an interest in the industry. The report refers, at a time before either the world recession or the emergence of the Korean shipyards, to the problems of increasing competition, over-capacity and the fact that Government support alone could not ensure a long-term market for our industry. As far as I can remember, Korea in fact was not mentioned at all in the report.

When I first went there in 1975 the Koreans were just starting to build ships. They had not built any ships before 1974, and now that little country on the other side of the world has more capacity than the whole of Europe put together. They pay such low wage rates and work such long hours in those yards, and in the steelworks which supply the yards, that they have an advantage of about four to one in labour costs when compared with European yards. That is a formidable problem of competition for all the western European shipbuilding countries.

When the Booz-Allen report was produced 14 years ago there was much criticism of the lack of efficiency and organisation in the British shipbuilding industry. Of course, it was well justified and well documented. I should, however, like to pay tribute tonight to the efficiency that we now see in the British yards.

The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) referred to the Govan shipyard. I remember my first visit to that yard not long after 1972, and I remember wondering whether James Onedin had just ordered his first steamboat there. The yard was very archaic in every way. Its equipment was that of the previous century. Govan is now a modern yard, and I pay tribute to what has been achieved there and at the other yards. I do not think that efficiency is any longer one of the problems facing us. To the credit of all those involved, we now have an efficient and modern shipbuilding industry.

Why are we in the serious predicament that we are debating tonight? It is due not to a lack of efficiency but firstly to the competition I have referred to, especially from Korea. The Koreans have a completely different type of life. There is no welfare state and no resulting overhead for their yards to carry. They work hours which are twice those worked in this country and pay half of what we would regard as reasonable.

Another fundamental reason for the problem is the collapse in the demand for ships. Sir Adrian Swire, chairman of the International Chamber of Shipping, referred to this as being the worst depression ever seen in shipping—a full 10 years of constant bad news, with almost every sector

"depressed and suffering from chronic oversupply of tonnage."

He referred to the "short-lived new dawn" and "hopes of optimism" which had at times been current, but these hopes were always dashed. He wisely pointed out the effect and influence of the banks on the present ordering position with their massive loans to shipowners in recent years. The banks, he points out,

"finally realised that they could not buy themselves out of trouble."

Therefore, they have now cut off funds for new building. Banks around the world are owed enormous sums of money by shipowning companies that are in great difficulties.

Sir Adrian drew the rather depressing conclusion that it was "frustrating, and profoundly sobering", that one must conclude that the over-tonnaging problem was intractable and

"that the interests of governments, of shipbuilders, of shipowners and of banks, who collectively have a common interest in improving their economic well-being, are individually too divergent to develop any successful common initiative."

That is the nub of the problem. How do we obtain the co-ordination that we need to tackle the problem when there are so many different interests involved? Shipowners and shipbuilders by no means necessarily have the same interests. In fact, their interests are often in conflict. The East is in conflict with the West and the countries of Europe are in conflict with one another. If there is one industry above all others which is international, it is the shipping industry and that makes it very difficult to deal with the problems we are discussing.

I believe that there must be more international co-ordination in tackling the problem and the Common Market must be the first place where one logically looks for a start to be made. My hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price), who speaks with such knowledge and wisdom on these matters, has already drawn our attention to the need for co-operation in dealing with the problem. I believe that I am right in saying that it is Britain's turn to preside at the Council of Ministers later this year. This will provide a great opportunity for us to take the initiative in dealing with this problem.

When will the depression end? There are estimates that it will end by the 1990s and that we shall then see a significant upturn in orders although there have been false dawns and false hopes before. At the moment the freight rates in the general tramp market are less that they were 10 years ago. They have been as much as three and a half times as high as they are today. There are ships on the oceans of the world where even the operating costs are not covered by the income they are earning. As we have heard tonight, there are vast numbers of ships laid up around the world and they equate to several years' capacity of the world's shipyards.

[Mr. Neville Trotter]

I have numerous cuttings pointing out the international nature of the problem. I shall not delay other speakers by reading from too many. However, there are headlines, such as

"Dutch yard in bankruptcy"

and

"10,000 jobs at risk in West German yards"

They also refer to how the Swedish shipyards lost their battle for survival. I visited the Swedish industry in 1974. At that time it was bigger than any other in the world, except Japan. Yet the Swedish industry has now disappeared and all the yards have closed. There is not one major shipyard left in Sweden. I could quote numerous other examples from other shipbuilding countries.

It is no comfort for the people on Teesside or the engine builders on Tyneside to realise that their competitors in other western countries face the same problems. We have a unique opportunity in this country to take action. We still have a major Merchant Navy. We cannot influence buyers or owners in the rest of the world, but surely we should be able to influence our own Merchant Navy. It is not a question of going to British shipowners and just asking them to buy. Repeated attempts have been made to do that. The information that I have is that, in the present state of the world shipping market, the immediate answer from the British shipowners is that they do not want to know. They do not want to buy any ships in the present climate.

Something must be done to stimulate our shipowners. Something must be done through the tax regime to make it worth while once again for them to buy ships. At one time Britain was a tax haven for shipowners. That is perhaps hard to believe. Yet many foreign shipowners found it worth while to trade under the British flag. Why can we not try to recreate such conditions? That must prove to be a good investment. I know that the Treasury would claim that it would lose income by doing that. However, in the long run it would surely be to our advantage to recreate that state of affairs, and I would suggest that the benefit would not in fact be long in coming.

The problems do not simply lie with those employed in the shipyards. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) referred to the statistic of 3:1 behind the shipyards. That ratio is probably higher today because the marine equipment industry has been successful in exporting. That industry has therefore not yet suffered as much as the shipbuilding industry. The proportion of jobs in the manufacture of parts is thus probably higher now than it used to be.

Industries like the marine equipment industry must retain a home market. If there is no home market, these firms will go down the plughole as well. We should be concerned about the jobs not only in the shipyards but in the marine equipment industry throughout the country which are also at risk.

I have mentioned the efficiency that now exists in our yards, and I have spoken about the need to ensure fair competition, which we can achieve only through international action. I have said that we must stimulate orders, especially through our own Merchant Navy.

I believe that the Government's record on financial aid is commendable. The Government have given a great deal of money to the industry. I believe that we should include Harland and Wolff in our consideration of financial aid. That large yard in Belfast, which was recently the source of such concern to the people of Tyneside through its entering the order for the fleet auxiliaries, does not come under the same Department and thus is usually omitted from the quoted figures for aid. I believe that in fact Harland and Wolff should come under the same Department as the rest of the British shipbuilding industry. We should certainly take into account its finances.

I calculate that, including the money that has gone to Harland and Wolff, on each working day over the past seven years some £1 million of taxpayers' money has gone to the shipbuilding industry. The Government cannot be faulted on the amount of money that has been provided. Whether all that money has been wisely spent is another matter.

Reference has been made to the fact that not all the available intervention fund money has been used. That is most unfortunate. I know that that is not the fault or the wish of the Government. They have sought to be allowed to give a higher intervention fund percentage. I believe that the Government tried to obtain from the EEC permission to pay 35 per cent., but the EEC would not go beyond the present 22·5 per cent. As a result, there have been cases where the subsidy has been insufficient to obtain orders, and the lack of orders has meant that the total money available has not been spent. Our presidency of the Council of Ministers may allow us to correct that position.

I do not believe a lack of money is the cause of the problems in the industry. Indeed, those at the head of British Shipbuilders have told me that money is not the basic problem. It is a problem not of lack of finance, but of lack of orders.

Aid must certainly continue to be available if we are to obtain future orders. I am sure that it will continue, and I have not heard any suggestion at all that it will not be available. We must also match the soft credit that is offered at times, against the rules, by our competitors. I am not sure that we have always kept to the rules, but we will not debate that tonight.

I have observed a change in attitude over the years to countering our competitors' terms. At one time, when one referred to the competition offering better terms, one was told, "We are British and we play by the rules." After a while, one heard that only if there was written evidence that the other side had broken the rules—almost if one could get a sworn statement from the other Government—perhaps then the British Government would help to match them. That was not much good. Then there was a stage when, at the eleventh hour, if a yard was desperate, with an order on the verge of being lost some help might be considered. By that time it was usually too late. I am glad to say that there is now a much more realistic assessment of the important role of soft credit in obtaining the few orders that are available.

The future of the merchant side of the industry depends on our success in attracting orders for specialist and sophisticated ships. Research and development are therefore extremely important. I hope that we shall soon embark on the construction of an "efficient" ship—that is the name given by British Shipbuilders to a forward-looking project for a very modern ship, especially economic to operate, on the design of which considerable money has been spent, but the ship itself has still to be built. Such ships can provide the key to the future success of the industry.

Our shipbuilding industry must not be allowed to disappear. I know that the Government do not desire or intend that it should disappear. We are, as we have always been, a maritime nation. Not merely our history, but our future requires us to have a minimum size for the industry, and we have surely now reached that size.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. It may be of assistance to the House if I say that the Front-Bench spokesmen will seek to rise at 20 minutes to 10. A large number of hon. Members still wish to speak.

9.11 pm

Mr. Ian Wrigglesworth (Stockton, South): I shall try to help other hon. Members to take part in this important debate, which has not given us the time to rehearse all the important arguments.

I hope that the message has got through loud and clear to the Government from both sides of the House. The right hon. Members for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) have made the facts plain and made the solutions plain. It is clear that we are debating the extermination of the shipbuilding industry and whether the Government have the political will to keep the industry in being.

I hope that the message getting through to Ministers is that both sides of the House wish to ensure that, by the methods suggested, the industry is maintained. I support all the suggestions made about action in the European Community and strengthening the support given to the industry through credit and about support through the intervention fund, public sector orders and scrap and build. There are many ways in which the Government can ensure the survival of the industry, if they have the will.

As the hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) said, Teesside has suffered a devastating blow. We have the highest unemployment—at 22 per cent.—of any county in the United Kingdom. In inner town wards it is 30 or 40 per cent. and the county council estimates that, if the shipyard is closed, unemployment in at least one ward on Teesside will be 60 per cent. That is an unacceptable and untenable situation for any part of the country.

I hope that on his visit to the area tomorrow the Secretary of State will make an announcement at least to give some hope that the action taken by local authorities, the enterprise agency and the new body that is being established will be drawn together. Various Government Departments, local authorities and other bodies are trying to help, and all that action needs to be brought together.

I hope that when the right hon. Gentleman sees the situation on Teesside for himself he will speak to his colleagues in the Department of the Environment, the Department of Employment and other Government Departments to ensure that help is co-ordinated and focused in a much better way. The Government have had suggestions from hon. Members and from the industry about how they can help the industry to survive. I hope that the loud, clear and unanimous message coming from the House will make Ministers act.

9.15 pm

Mr. Richard Ottaway (Nottingham, North): I shall endeavour to be brief. Many Opposition Members are closer to the action than I am, although there are many suppliers of maritime equipment in the Nottingham area.

It is common ground that the root of the problem faced by the shipping industry is worldwide over-capacity. As I told the House before, in Elefsis bay just outside Athens there are 1,000 ships laid up. Hundreds of ships are laid up in the fjords of Norway, and the Burmah Endeavour lying in Southampton dockyard is a harsh reminder of the over-capacity. We read of cancelled orders by the Hong Kong fleet and the closure of the Wartsila yard in Finland. All that comes as no surprise when we bear in mind that the world has twice the number of ships that it needs.

The problem is not confined to Europe, because in Japan last year the enormous Sanko fleet went into liquidation. That is an illustration of the ludicrous policy of ordering ships for which there is no work. The situation is worsening. Last year was bad, but this year is even worse. In the port of London last week was the Maersk Mariner, one of the most revolutionary and technologically up-to-date vessel that the world has seen. There is no employment for it at all, and it came into service only three weeks ago. Because of the collapse of the American tourist industry, at least two cruise lines are likely to go to the wall in the next few weeks.

In shipping, freight rates are depressed. That is nice for consumers, but the shipowner can compete only by flagging out, and it is estimated that about £350,000 a year can be saved per ship by flagging out. Leaving aside the defence issue, do we actually need any more British ships? It makes no difference whether a vessel coming up Southampton water is flying the red duster or the Panamanian flag. There is no shortage of ships to bring in the nation's raw materials and basic commodities.

What is happening is widespread throughout Europe. *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman jumps to conclusions. I am trying to outline the position and say which policies should be adopted. All the fleets in Europe are suffering from the same cause. Some 25 per cent. of the world's cargo movements are in and out of Europe. That is twice the number of cargo movements in the United States.

It is essential that we maintain some sort of fleet in Europe, and that fleet should preferably be built in European yards. That illustrates the importance of the emerging European maritime transport policy. I returned from Brussels this afternoon with members of the Bow group. We had been considering making an input to the European maritime transport policy. That policy is important because it is a first step towards a concerted European maritime policy. The dilemma about that policy is the direction that it will take.

On the one hand, we could adopt protectionism and, on the other hand, we could have a protective policy. The seamen's unions want protectionism because that means more jobs, but protectionism costs a lot of money and if we opt for Community cabotage the result will be high prices. We then have to ask ourselves, who will pay those high prices? If we go down the road of protectionism, the United States will interpret that in an obvious way and retaliate, most likely by extending the Jones Act to the cross trades. The excellent report by the Select Committee of the House of Lords on European maritime transport policy says in paragraph 51:

"If the world became more protectionist, it would be increasingly difficult to compete in the cross trades, and that would lead to further reductions in the United Kingdom's fleet".

[Mr. Richard Ottaway]

We do not want further reductions in the United Kingdom fleet and we must take steps to ensure that there are no such reductions. Protectionism would result in nothing gained and possibly everything lost.

If we adopt a protective policy, the first thing we must do is to create a genuine open market. We must take the full proposals currently before the Commission on which we are now close to consensus. I urge the Government not to treat regulations 1, 2 and 3 without doing a deal on regulation 4 at the same time, because we will never get the French and the Germans to agree about a proper system of cabotage if we lose what little leverage we have by proceeding on the other three regulations.

We must also protect ourselves against unfair competition from, say, the Russian fleet. That is why regulation 1 is so important, because it will give Europe the power to respond to the unfair Russian competition that we are currently experiencing. [HON. MEMBERS: "What about shipbuilding?"] I am coming to that, but one cannot look at shipbuilding on its own. The two are totally interrelated but distinct problems, and we must deal with one before dealing with the other. However, whichever route one takes, there will be a decline in shipbuilding. The harsh choice that the Government must face is that either we have no ships or we have protectionism.

At the end of the day, the Government are faced with the inevitable fact that there must be some form of subsidy. But how does one subsidise shipping? We should continue the soft loans which have been available and which many other hon. Members have discussed. We should have a "use British ships" policy. I am dismayed that Government cargoes are carried on foreign flag vessels, and the Government's freight agents should be instructed to show more flexibility in the fixing of ships. If there are such enormous subsidies for shipbuilding, why cannot there be subsidies for ship operators as well?

As the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said, why cannot we have tax concessions to British flag vessels? There is no reason whatever why capital allowances that were taken away from British shipowners should not be restored. In fact, there would be nothing to lose by making the British flag a tax-free zone. As has already been said, this could result in Britain becoming a tax haven, and when that was done in Greece there was a dramatic expansion in the size of the Greek fleet.

We must also concentrate our efforts on special projects. It is a little known fact among Opposition Members that, while, sadly, there are closures, in the last few weeks an office has been opened in Middlesbrough by Cenargo, which at present is the only growing British company. It will be formally opened tomorrow. That company makes special products and enterprises. We must also look at defence, which many hon. Members have already mentioned and on which I shall not dwell.

It is a sad but self-evident fact that we do not need an official shipbuilding industry to have an efficient fleet. If hon. Members do not believe me, they need only look at the aircraft industry to appreciate that. That has been accepted by Australia and Canada, which have completely abandoned having their own fleets and shipbuilding industries and which now charter vessels as and when required.

We are in a mess as a result of over-capacity, and that is the fault of shipbuilding policy. To be frank, loans have been too easy to come by in recent years, and that applies throughout the world. The United States lines, which run a non-stop container service, could get their hands on 12 vessels without paying a penny, and that results in a constant over-supply and consequently a reduction in freight rates. That has crippled British shipowners.

Opposition Members will remember the subsidies for Polish ships in the mid-1970s, and while they welcomed the jobs that that created, they should also bear in mind that it put a British shipping company into liquidation. [HON. MEMBERS: "Stop filibustering."] I am not filibustering. Every word that I am saying is solid stuff.

I wish to put forward four aspects of policy. First, we should embark on a scrapping policy and should not build at the same time. Over the last decade, the subsidies to the British ship industry would have allowed us to buy every surplus tanker in the world and to scrap them. That is the kind of subsidy that has gone into British shipbuilding, and that is a way in which money could be made available.

We should concentrate on building up the defence of the country and, where possible, we should bring forward orders—I understand that there is an internal dispute about whether the extra funds for such a policy should be in the Defence budget or in the Trade and Industry budget. I urge upon the Front Bench that the defence of the country should not suffer as a result of the policies needed to deal with the social problems faced in the shipbuilding industry.

We should have a European shipping policy. When we have the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Commission should be instructed to examine the concept of a European shipbuilding policy. When the Prime Minister talks about the advantages of a worldwide summit, shipbuilding should go on the agenda of such a summit. The Government must be positive. They should be like the company that is opening up in Middlesbrough: they should think positively and they should be positive.

9.25 pm

Mr. Gordon A. T. Bagier (Sunderland, South): I hope the hon. Member for Nottingham, North (Mr. Ottaway) will forgive me if I suggest that he has shown almost atrocious cheek in lecturing us from his position as a representative of Nottingham Slipway. It ill becomes him to lecture us. His was the second discordant speech today. The first was by the Secretary of State. Every other speech, from both sides of the House, attempted to make a positive contribution to the discussion.

This has been a heck of a week. Along with some others, I came down on Monday morning hoping to get some light from the Secretary of State. Some of us had left home very early in the morning. When we went in to see the Secretary of State we were a little despondent about the position, but we came out devastated. The Secretary of State could not give us any hope about the long-term future of shipbuilding. He hoped something would happen, he believed that something might happen, but we heard nothing from him about Government policy or about how he saw the future of British shipbuilding.

Again this evening he has talked about how much money has been put into shipbuilding by his Government since 1979. He did not give the other part of the equation —the reduction of the work force from 55,000 to just under 6,000.

On Tuesday my hon. Friend the Member for Sunderland, North (Mr. Clay), local authority members from Wearside and I went to see Phillip Hares, the chairman of British Shipbuilders. I believe that he and his team are doing everything that they can to bring orders to British shipyards. I am not saying that he blames the Government for what is happening. I do not believe for one moment that he wants to be made redundant. I believe that he genuinely wants to help and that he is fully aware of the difficulties.

We need a political move from the Secretary of State. We want to hear clearly and unequivocally that the policy of Her Majesty's Government is to maintain a shipbuilding capacity in the United Kingdom. The Secretary of State has dodged that question. He dodged it three times on Monday morning, and he has not yet said anything constructive about Government policy.

One could almost say that all hon. Members who have spoken in the debate have been unanimous about how far the Government should go in helping British shipyards. I shall not rehearse the arguments that have been put forward eloquently by all my colleagues. The Secretary of State should consider deeply what is happening in the areas where massive redundancies will take place. Over the weekend and at the beginning of the week it was even suggested that we would have no shipbuilding industry.

In Sunderland we will lose 925 jobs. What will that mean? In the local context, those 925 men will join 20,918 others who are already on the dole. So the palliative of £10 million for all the areas will have to be spread over that additional number. The hon. Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) said that for every one shipyard job there were three outside. That will mean that we will have 22,000 men on the dole in Sunderland.

The local authority has done its utmost to help. For example, it has provided rate relief for shipyard buildings in Sunderland, at a cost of £127,500 per annum. It has done river dredging, at a cost of approximately £200,000 per annum, for which it has not charged the shipbuilding industry a penny. It is providing £3,000 and space for BS to go to the Stavanger offshore oil exhibition. Even more important, for the youngsters it is providing the cash for 23 apprentices to start work in the yard and learn the craft, which it hopes they will be able to use in future.

It is very important tonight to have a message of hope from the Government, and an unequivocal statement that British Shipbuilding has a future in the United Kingdom, and that the Government will work along the lines suggested by all my colleagues. If they can give that assurance, BS has some chance of capturing orders, because it will be backed by a Government dedicated to maintaining shipbuilding. At present we are not sure if that is so. That is the answer that we want from the Secretary of State.

9.30 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Until a short while ago few people would have heard of Chernobyl. Until the terrible disaster at Aberfan, few people would have heard of Aberfan. Langbaurgh is not particularly well known among my colleagues in the House. When I go to the bar and people ask me the name of my constituency, I discover few have heard of it. Few have heard of the district council area in which Smith's Dock is situated.

The closure of Smith's Dock will devastate the area. It comes on top of other closures along the river during the past six years. The number of jobs at British Steel has decreased from 22,821 in April 1980 to today's 7,607—a net loss of 15,214 jobs. The number at ICI has dropped from 12,500 to 7,300. Now Smith's Dock, which lies between the two on the river, is about to be closed.

Tonight we can make only short speeches, but I wish to emphasise the fact that the River Tees is not the River Tyne, that the Wear is in between, and that they are all north of Watford. It is time that some members of the Government spent time living in the north-east, not merely visiting it, in order to understand the impact of their policies on the region.

This evening I have listened to a litany of ideas. I would be less than fair to the Government if I did not think that they had thought of all of them, investigated them, and concluded that there was something wrong with all of them, but I cannot believe that. The Government should be taking on board all the points that have been made by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

A little while ago the Government floated an idea about British Leyland, and found themselves with a meal that they could not digest. They have now produced a menu which, again, they will have difficulty in digesting. The British shipbuilding industry is not the British car industry. It is far more fundamental and important to our future, and we cannot allow it to decline until it becomes like the refrigeration industry, in which I once worked, or the motor-cycle industry, both of which have gone.

Langbaurgh does not have a great deal of history, and will not have a future if present events continue. We produced one of the greatest seamen in the world in Captain Cook. If he had looked at the future as the Government are doing, wrung his hands and said, "My goodness, there is nothing I can do about this," we would never have found Australia, let alone New Zealand.

There are ideas that should be pursued. Some of them may be zany and not worth a great deal of consideration. I shall throw one in: why not build a ship at Smith's Dock with NHS funds, and fill it will all the people who need sea voyages for their health? That would create employment, maintain the industry, fulfil an NHS need, and stimulate the sort of thinking in which my Front Bench should be engaged.

9.34 pm

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): We study history and from that we try to learn lessons. If ever there were an example of none of the lessons being learnt, it is the shipbuilding industry. Successive Governments have stated the nature of the problem and commissioned reports, such as the Swallow and the Geddes reports, but every move towards reforming the industry has faltered for the reason mentioned by the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price)—the Treasury. All efforts have collapsed because of Treasury stubbornness. I blame no particular Minister or Chancellor of the Exchequer. They are all guilty.

This is the final episode for British shipbuilding. If a rescue operation is not planned now, and if the Government do not interfere in British Shipbuilders' plans for closure, the position will spell ultimate doom, as many hon. Members have pointed out. Having said that, I do not want it spread around that I am saying that the industry will collapse completely. However, I make it clear that such a fate is damned close, and the problem could be terminal. Wallsend has been battered to the point where the

[Mr. Ted Garrett]

blackness and apathy have to be seen to be believed. The coal industry has gone, the merchant shipbuilding industry has gone, general engineering is going and so is the marine engineering industry unless something happens.

The Secretary of State spoke about the vast sums of money that have been put into the infrastructure of the region by this and previous Governments. What is the good of putting in the infrastructure if no balance for the taxpayer comes out of it? We have spent thousands of millions of pounds that are a loss to the British taxpayer. If I were a taxpayer living in the more affluent areas, I would be asking my Member of Parliament why something could not be done to redress the balance so that the losses could be recouped for the general kitty.

It is no use having good roads and schools if nothing is done to get maximum advantage. If this situation continues, we might as well close the polytechnics, because there will be no requirement for technical education, and we might as well close the universities because there will be no places for naval architects. If I am accused of giving the Government ideas, I apologise. I hope that the more enlightened members of the Government think that I am being facetious, although the underlying purpose is serious.

Money has been put into various funds. I should like the Government to collaborate with British Shipbuilders and the unions in considering redundancy schemes for the industry. If the worst comes to the worst, the men will be unemployed for many years. About 890 men from Clark Kincaid in my constituency will be paid off this year. It might surprise the House to know that the 20 to 24 age group will be the worst affected. They will receive the least redundancy payments because the scheme is based on age and length of service. Therefore, the redundancy payment scheme must be examined, and the Government must try to squeeze something from the Treasury to enhance the value of the scheme.

9.38 pm

Mr. David Lambie (Cunninghame, South): In the short time left before the Front-Bench spokesmen rise to speak, I cannot deliver the speech that I have prepared on behalf of the shipyard workers at the Ailsa yard in Troon —one of the yards faced with closure. Like many right hon. and hon. Members, I am bitter and angry at the attitude of the Government, and especially this Secretary of State, towards shipbuilding in the United Kingdom. Last week, at the Tory party conference in Perth, the Prime Minister spoke of a caring Prime Minister and a caring Tory Government. The Minister whom I met last Monday was like a dead fish. He showed no compassion and no care for anyone. He was not interested in the future of our constituents, especially those in the Troon and Ayrshire area. If the Minister cannot solve the problems of the shipbuilding and shipping industry he should get out and allow someone else to move in and put forward a proposition that will at least help us.

I have had experience of enterprise trusts, such as BSC (Industry) Ltd, NCB (Enterprise) Ltd and British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd, which was a local enterprise trust. Despite all the cosmetic attempts to assist in Cunninghame, one man in every four is unemployed. Coalminers and other workers are still unemployed. If the Government do not get rid of those who are unable to deal with the problems and replace them, even with other Tories, such as those right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken tonight, we shall see the end of Britain as a manufacturing country. We shall see the end of the communities of hon. Members on both sides of the House. Tonight we make a plea on behalf of those communities.

9.41 pm

Mr. Gordon Brown (Dunfermline, East): As my right hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) emphasised, the debate is about whether this island trading nation, with more than 1,000 years of maritime traditions, will continue to have a strategic capacity to build merchant ships.

The Minister's speech was completely devoid of any proposal or fresh initiative to save the industry. He said that he wanted to save the industry. What we want from the Government is a commitment to implement measures that will save the industry. The Minister said that the closures and the cuts would make the industry leaner and, therefore, fitter. How much fitter can a skeleton become? Has the Minister looked at the statement by the man he praised only last week, Mr. Graham Day, who said of cuts such as these:

"The industry will not be leaner and more fit. It will not be here."?

There is a leanness beyond which life is not sustainable.

I ask the House whether, at any previous point in the 700-year history of Parliament, until the seven years of this Government, the prospect of the disappearance of our entire merchant shipbuilding industry could have been imaginable, far less seriously contemplated. On any previous occasion, could any Government, of any political colour, have attracted even their most ardent and enthusiastic supporters into their Lobby to defend such a policy?

Britain, the biggest island state in Europe, survives by a seagoing trade. Ninety per cent. of our trade arrives and departs by sea. Our merchant fleet is the fourth arm of our defence. Should we face, with resignation, the prospect of the shipbuilding industry reaching such a point of collapse? The only future that the Minister can put before us is that we conduct our trade and protect our defences in ships bought in Japan, repaired and refitted in Korea or Taiwan, crewed in Panama and flying the flag of Liberia. This is the Government who claimed that they would make Britain great again.

Tonight we have heard from Members who represent Middlesbrough, Govan, Ayrshire and Sunderland about the desolation in our shipbuilding communities. Those communities and work forces have done everything that the Government have asked of them. In the areas of productivity, flexibility, wage negotiations and industrial relations they have made sacrifices to help the Government's industrial strategy. They are now asked to sacrifice their jobs because of the Government's spending strategy. They are the mass casualties in the Government's economic war of attrition. They are told from the comfort of Whitehall that things are getting better, that we are in the sixth year of growth and that there is no crisis, but there is despair in the communities that Ministers refuse to visit, and desolation in the faces that they never see.

Tonight we have heard also from some Conservative Members. They are perhaps isolated voices in the Conservative party, but I believe that they are representative of a Conservative tradition. The right hon.

Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) and the hon. Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) did more in a few short minutes to speak up for the Conservative party's maritime traditions than any Minister has done in the seven long years under this Administration.

The Government's proposition is that Britain is suffering because the world is suffering, that the British shipbuilding industry is in crisis because the world's shipbuilding industry is in crisis, as though we have borne an equal burden of the cuts and closures. If there has been an equal sacrifice, why, since 1979, have the French, Germans and Italians—far less the Japanese and the Koreans—lost 5,000, 6,000, 7,000 or 8,000 workers in their merchant shipbuilding industry, while Britain has lost 25,000 workers, and the number is increasing? Why has their capacity been cut by a third or a half, while our capacity has been cut by two thirds? Why has the share of world orders of those countries remained relatively stable, while Britain's share, which used to be 50 per cent., is now less than 1 per cent.? Why is it that other countries with the least to gain do most to protect their industries, while this country, with the most to gain, does least?

The proposition of the Secretary of State is that there is no shortage of support for the industry, only a shortage of orders, and that if contracts were there the cash would be there to support them. If that is so, why did we lose the British Nuclear Fuels contract to Japan? Why did the Trinity House contract go to Korea? Why did the right hon. Gentleman's officials have to say to a Committee in the other place that for years we have been beaten hands down by our competitors in France and Germany? Why did the chairman of British Shipbuilders have to say last week, when he announced redundancies, that one of the major problems he faced was not orders but how to survive within the financial limits set by the Government?

If Government support is not the problem, why do the Government not advance the public sector orders about which hon. Members have talked—Ministry of Defence, coastal protection and fishery protection orders? There are plenty of projects which, if the Secretary of State put his mind to it, could be brought forward to save the shipbuilding yards. If support is not the problem, why does the Secretary of State not accept the recommendations of the Committee in another place and of the General Council of British Shipping that we take measures to persuade British shipowners to buy British, to repair British and to fly the British flag? If the right hon. Gentleman is serious about saving the shipbuilding industry, he will bring forward such proposals.

Is the Secretary of State not simply giving the same reassurances that were given in public in 1983 and 1984—that he is doing what he can and doing his best? Sir Robert Atkinson, the chairman of British Shipbuilders at the time, said that although those statements were being made in public, in private the Government were hell-bent on sabotaging the industry. He said that the Government never talked about developments, new research and the industry's future. In the most telling phrase of all, he said that when the Government talked about closures and redundancies a gleam came into their eyes.

Throughout the last week and during this debate we have had no more than hand-wringing apologies and the supine defence of the mistaken policies of failed Ministers in a discredited Government who are pursuing a bankrupt ideological solution that relies upon free market forces that will not work. The Government tell us that they are creating real and lasting jobs in new areas and new industries, whereas we have heard tonight that they are creating real and lasting unemployment in new areas and new industries.

Before the Minister of State ends his speech this evening, I should like him to answer three questions. We know that 10 million tonnes of world orders are available this year. Will the Minister set up a task force to ensure that many of these orders come to Britain? We know that it is within the Minister's power, through public sector orders, to save yards and prevent closures. Will he ensure that, throughout the public services and the public sector, a search is made and that decisions are made to advance orders? If the Japanese say that as long as there is an ocean to sail there will be a Japanese shipbuilding industry to build for it, why do we not say the same? If this Government will not fight for the industry, we shall, and we shall have the country behind us.

9.51 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Govan (Mr. Millan) said that people are concerned about our shipbuilding industry. I agree with him. Those who work in the shipbuilding industry live in closely knit communities, and in many cases they live in areas of high unemployment. The shipbuilding industry is part of our industrial heritage and became very successful in the market place. Today it is operating neither in the international market place nor in the domestic and European market place.

The Father of the House, the right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth (Mr. Callaghan) and my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann) reminded the House of the importance of the manufacturing sector to this country. I agree with them. The right hon. Gentleman said that high tech is very important to this country, but that the traditional industries are also very important. I agree with him. High tech makes the traditional industries as competitive as they can possibly be.

All right hon. and hon. Members acknowledge that during the last 10 years British Shipbuilders has undergone a massive change. Last week's announcement was a further step towards rationalisation. I accept immediately that that does not make it any the less painful, but the fact remains that there is a world surplus of both ships and shipyards. I agree with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) that this country needs orders. That is what this debate is about.

When, in 1977, the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) held the position that I hold now, he said that shipbuilding industries all over the world, from Japan to Sweden, were accepting the inevitability of contraction and that Britain could not be insulated from this trend. I agree with him. This Government are in a precisely similar position to that in which he found himself then.

Perfectly reasonably, certain strands have run through the debate. The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) and other Opposition Members have asked whether the Government are committed to British Shipbuilders. The answer to that, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman has heard me say twice during the proceedings on what is now the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Act 1983, is yes. I say

[Mr. Peter Morrison]

it again. We are, otherwise we would not have introduced that measure. The right hon. Member for Cardiff, South and Penarth, the Father of the House, suggested that we had given up the ghost. I assure him that that is not the case.

Perfectly reasonably, right hon. and hon. Members asked whether we are doing everything possible by way of support. My answer to that, as I told the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East and his hon. Friends during proceedings on the British Shipbuilders (Borrowing Powers) Act, is also yes.

I listened carefully to what hon. Members had to say, but they did not propose any specific changes in terms of support that we could make. If they have specific points to make, I am happy that they should do so. Opposition Members also asked whether we are doing everything that we can to secure orders. I assure all hon. Members that we are doing precisely that.

The hon. Member for Redcar (Mr. Tinn) asked about the follow-on from the fifth directive. That will cease to operate at the end of this year, and I give him an undertaking that, if I understood him correctly, we shall be going down precisely the route that he would like us to go. That is to say that we would wish to see that we are on an equal footing with all our European counterparts. My hon. Friend the Member for Tynemouth (Mr. Trotter) pointed out that we shall have an opportunity to secure that as President of the Council during the latter half of this year, and that will be an opportunity that we shall want to grab.

The right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East tended, as did some of his hon. Friends, to mock British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. The right hon. and learned Gentleman has steel communities close to his constituency, and I hope he will agree that BSC (Industry) Ltd. has had impressive achievements, although he may want such achievements to go further.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman also asked why we have not referred to the yards—Smith's Dock, Clark Kincaid and Ferguson-Ailsa. The simple answer is that in each case decisions have to be made for commercial industrial purposes. If it were not Smith's dock it would have to be another yard. As hon. Members will appreciate, the matter is ultimately for decision by British Shipbuilders. However, if that is the way that the right hon. and learned Gentleman wants us to proceed, it would be robbing Peter to pay Paul.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman talked about losing our merchant fleet. That, I accept, is correct, but my right hon. Friend the Member for Taunton pointed out that shipping, like any other business, has to be profitable, and it is no doubt for that reasons principally that the position is as it is.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman and the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East suggested a task force. The three specific points that they wish us to look into—bringing forward public orders, improving the package of support and looking at what can be done for British shipowners—are all matters that are currently under review.

The hon. Member for Sunderland, South (Mr. Bagier) asked me about the long-term future of British shipbuilding. I conclude by saying that as far as I am concerned it will get all the backing from us that is possible.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 205, Noes 277.

Division No. 192] **[10 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Coleman, Donald
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(Llli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Edwards, Bob *(W'h'mpt'n SE)*
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy *(Hillh'd)*
John, Brynmor
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce

Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Neillist, David
O Brien, William
O Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pavitt, Laurie
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robertson, George
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Short, Mrs R.*(W'hampt n NE)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C.*(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Woodall, Alec
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Don Dixon and
Mr. Frank Haynes.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dicks, Terry
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gorst, John
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*

Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watson, John
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:

Mr. Peter Lloyd and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House notes the massive slump in demand for merchant ships which has led to cutbacks in shipyards throughout the world; regrets that this has inevitably led to contraction in the United Kingdom's own merchant shipbuilding industry despite the Government's extensive and continued support for British Shipbuilders (including over £1,400 million since 1979); and welcomes the Government's package of measures to provide special assistance to those affected.

Radioactive Waste (Disposal)

10.14 pm

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We are about to debate the Town and Country Planning (NIREX) Special Development Order, which was laid before the House by the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he held another position in the Cabinet. You will notice, Mr. Speaker, that the last page of the order, which is dated 7 May 1986, contains the name of the former Secretary of State for the Environment.

The Secretary of State for the Environment appointed earlier today has plainly not had an opportunity to consider the details of the order, let alone the representations made by me, Glanford borough council, Humberside county council, North and South Killingholme parish councils, East Halton parish council, Brigg town council, Cleethorpes district council and many other local authorities in my constituency and in the constituencies represented by my right hon. Friend the Patronage Secretary, my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) and my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). If my right hon. Friend had had an opportunity to consider those representations, his judgment might have been different from that of the former Secretary of State for the Environment.

I now see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on the Government Front Bench. I cannot believe, in fairness to him, that he will have had an opportunity between leaving the Department of Transport this afternoon and entering the Department of the Environment, with all the business involved in moving from one Department to another, to be briefed by his officials on the impact of the order on my constituency and the constituencies of the other hon. Members who are affected by the order.

There is a case for the House not pursuing its consideration of the special development order until my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has had an opportunity to reflect upon the consultation process which took place between 25 February and 18 April. It is essential for him, as the new Secretary of State wanting to bring a fresh judgment to the matter, to bear in mind that the policy on nuclear waste disposal and the eventual publication of the order was changed when my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) took over as Secretary of State for the Environment from my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin). You will recall, Mr. Speaker, that my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford proposed that intermediate waste be included in the order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. These remarks would be more appropriate to the hon. Gentleman's speech, if he should catch my eye a second time.

Mr. Brown: May I conclude my point of order and request you, Mr. Speaker, to ask the Secretary of State for the Environment, whom I congratulate on his appointment, to say whether he wishes to have time to consider this policy, as he was not involved in its details? He might wish to suggest that the House should not pursue the matter today.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) has put forward a powerful case for not debating the special development order tonight, and I support what he has said. However, there is, I regret to say, yet another point which he did not make. The order is ultra vires.

It is absolutely clear that the order is laid by a Secretary of State, but we are entitled to ask, "By which Secretary of State?" I know perfectly well that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Education and Science laid the order. He told me so and I believe him. However, I am entitled to ask my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has had an opportunity to ratify that decision. If he has not, we are being asked to consider a special development order which has never been laid by the relevant Secretary of State.

You, Mr. Speaker, have the rare good fortune to have by your side my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General. It is customary on these occasions to ask for his advice on complicated matters of law, and I cannot believe that, faced with such a complicated matter of law, the House can let the Attorney-General go away without giving us his assistance.

I think that I speak for the entire House—at least for those hon. Members who are not on the payroll—when I say that we desire to hear the Attorney-General on this important point. Even if I cannot prevail on my right hon. and learned Friend to come to the Dispatch Box, may I repeat the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes? When you were elected, Mr. Speaker, you stressed the importance of representing Back Benchers. My hon. Friend and I, who represent constituencies deeply touched by the special development order, stand alone because the payroll is against us, the Labour party, in substance, is against us, and the Liberal party has not made up its mind. *[Interruption.]* I am sorry; some have and some have not. Liberal Members are in a state of complete ambivalence and the SDP is in an even worse state.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Again, these are all points that the hon. Member could——

Mr. Hogg: Forgive me, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have got the gist of what has been said by the hon. Members for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown). I have had the advantage of a whispered conversation with a Law Officer and the hon. Member for Grantham will know, because he is a constitutional expert in his way, that ministerial responsibility is indivisible. There is nothing ultra vires about the order.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek your advice on what I can tell my constituents. They are fighting to preserve their area and the surrounding district from what amounts to a 100-year blight. During that fight they have written hundreds of letters to the Secretary of State, signed petitions in their thousands to Parliament and to the Secretary of State, and sent deputations to the Secretary of State. It is true that they have been listened to mainly by junior Ministers—by acolytes—but——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that they have, but what is the point of order for me?

Mr. Mitchell: It is a question for you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents feel that all the representations and arguments that they have made have been channelled up to a Secretary of State who has now moved on. They have not had the chance to have those arguments heard by the new Secretary of State. It is on the basis of those arguments that the right hon. Gentleman will or will not relegate them to the 100-year blight of the special development order. It is important that they feel satisfied that their views have reached the man who is making the decision. What can I tell my constituents——

Mr. Speaker: What the hon. Gentleman tells his constituents is what I have already said to the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), that ministerial responsibility is indivisible.

Mr. Hogg: Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have dealt with the point of order.

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I should like to raise an entirely different point of order on a matter of procedure, and I raise it in the light of the consideration by the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments. It is about the certified copy of the Town and Country Planning (England and Wales) NIREX Special Development Order which was laid before the House on 14 May. The original order signed by the Secretary of State has not been laid before the House. Indeed, it never is. The order that was considered yesterday was a certified copy. The certified copy which is in the Journal Office contains approximately 40 amendments.

What is sought tonight is approval of the order made by the Secretary of State under that statutory instrument, under section 24 and section 287 (5) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1971. It has to be approved in this House. The first step is for the order itself to be laid before the House. A certified copy has been laid before the House, but I raise no point of order on that fact alone. I should like to refer you, Mr. Speaker, to page 614 of "Erskine May", which says:

"Statutory instruments and other documents which require to be laid must be complete and in full, and correct."

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has your copy of "Erskine May", Mr. Speaker.

My first point is that an error contained in the copy of a statutory instrument laid before the House vitiates the laying of the order. I refer you, Mr. Speaker, to the ruling made by Mr. Speaker in the House on 15 May 1946. Sir John Mellor said:

"I wish to put a Question to you, Mr. Speaker, of which I have given Private Notice. It is whether your attention has been called to the error of approximately 30 per cent. in the maximum price of certain cloth, prescribed in the purported copy of Statutory Rule and Order No. 179 of 1946, and related Schedule 2A, which copy was presented to Parliament on 14th March; whether your attention has also been called to the purported correction of the error by the Board of Trade by a correcting slip issued on 26th April, upon which date the time for moving to annul the Order normally expired; and if you will rule whether the Order was validly presented, and, if so, upon what date?"

Your predecessor made this ruling, Mr. Speaker:

"My attention has been called to the error contained in the copy of Statutory Order No. 179, laid on 14th March, or rather in the Related Schedule 2A, by which this Order was accompanied. The period of 40 days during which, under the parent statute—the Goods and Services (Price Control) Act, 1941, Section 17—the Order could be prayed against has now elapsed. The error to which my attention is directed occurs in page 21, line 11, column 2*(a)* of the Related Schedule, and consists in the printing of '2s.10½d.' in place of '2s.0½d.'. A corrigendum slip indicating the error was issued on 26th April. The question I have to decide is whether the error contained in the copy of the Statutory Order, as presented, vitiates the laying of the Order before the House for the purposes of proceedings in this House under the Act."

Your predecessor ruled as follows, Mr. Speaker:

"There is no precise precedent which covers this case. But it has on several occasions been ruled by my predecessors in the Chair, in the case of the laying before the House of Statutory Orders in dummy, that the period, for which an Order has to lie before the House, begins on the date on which a complete copy of the Order is available to Members. This principle, in my view, requires that the copy of an order laid should not only be complete but also correct."—[*Official Report*, 15 May 1946; Vol. 422, c. 1880-81.]

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is boring the House. If he is alleging that there is something incorrect in this order, that is one thing, but I have before me the certified true copy of Statutory Instrument No. 812. As he has drawn my attention to page 614 of "Erskine May" and read part of it, let me quote the relevant part which states:

"The laying copies must be certified by the responsible Department as true copies of the original document retained by the Department".

A true, certified copy that has been duly signed has been laid in this case. It is not out of order in any way. Therefore, what is the hon. Gentleman's point?

Mr. Hickmet: May I answer that, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must put a point of order to me with which I can deal. I have dealt with what he has said, and there is nothing more to say. We must move on. I call the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark).

10.31 pm

Dr. David Clark (South Shields) *rose*——

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Dr. Clark: I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that the Town and Country Planning (NIREX) Special Development Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 812), dated 7th May 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14th May, be annulled.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I hope that you have not yet called the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), because following the point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) had a good run, and I have dealt with his points.

Mr. Michael Brown *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman can make his points during his speech.

Dr. Clark: We are obviously discussing a matter which although on the surface is narrow and technical, is one of great concern and emotion, as we have seen. Hon. Members rightly feel that this is a serious issue.

Technically the issue is narrow—whether we grant NIREX a special development order to allow it to bypass the planning procedure and start exploratory work on a near-surface site for the disposal of radioactive waste. It is true to say, without any exaggeration, that the

background to this apparently straightforward application is of great national interest because it will have implications, stretching far into the future, with which our descendents will have to live for generations to come. Such a responsibility is grave, and I hope to persuade the House that it would be an error to grant NIREX this special development order.

Although the nuclear and radioactive issue appears complicated, it is not impossible for the layman to grasp. It is incumbent upon us as legislators to try to understand these complicated isues and then to explain them to our constituents. In that sense I pay a warm tribute to the Chairman and members of the Select Committee on the Environment for their recent report on radioactive waste. It was first-class, and it has helped the learning curve of some hon. Members, including myself. It has helped to clarify in my mind how we should be tackling some of these fundamental issues that will remain with us, whether or not we are in favour of nuclear energy and weaponry and, much more fundamentally, whether or not we are in favour of medical treatment that involves radioactive material.

The waste from those activities will remain with us, and we shall have to tackle it. Tonight we are discussing how we might tackle only one type of waste—very low-level waste. I ask for reassurance from the Government that we are talking about only very low-level waste. I assume that the statement on 2 May about intermediate waste stands.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am sure the hon. Gentleman appreciates that there is a distinction between waste known as low-level waste and waste known as very low-level waste.

Dr. Clark: If the hon. Gentleman had been more patient, he would have heard me put that very point to the Minister. I was about to ask the Minister whether it is true that only short-lived, non-alpha low-activity waste would be deposited in these sites. As the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) has indicated, there are different types of low-level waste. It is important that the point is made.

We are talking now not about the technical application of tackling the problem but how we go about the exploratory work. It might be useful if I quickly rehearse the chronology leading up to the order.

The House will remember that on 25 October 1983 the Government announced that two sites would be investigated to see whether they were suitable for low-level and intermediate-level waste. One was a shallow facility at Elstow in Bedfordshire, and the other was at Billingham in Cleveland, where it was proposed to have a deep repository in an anhydrite mine.

It was decided, even by the Government, that the Billingham proposal would be unsuitable. In January 1985 they announced that that proposal would be abandoned but that they would press ahead and look for at least two other sites with shallow trenches. The proposal to deposit waste at Billingham may have been sound scientifically and technically, but it illustrates the difficulty which we face when dealing with the nuclear industry, because we are dealing with public perception and understanding. While the proposal may have been sound technically, in terms of psychology it was sheer madness to attempt to locate a nuclear dump under an area that was not only greatly built-up but that had on it one of the largest chemical complexes in the United Kingdom. That indicates the difference in perception between us as laymen and nuclear scientists. Anyhow, the Government rightly decided that Billingham was not a suitable site. On 25 February this year they announced that three additional sites were proposed for exploration by NIREX — South Killingholme in Humberside, Fulbeck in Lincolnshire and Bradwell in Essex. We then had the announcement of 2 May, to which I have already referred, when the Government appeared to say that they were talking about only low-level waste. That is the background.

During a very good and thorough debate on 13 March we had a general philosophical discussion about nuclear waste. Many of the arguments which will be developed further tonight were deployed at that stage. Since that debate the whole world has experienced something which has heightened the nuclear awareness of every person in the northern hemisphere. I do not think there is anyone in the House or in the country whose awareness of nuclear and radioactive matters has not been heightened by the terrible disaster at Chernobyl. It would not be the slightest exaggeration to say that that has created a great deal of fear, anguish and anxiety among millions of people.

For the first time many people who had not questioned radioactivity or nuclear power have begun to question it. It would be surprising if that was not so. Indeed, that experience has been traumatic in the true meaning of the word. Many people's perceptions will never be the same again. On top of a series of unfortunate and, by themselves, usually minor incidents in this country, principally at Sellafield, that has heightened anxiety to an unprecedented level. Only today we heard of an unfortunate accident just across the Channel in France, reminding us again that the nuclear industry knows no national boundaries. At Cap de la Hague five personnel have been affected by radioactivity in what I understand is a nuclear waste unit. Perhaps the Minister can advise us whether it was in the reprocessing plant or in the waste unit.

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): It was in the reprocessing plant.

Dr. Clark: I am grateful for that information. It highlights the difficulty of getting information, and getting it across to the general public. The basic thrust of my argument is that it is yet another incident which increases public anxiety about radioactive and nuclear matters.

It had been my impression that even the Government had changed their attitude and realised the significance of the factors that I have mentioned. When the former Secretary of State for the Environment, who has now transferred to the Department of Education and Science, addressed the House on 13 May, his stridency and, if I may say so, arrogance had gone, to be replaced with a softer, gentler more understanding and reassuring line. It appeared that the Government had realised the significance of the aftermath of Chernobyl. Unfortunately, that humility was shattered the next day when they laid this order.

If the Government are successful with the order, a complete stage in the normal planning procedure will be bypassed. It would be sheer folly and, I predict, counter to the Government's intentions to bypass the normal planning procedure. At this time of great public anxiety

[Dr. Clark]

we should be seeking to open up the debate and to reassure people. There is an on us onus to persuade the public of the merits of our case, whatever it may be. Yet, this is a proposal to stifle public debate and to remove from the public arena the opportunity for people, through their democratically elected representatives, to make their voices heard. That is crass stupidity. We should be allowing opportunities for both sides to make their case. We should not try to stifle the debate.

The Minister may respond by saying that local authorities can reject the application for the exploratory work. Perhaps I may remind the House that we are talking not about a man, a dog and a measuring rod, but about a well assembled, highly technical, sophisticated, expensive operation, and rightly so. I refer hon. Members to paragraph 5 of the order, which sets out in detail the extent of the work which would be permitted without any consultation with local authority representatives, if the order is passed. It is extensive and may last for two or possibly even five years.

Mr. Hickmet: Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the laying of an SDO to carry out works of this magnitude goes far beyond the powers envisaged in the statute for giving the Secretary of State permission to bypass planning procedure? Does he agree that this is a unique exercise of those delegated powers?

Dr. Clark: The hon. Gentleman has a good point. As he has said, there are occasions when it is right and proper to stray from the normal planning procedures, but this matter is of such public concern that it is wrong to use the special development order procedure. It is sad that the Government have used this procedure eight times. The Government's record on planning is not good.

The Minister might argue that the local authorities could reject the application, and that would be it. However, it would not, because if the local authority rejected the application—the Humberside authority has already said that it will do so—it would be open to NIREX to appeal directly to the Secretary of State. If he is so minded, after having examined the merits of the case, he could then grant permission for the exploratory work. At least, the general public would then have had the opportunity to hear the merits of the case for the locality being used.

Similarly, the Minister might say that a local authority could try to delay progress and refuse to discuss the application. He must know that in such cases, if, after eight weeks, no consideration has been given to the application by the local authority, NIREX can refer the application direct to the Secretary of State, and he could, if he thought it right, grant permission for the exploratory work. In that case, the onus would be on the local authority, and it would be its responsibility if it stifled local debate.

The Minister keeps going on about how important it is to get this under way, but I wonder whether a delay of three or four months, which would be the maximum, would matter too much, bearing in mind that we have a year or two years in hand. I fully accept that there are difficulties, and that Drigg cannot indefinitely contain all the waste that will be produced.

The scientists tell us that the site chosen will be safe, but everyone admits that in the public perception there is a gap between what the scientists say and what they mean. I quote again the example of the suggestion of Billingham. A psychological factor is involved that the Government, by placing the orders and restricting the public debate, are doing nothing to allay. These fears are heightened—I do not say this discourteously—by the appointment of the new Secretary of State. His record as Secretary of State for Transport was not good on public inquiries. He decided to go ahead with the Channel tunnel — the greatest engineering enterprise for decades — without even a public inquiry. After a Committee of both Houses of Parliament recommended that the Okehampton bypass should go by the southern route, he decided to use his parliamentary muscle to overturn the decision.

Mr. Stan Crowther (Rotherham): I am following with great interest the points that my hon. Friend is making, and I agree about the desirability of going through the proper planning procedures with, if necessary, a public inquiry preceding an appeal to the Secretary of State. However, as in this case the Secretary of State is proposing the order, does it not show that he has already made up his mind before he has heard the case? Therefore, would not any public inquiry be a farce and a waste of time?

Dr. Clark: My hon. Friend, with his usual perception, went right to the logic of the case. If we cannot change the Government's mind—it may be closed—at least we can have a public debate and an opportunity to discuss the merits of the case.

I submit that the proposal before us, in the form of this order, is inappropriate. I believe that it will set back the cause that the Minister proposes. It will heighten suspicion about the Government's intentions, as my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Mr. Crowther) has said, and, more importantly, it will do nothing to allay the genuine fears of millions of people.

10.51 pm

The Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government (Mr. William Waldegrave): On 13 May the House debated and approved a motion on nuclear matters. This included an endorsement of the Government's first stage response on 2 May to the report of the Select Committee on the Environment on radioactive waste. That response reaffirmed the principles on which the Government's policy on the management of radioactive waste is based. It also set out the Government's comments on those recommendations in the Committee's report that were directly relevant to the concept of a near-surface facility. It is against that background that the Government have brought forward the special development order now under debate.

I should like to say why the Government consider the special development order procedure to be appropriate. I must say to the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark), whose advice on such matters the House greatly respects, that there has been a little selective amnesia. He will remember, and the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) will recall even better, that the great THORP project was approved under the special order development procedure. Before the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), who is the Liberal party's spokesman, gets too excited, I must remind him of a moving speech made by the present leader of the SDP, the right hon. Member for Plymouth, Devonport (Dr. Owen),

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): During the debate in March 1978, when the prayer against the order was moved by my right hon. Friend the leader of the Liberal party — if the Minister checks he may confirm this—no speech was made by the present leader of the SDP. Indeed, there was total unanimity, not only on the Liberal Benches, but on Labour and Tory Back Benches in opposing the special development order.

Mr. Waldegrave: I can confirm that the Liberal party's position on Sellafield has been reasonably consistent. Tomorrow, I shall send the hon. Gentleman a copy of the speech made by the right hon. Member for Devonport, which took a rather different line. I shall not press that in terms of alliance unity.

The Government accept that there is a need for a near-surface facility for the disposal of low-level waste. The only national disposal site at present is at Drigg in Cumbria. It has a finite capacity. I was grateful for the confirmation by the hon. Member for South Shields that he recognises that, as does the hon. Member for Copeland, who must know the site better than most of us.

Another site is needed, whether or not the nuclear power programme continues. That is a separate debate. The Government believe that nuclear power, subject to stringent safety provisions, has a continuing role to play, but even if, and perhaps especially if, all existing power stations were to close tomorrow, a new site would still be required. The hon. Member for Copeland, in his speech on 13 May, accepted that need, as did the Environment Committee in its report.

Mr. Ian Campbell (Dumbarton): Will the Minister tell the House when the new site will be approved?

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall deal with that. I shall turn to what is obviously a fundamental point later in my speech. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) bases his opposition to the development on that point. When he deploys his arguments, I shall try to respond to them.

Before any site can be developed, NIREX, as the developer, must have sufficient information to determine whether a site is suitable and can be defended at a public inquiry. That requires detailed information, not least on the geology and hydrogeology of the site.

The Government considered whether preliminary geological investigation of each site should be the subject of a separate planning inquiry—we considered that quite seriously, as hon. Members would have asked us to do — to be followed by a further inquiry into any subsequent proposal to develop a particular site. This could have taken a number of years. The idea that there would have been a three-month delay is a little optimistic. In reality, there might have been two long inquiries laid end on end.

The Government rejected that course because they believed that it was wrong unnecessarily to subject any community to such a period of uncertainty. In doing so we were responding — I shall not exaggerate — to points made, not by everyone in the area, but by a number of wise, elected representatives of some of the areas. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire was in the lead. On 24 January 1985 he said that the special development order procedure was sensible. I understand that there is another argument, but it seemed to us that, as long as there was a proper and detailed public inquiry in due course, the idea of subjecting the local communities to what might have amounted to three or four years of continuing inquiry would have been in the interests of no one.

The special development order was issued in draft to give those with an interest an opportunity to comment. I have met the hon. Members representing all the constituencies concerned and have visited all the sites. A number of changes have subsequently been made to the order.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Ha, Ha.

Mr. Waldegrave: The most important — I hope that even the hon. Gentleman will recognise that it is an important change — is a decision to amend the order to allow NIREX to carry out drilling for the investigation of a site to take low-level waste only. The Environment Committee asked for that change, as have many hon. Members and the communities that they represent. The Government do not accept that there are any scientific or technical reasons why short-lived intermediate-level waste should not be disposed of in a near-surface site. Nevertheless, we recognise that many people would be reassured if any near-surface facility that is developed were used only for low-level waste.

Mr. Hickmet: If the order allows NIREX to carry out a survey to determine whether a site is suitable for low-level waste only, does it not follow that at some future date it might be possible for the site that was surveyed and adopted to be used for the disposal of intermediate-level waste? There is no guarantee in the long term that the site would not be so used. Is that right?

Mr. Waldegrave: There are several extra levels of guarantee, but basically the same guarantee exists as is involved in adapting planning permission to do something other than the purpose for which it was originally granted. Further planning permission would have to be granted. What is more, there are further fall-backs. The authorisation issued by my Department concerning what would go into the site would have to be altered. The whole procedure would have to be re-opened. My hon. Friend need not be too anxious on that score. I recognise his point. It has been made to me by the citizens and elected representatives in the areas that I have visited. I hope that that helps. It is important to have that point on the record.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Will the hon. Gentleman tell us what representations he has received from the right hon. Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) about the site of Bradwell power station, because the right hon. Gentleman is not likely to be able to speak in the debate?

Mr. Waldegrave: I do not know whether that is an attempt to embarrass my right hon. Friend. I am not sure that my right hon. Friend needs the hon. Gentleman's help to put across his views. Indeed, I am not sure that the Labour Front Bench needs the hon. Gentleman's help. We recognise that many people would be reassured if any near-surface facility that is developed were used only for low-level waste. For that reason, we have decided that both short-lived and long-lived intermediate-level waste should be stored, pending the identification and development of a deep disposal site or until the radioactivity has reduced sufficiently for disposal at a low-level waste facility.

[Mr. Waldegrave]

Other significant changes have been made which should be of direct benefit to those communities surrounding the sites.

Mr. Hickmet: With respect, my hon. Friend has just made a very serious comment. He referred to waste being stored until such time as the intermediate-level waste is no longer as radioactive as it might be, or until it can be defined as low-level waste. Is he saying that at some future date the waste that would not be stored now might be stored at the facility that is ultimately chosen?

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend is undoubtedly becoming more expert every day in these matters. We all know that if we wait long enough the substances will not be radioactive at all. The shorter-life intermediate-level waste converts itself by the inexorable processes of nature into low-level waste if one waits long enough.

A point put to me by a number of representatives was that the SDO will now run for five years instead of being open ended. This means that all work on site must be completed within five years. NIREX is now required to make detailed after-care arrangements for the sites, which it will have to maintain for two years. These are subject to the agreement of the relevant local authority. NIREX will have to give the local authorities concerned information on its proposed investigatory work and bring it up to date at intervals.

Time limits have been set on when operations may be carried out. In general, these restrict operations to between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm and prohibit work on a Sunday or a public holiday. There are also limits on the noise that may be generated.

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my hon. Friend tell the House when he expects NIREX, within the limits that are set by the order, to be in a position to name its site?

Mr. Waldegrave: That is a slightly different timetable from the one to which I referred. I referred to a less interesting but nevertheless still important point, namely, limiting the interference and noise around the site. NIREX needs to take its measurements and drillings for a full year in order to obtain the full hydrological cycle. If NIREX goes on to the site in July, it will need to drill for a full year — until the next July. There will then be a considerable period of analysis by NIREX of the data before it brings before a public inquiry one or more of the sites. I cannot give an exact timetable. It depends upon what NIREX finds. Some of my hon. Friends have said to me that NIREX will rapidly discover geological reasons why a particular site is unsatisfactory and that that will allow it to release the site.

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): I cannot understand why my hon. Friend is asking for five years. Will he give an undertaking that when the geological examinations have been carried out and he is satisfied about the water table he will release almost immediately those sites that are found to be unsuitable?

Mr. Waldegrave: The reason for the five-year period is that it is just possible that if a particular site went before a public inquiry the inspector would ask NIREX to take certain additional measures. That is why it has been brought down to a finite period, but one which should overlap the public inquiry.

I was often asked, when I visited each of these sites and talked to local communities and councillors, why the Government had allowed NIREX to select a particular site for investigation. That is to misunderstand the respective roles of NIREX and my Department.

It is the responsibility of the authorising Department to ensure, by general oversight and the use of its statutory powers, that high standards of waste management are maintained, that potential hazards are reduced to levels that are not only acceptable, but as low as reasonably achievable, and that the public are fully safeguarded, both now and for future generations. This includes scrutiny by the Radiochemical Inspectorate of my Department, the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to ensure that the terms of the authorisation are met. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment, together with my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales, are responsible for the overall strategy of waste management.

The implementation of the strategy falls to the nuclear industry. It is the particular responsibility of NIREX to develop comprehensive plans for dealing with low-level and intermediate-level wastes.

It has been for NIREX, on the basis of information available to it, to identify the sites that it considers to be suitable for a near-surface facility, and it has identified the four sites referred to in the SDO. If the House allows this order to proceed, as I would urge it to do, NIREX will be able to collect the geological information that it needs. It will then have to decide which site, if any, to put forward and set out the design of that facility.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment has already made it clear that any application will be subject to a public inquiry. My Department set out the

"principles for the protection of the human environment"

in December 1984.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Will my hon. Friend give an undertaking that the public inquiry's ambit will be very wide? It is not sufficient to concentrate on specific site criteria. The inspector must be allowed to look at all methods of disposing of low-level nuclear waste and to determine the most appropriate method.

Mr. Waldegrave: My hon. Friend has made an important point, which has been made to me in relation to all the sites. I am in a little difficulty, in that it will obviously be for Ministers of the day to decide whether they want to make any policy statement to the inspector. However, it is important to realise that, regardless of whether the Secretary of State of the day says that the Government's preferred policy is that if a proper site can be found, there should be a low-level facility, it remains open to the inspector to allow any evidence that he regards as relevant.

Mr. Hogg: I understand that an undertaking cannot be made to give a specific remit to the inspector to enable him to discuss all questions of disposal, but will my hon. Friend give an assurance that this Government will not prevent the inspector from looking into the wider questions of disposal, including all alternative methods?

Mr. Waldegrave: I can give my hon. Friend a better assurance than that. It is not within the power of Ministers

to prevent the inspector from allowing evidence that he believes to be relevant to the inquiry. For example, if it could persuasively be shown that the route of disposal on offer was less satisfactory than another route, a case would have to be made that was of relevance to the inquiry. I understand that we do not have the power to exclude such evidence.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Although that answer is satisfactory in a limited way, does the Minister agree that, as the Select Committee says in paragraph 99, the poor state of research in the United Kingdom means that it is impossible to make an informed choice at this stage between the different options? Thus, within the context of a planning inquiry, it would not be possible for an inspector to make a proper assessment. We need the research before that evaluative judgment can be made.

Mr. Waldegrave: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman underestimates the extent to which there is an international interchange of research on this issue. Perhaps, too, he overestimates the extent to which the Select Committee's criticisms of the research effort involved in this country —with which I have some sympathy—relate to high and intermediate-level waste. Members of that Committee may be in the Chamber, but I think they believed that we would be wise, for example, to have an underground laboratory like the one that I shall see soon in Canada.

Those who offered alternative well-documented routes would not have much difficulty in making a case, although I do not believe that such a case would necessarily carry the day.

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): Pending the conclusion of investigations into individual sites, will my hon. Friend give an assurance that the Government, and NIREX, acting under Government instructions, will continue to investigate thoroughly alternative solutions for the disposal of low, as well as intermediate and high-level waste?

Mr. Waldegrave: Most of the options urged on me by hon. Members have involved adding low-level waste to intermediate-level waste in some sort of facility. Work is continuing, and I think will expand, on the development of alternatives for intermediate and high-level waste. However, I cannot guarantee that much more money will be spent on research into the principal route for low-level waste. Work is continuing on investigating different methods of deep disposal.

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): This is important. Can my hon. Friend say whether the Government have set their mind definitely against the prospect of dealing with low-level waste in the same way as the Swedes do? If they have, that would be very encouraging to our constituents.

Mr. Waldegrave: I cannot give my hon. Friend as much comfort as that. The Government have taken the view, having done a great deal of research on low-level waste as experienced around the world, and having looked at the geology in this country, that there is a feasible route, but it is for NIREX to say that it will follow that route and to offer a particular facility at a particular place. Nothing that I say tonight pre-empts the decision of the planning inquiry that, in spite of that, no such facilities or no such place may ultimately be found.

We believe in the concept of a shallow disposal site. We have some support from the Select Committee on that and from the hon. Member for Copeland in his speech last week. That design concept looks hopeful and worth proceeding with, if a proper design can be produced and a proper place can be found for it.

One of the requirements in the assessment principles pubished by my Department is that any proposal should include an "environmental assessment" of the consequences of that proposal. This will require the developer to show that he has followed a rational procedure for site identification, and will therefore cover alternative sites. All this material will be available for examination at a public inquiry.

The Environment Select Committee criticised, and I believe rightly, successive Governments for not making more rapid progress in the identification and development of sites for the disposal of radioactive waste.

The Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, under the chairmanship of Professor Paul Matthews, rebuked us—a dangerous thing to do in these days of privileged debates—and said that sometimes politics had interfered in the rational procedure for the national interest. We all have a responsibility. I do not think that any hon. Member would delight in that responsibility, but we have responsibility—whatever our views—for the long-term nuclear programme. We must take a responsible view about the disposal of waste. It is not a happy responsibility. It is not easy and it is not popular, but it is an inescapable responsiblity. I ask the House to recognise this responsibility, to reject the prayer and to let the order issue.

11.13 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): Debating this issue so soon after the shabby, inadequate reply which the Department of the Environment gave to the Select Committee seems to show that the Government are in too much of a rush for the health of democracy. In reply to the Committee's excellent report, the Government put up a pathetic pretence of considering the issues while ignoring the Committee's basic recommendations.

The report hung together as a whole and should have been treated as whole. The recommendations interlocked. It was unrealistic and unreasonable to take out 13 of the 43 recommendations, to deal shabbily and inadequately with them and to accept only one. The Government called that considering the report and replying to it. That reply has now been foisted on the back of a block vote based on the Government's majority, without any consideration. They call that a policy. It is an apology for a policy, and as a result a serious blow will be struck at areas such as mine and at three other areas which are mentioned in the order.

It is clear that the Government are proceeding at speed to get on with their real priority, which is to push on with the semblance of a nuclear dumping programme. It is a steamroller approach—the tactic of those who recognise a weak and inadequate case which cannot be justified intellectually, which has not been thought through, and which will not stand up to examination. That means that it must be foisted through by means of a brute majority, and quickly, so that the issue is over and done with and out of the way. There is no need to function in that fashion. The Government are behaving in an unforgivable fashion. The Drigg facility—this was made clear in an answer to

[Mr. Austin Mitchell]

one of my parliamentary questions—will be available until the year 2010. It will not be full until that year if compacting is introduced in 1987. The problem will not arise until the next century, so why is there a rush to deal with it now? Why are the Government acting with such speed, and why is blight being foisted on areas such as my constituency?

In his evidence to the Select Committee, Lord Marshall said,

"We do not see urgency attached to this matter".

Against that background, why are the Government acting so quickly? To do so is an affront to the Select Committee, which addressed itself to the first full and detailed consideration of the issue. Surely it deserved a full and detailed reply from the Government if it was to be done justice. The Select Committee's report has been treated shabbily.

No strategy or planning has been evident on the Government's part. Instead, there seems to have been a process of improvisation and an opting for a cheap and nasty system of disposal, which is to be pushed through by means of the Government's majority in this place. That is an undemocratic approach, and my constituency and other areas will suffer the consequences.

In their response to the representations that have been received from my constituency, the Minister and his ministerial colleagues have insulted the intelligence of my electors and others. I said to my electorate, "It is important at this juncture to take the democractic approach and to write, to persuade and to put arguments to the Minister. He is a reasonable man and he will listen. If we can convince him that there is no case for that which the Government propose, our representations will have some effect. So write, sign petitions, go through the democratic processes and make representations, and a reasonable Minister will listen."

The letters poured in, but they were not answered before the special development order was laid. The Minister was sent letters urging him to think again and not to blight the area, but he did not have the decency to reply to them before rushing in the order. Petitions have poured in. I shall be presenting later tonight, with the full support of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown)—it is only an accident that I am presenting the petition and not he—a petition from Humberside that is supported by 155,000 signatures. In effect, the petition states, "Do not inflict this on our area."

Unfortunately, the Minister has not listened. There is a weight of opinion and reaction which has been demonstrated in the Chamber, but the Minister is adopting a steamroller-like, ill-considered and over-speedy approach. If he forces that upon the people, we know what their response will be. If he ignores the representations that are made democratically in letters and petitions, there will be a violent reaction later, and if that happens, he will be responsible. He has not listened to the arguments and he has not considered the case that has been put in opposition to the Government's approach.

I advised my constituents to organise deputations and to put the argument to the Minister. The deputations have flocked to him, but he has not even been willing to hear or see some of them. I asked him to receive a deputation of Humberside Members—the request was made well before the process of consultation was under way—but my request was not granted. Without seeing that deputation of hon. Members, he has rushed in a special development order.

I asked him to receive a deputation from Britain Against Nuclear Dumping, but there was no accommodation, no acceptance and no reply. It is true, however, that the Minister has seen some deputations and that junior Ministers have seen others. They have acted as rubber cushions to absorb the arguments rather than as relays to the Minister. They cannot have listened to the arguments, which were extremely well put by the delegations. Ministers have not listened and the deputations have been fobbed off.

We were advancing four arguments in the letters, deputations and petitions, all of them powerful. First, we argued that there was no need to rush into a decision at this stage. We said that if the Government were to carry conviction, to demonstrate that they had a considered programme, to show that they had a plan and to make it clear that they had thought the matter through, they must take time to present the arguments to show that they had considered the issues from scratch, to demonstrate that they were not going for the cheap-and-nasty option, to make it clear that they would not foist on Humberside an option that has not been accepted by most other countries with nuclear waste—an option that has been used only by the United States, where it has produced problems, and in France, which is not known for the democracy of its planning and other organisational decisions — and to show that they had chosen the sites on the basis of a full consideration of the alternatives. In fact they chose these sites not because they were the best sites but because they were owned by the Government or NIREX partners. That was why our site was chosen. The Minister admitted that to me when he said:

"I understand that ownership was a factor in NIREX's choice of sites insofar as it seemed likely to affect availability."—[*Official Report*, 29 February 1986; Vol. 92, c. 506.]

That was why that site was chosen. They chose that site to avoid another fiasco like that at Billingham when ICI pulled out in the face of local pressure. The Government have chosen sites that they can obtain because they own them, not because they are the best sites. We have had this site foisted on us simply because there is a site owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board in the area. That is hardly democratic. The Government did not consider looking for the best site and they did not consider the matter rationally. They did not consider the alternatives. They should not have rushed into this.

Our second argument was a warning. We warned that it would be a setback if there was a site in our area. It would be a setback to house prices and to the prospects of development for the area. This area is struggling for development and it does not have the advantages of full development area status and the financial benefits that flow from that. We do not want the image that is associated with nuclear dumping. That would not be attractive for an area that deals with food production. It would not be a great asset for us. The Minister agreed with that when he met the deputation and he accepted that it would not be a good selling point and would not lead to the establishment of food factories in Grimsby.

Mr. Martin Flannery (Sheffield, Hillsborough): There is another aspect to this issue which my hon. Friend might consider. People who would have gone to that area

are now reconsidering going near it. I spoke earlier this evening to the deputy general secretary of the National Union of Teachers who told me that around Sellafield they are finding great difficulty in filling teaching posts—especially posts for scientific study—because people who would have gone there no longer want to go to areas where there is nuclear power or nuclear waste.

Mr. Mitchell: The Minister appears to be willing to attach the mark of Waldegrave to my area and give us the stigmata. The function that is proposed for my area will not aid us in our struggle to attract food industries, to present the area as a food town or as a suitable site for the development of food industries. What advantage will there be in having the site in our area?

The Minister ignored that and the third argument. The fact is that the blight begins with the order. The blight does not begin with the planning process or with the final decision. The association between the areas of nuclear dumping is contained in the special development order. We pleaded desperately with the Minister to take us out of the list of sites and not to inflict such a blight on us in a casual and cack-handed manner. Other areas have made similar pleas to the Minister. However, he has not listened to any of the arguments. That is absolutely abhorrent. I feel betrayed.

Most of the people I took to talk to the Minister have also been betrayed because their arguments were not heeded. The Minister is presenting us with his smooth, bland apologetic face, but he has not listened to the arguments. The list that has been presented tonight is the same list that NIREX shoved into the Minister's hand in January. It is unchanged and there has been no consideration of it. Not one dot or comma has been altered. That is sickening.

The next argument is simple. The site is not suitable for various reasons. There are gas caves, and chemical and oil industries in the surrounding area. This area gave the country the tragedy of Flixborough and the mess at Barnetby where there was a serious oil spillage recently. Does the Minister really mean to inflict nuclear traffic, transport and dumping on such an area? That is simply not acceptable

The Minister has not listened to the arguments. The consultation that he made so much of was an absolute farce. The deputations were robbed. The Minister should at least have had the decency to pay their train fares from and back to Grimsby and reimburse the money that those people spent coming to London to make their points for him and his colleagues to ignore. He has not considered the alternatives or questioned whether NIREX has chosen the best site. He has not fulfilled his responsibility.

The Minister has simply put his signature on the NIREX list, and it is inconceivable that he could have listened to any of the arguments. His mind has been closed throughout, which is tragic for him and for us. The Department of the Environment has a greater responsibility to the environment and the people who live there than to act as the political arm of NIREX, because NIREX is the public relations arm of the nuclear industry, and we do not trust the nuclear industry. If the Department responsible for our environment is to taint itself with those associations and act as a rubber stamp for NIREX, it will forfeit all credibility and responsibility for the area. What confidence can people have in that Department? What trust can they have in a Department that has behaved in that way? What trust can they have in the reasonableness of the democratic procedures in which they are asked to participate when the Minister behaves in this way and rushes in so quickly to force this on us.

Why has the Minister behaved so stupidly and so criminally towards my area? Why do so at a time when the Russian tragedy at Chernobyl has highlighted anxiety in the country? Why rush into this when an election is approaching? This is a disasterous issue to be stirring before an election. Why behave so stupidly and unfairly? Why answer the arguments that have been put seriously by my constituents with what amount to half truths? It has been said that there are half truths, lies and ministerial replies. The letters that my constituents received after the decision was taken and the order was published were half-baked apologies for the truth and insults to their intelligence.

For the Minister to give the impression in those letters that all that will be dumped on the site is bandages and crutches thrown away by people suddenly rejuvenated by radium treatment is a distortion of the truth. The bulk of the material will come from nuclear power production and from reprocessing. Even if it does not come directly to those sites, we shall simply be making available sites to take material that used to go to Drigg, so that Drigg can absorb the waste from reprocessing plants. It is not about medical treatment, but about the power programme and reprocessing.

Why is the Minister behaving like this now? Is there a conspiracy? Is the nuclear industry getting its way again—that public relations mafia which gets its way all too often? I do not believe so. The Minister's speech tonight has given us the clue. It is dull, pedantic duty. He has a sense of duty which leads him to impose this on us. He is not thinking, questioning that sense of duty or examining the arguments, but plodding on with it in this way. A man with that sense of duty, in charge of a majority that can force through anything in the House, is a man who should be watched, for he is dangerous. He does not need to weigh the matter for himself and fulfil his responsibility to examine the issues, because his sense of duty drives him on.

That sense of duty compels the Minister to have a policy. Several years ago, the Flowers report said that the Government had to have a policy for nuclear waste and that we had to solve the waste problem before we could expand the nuclear power programme. The nuclear industry wants the Government to solve the waste problem, because otherwise the industry will drown in its waste. The Government want to expand the nuclear power programme. That is what is behind it. It is not the stations we have, but the stations for which we are making way. The Government will lie low for a bit and keep quiet until the embarrassment of Chernobyl dies down, but that is their intention. They also want to expand the reprocessing operation, as though that was an appropriate destiny for an overcrowded country such as Britain—to become the wash house of the nuclear world. That is what we are hiring ourselves out to be. It is to make room for that sort of waste that our areas have to be blighted.

Those pressures produce the waste problem. The Government feel that they cannot go ahead with either of those programmes until the waste problem is solved. Humberside and the other areas must take the

[Mr. Mitchell]

consequences, and the consequences begin tonight. The blight on house prices and development prospects begins here. That is why we are fighting to defend our areas.

The Minister is turning people against the nuclear power programme and producing the sort of emotions that we saw earlier. I was a doubtful supporter of that programme until all this came along. I was forced to ask whether I want the nuclear power programme at this expense. My decision is not particularly important, but that is the intellectual process that I went through and the same thing is happening to thousands of people in my constituency and in all the other affected areas. They are thinking it through and deciding that the game is not worth the candle. The Minister is producing a rising tide of anger and hostility to the nuclear industry and the nuclear power programme.

The Select Committee issued a serious report, but it has been ignored by the Government. The report brings out the "not in my backyard" problem and says:

"we also believe that there are ways of reassuring local people that their area has been chosen as the result of a systematic and rational process."

Has it? Can the Minister put his hand on his heart and tell me that South Killingholme has been chosen as the result of a "systematic and rational process"? I will give way to him if he wishes to intervene.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): He is not even awake.

Mr. Mitchell: No.

The report says:

"People need to know that choice of their area is not simply the result of some quirk or quite extraneous reason such as site ownership;"

The Minister has told me that it is as a result of site ownership.

The processes have been bad, the methods are uncertain, the disposal system is wrong — we should examine alternatives such as those used by countries that are more responsible in their treatment of nuclear waste —and we are approaching the problem from the wrong end. We should be looking at the wider issues first. The Minister says that transport, communication and all the other local problems will be considered by the planning inquiry. But the odds at an inquiry will be loaded against the local authorities, because they will have to fight with one hand tied behind their back — because of the restrictions on their spending—against NIREX, which has a budget of £800,000 a year for distorting publicity, and against the Government who are in conspiracy with NIREX.

I hope that hon. Members in the affected areas will show their courage and independence and will serve their constituents by voting against the order. I do not question their integrity, courage and conviction; they should be on the side of sense and right. However, there may be some hon. Members who are considering doing my area down and saying, "There but for the grace of God go I. Hard Cheddar Humberside." I say to them, "You are next. Our fight is your fight. We are fighting for everybody in this matter. Do not use your votes to steamroller this on to us, to foist on us a programme which the Government have not thought through and which they cannot justify." They are proceeding in a half-baked fashion and I ask hon. Members not to use their votes to foist the result on us. Hon. Members should ask themselves whether it is necessary to do it now, to do it in this undemocratic fashion and at this speed. Have the Government behaved fairly and democratically and have they listened to the arguments and considered the matter?

Hon. Members should realise that it is our turn now, but it will be their turn next, because it may well be that at the end of the day none of these four sites will be suitable. A pointless search will blight us, but we do not know whether the sites will be suitable. The Government may land in their constituencies which may be eligible for the next site. Once one site has been obtained, others will become necessary as the programme expands and as the Government achieve their ambition of turning Britain into the dirty laundry centre of the nuclear world. Once they do that, other sites will become necessary.

I hope that hon. Members will bear in mind that if the Government get away with this here, they can get away with it in other constituencies. I am fighting for my area. It is not *Homes and Gardens* country and the Minister knows that because he has been there. It is not even his kind of country, *Tatler* country or *Country Life* country, but it is our country and we are proud of it. We will not have nuclear waste there. We abhor the manner in which the Minister is proceeding. I would rather build Jerusalem in Humberside's green and pleasant land and I certainly will not allow it to become a dump. We are not allowed to build Jerusalem under this Government, but we can fight to keep out the detritus of their nuclear policy.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. Many hon. Members wish to speak and I appeal for brief contributions. We have less than two hours to go.

11.38 pm

Mr. Norman Miscampbell (Blackpool, North): I shall be brief because I know that other hon. Members have much more urgent reasons for speaking than I have. I was a member of the Select Committee on the Environment. I say to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) that I do not view the response we have had so far from the Government to be in any way shabby. Intermediate waste has been removed from the order. It would have been shabby if the Government had made an instant response to something that all Governments have agonised over the years. I have no doubt that when the time comes we will get a proper response.

I know that the Minister has already said that he does not agree with the point, but I say that sites similar to the ones in the order can easily accommodate low-level waste. Technically, there is not the remotest problem about getting rid of low-level waste. Our Committee, representative of the whole spectrum of views in the House, agreed on that. The Committee said that things needed to be done. First, it did not want a low-level waste depository to contain intermediate-level waste. That has been accepted. It wanted proper verification of what was going into the depository and it wanted incineration to reduce the bulk. Above all, it wanted compaction. If those things are done, low-level waste can be contained in an area much smaller than we have envisaged so far.

In addition to the sites we are looking at, we should also look at sites similar to the one that Sweden is considering. There ought to be the option of burying low-level waste

not in a deep depository and certainly not in a shallow land depository, but in a moderately deep depository. I accept that to do that is to throw money down the drain, but unless we begin to move in that direction we will not take public opinion with us. The Government should not make a mistake about the difficulty of convincing people. In some ways we have heard that reflected in the debate. It has been said that we can discuss, discuss and discuss, but that we cannot get across the fact that low-level waste is not a problem. If that is the case, we must meet the difficulty head on. If we want a stable nuclear industry in this country, the one way to achieve it is to satisfy public opinion.

All four sites will get my support, because I am confident that any one of them will probably be satisfactory. I would feel much happier if we were looking at the possibility of an underground site — perhaps at expense that is unnecessary — because in the end that may be the salvation of our industry. Public opinion will not allow it to continue unless we take steps that are probably unnecessary.

It is no use asking NIREX because it will tell the truth —I say that after six months of investigation—and say that these sites, or similar sites, will be fine; but that is not the point. We must satisfy public opinion, so the Government would be well advised to take that step.

11.41 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): My colleagues and I will support the prayer and oppose the Government. We do so, regretting the fact that the new Secretary of State does not have the courtesy to be here on such an important and sensitive matter for which he has now taken responsibility on behalf of the Government. If this shows the new caring face of the Conservative party after its election defeats, it will not do much good.

As the Minister and all hon. Members rightly agree, the issue before us is how and where we dispose of our radioactive waste in the future. As the Minister properly said, this is an inescapable problem. Our views may differ substantially on how we can increase or decrease the amount of nuclear waste — either through the nuclear power programme or through reprocessing—but we still face the problem, we must be responsible, we must face up to the options and we must take decisions.

Given that we have high, intermediate and low-level waste, we must plan responsibly for its disposal and storage. The preliminary question that follows — which the Minister dealt with inadequately—relates to the time scale. What is the deadline by which we must take this decision? Our task has been made easier by the fact that now we are talking only about low-level waste, and I acknowledge that concession by the Government.

Originally the Government were going to propose land storage for intermediate and low-level waste, but now they are talking only about low-level waste. We welcome that. That retreat from the brink may indicate the vulnerability of their position. They realise that their original argument would have been impossible to win, while this one is merely extraordinarily difficult even though its consequences are more limited. But there is still no general scientific agreement about the different categories of waste. There is still no unanimity on where the boundaries between the low and intermediate levels end or begin, and it is clear that there is work still to be done in that regard.

The evidence as to the timetable within which we must make the decision is to be found in both the Select Committee's report and the Government's response to it. I am talking about the completed report, not the now infamous draft. Paragraph 63 of the report states:

"the Drigg disposal site is likely to be full some time at the beginning of the next century, if another site is not found and if reprocessing continues."

The paragraph also says that the volume of about 500,000 cubic metres by the year 2000 which is containable at Drigg can be reduced significantly by various compacting techniques. In their response the Government accept that in paragraph 13, where they say:

> "Assuming that available techniques for compaction are used by 1987, and that it is possible to develop the whole of the existing site, Drigg would be full by about 2010 in the absence of any alternative facility."

So we have 24 years. The only argument that the Government put counter to the time that is clearly available is that it would be prudent to start now. Of course it is prudent. The question is: is it prudent to start going down only one route, or would it be more prudent to contemplate all the options logically at the same time? The latter is our argument and it is supported by the evidence of other countries, as well as the expert evidence given to the Government.

Many hon. Members, including my hon. Friends and myself, though appreciating the concern of hon. Members who rightly have a prior duty to their constituents, would say that the argument "not in my back yard" should not be the one most often advanced. Clearly the waste will have to go somewhere. We cannot make national policy from a collection of "not in my back yard" responses. The problem is that the Government have forced such a response. First, it was Billingham for intermediate-level waste. There was a retreat from that because of ICI's retraction of its support, massive public concern and general concern about that not having been a well-thought-out plan. Elstow remained on the table, and since then other sites have been named. We cannot proceed with a "take it or leave it" option of four sites without having been asked to decide on the principle of how to store or dispose of the waste. We are not being asked that question tonight.

What is the position about future disposal options? The Select Committee, in paragraph 83, said that investigations were still at a very early stage. Even though he says that we may disagree about the amount of research that may be needed, I hope that the Minister accepts that there is not in Britain, and has not been, any proper research programme to examine coherently, and in an adequately financed way, the range of options. We should have such a programme. Other countries have managed to develop such programmes. For example, Canada has done so from the beginning of the decade and has reached a conclusion as a result of that considered approach. Therefore, we need to research all the options of near-surface land disposal, deep-facility land disposal suggested by the hon. and learned Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) as the other option to be considered now, and sea bed disposal.

The Select Committee took a clear view. I anticipate that at the end of all the debate the Government will have shown themselves to have been misguided in going down the route they have chosen, because there is general agreement in the House that a deep disposal option is likely to be the most satisfactory for all forms of waste and is

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

most likely to alleviate the anxieties of people who otherwise will have a low-level, near-surface disposal facility in their neighbourhood.

We could avoid all those concerns if we considered the best options as Sweden and other countries are doing. Not only is it misguided to come down in favour of proceeding down one route only — near-surface disposal facility investigation—but there is no evidence at the moment to prove that that is the best option in any event. The Select Committee, in paragraph 99, clearly said:

"The poor state of research in the UK means that it is impossible at this stage for us to recommend any disposal option with total confidence."

We should be able to make a recommendation with total confidence if we are to dispose of nuclear waste near people, and we should wait until we can do that before we make the decision.

There are objections to near-surface facilities, and the Select Committee made it clear what they are: experience abroad and anxieties at home. Evidence and anxieties have led many countries to opt for the deep underground disposal option. Only France and the United States now have near-surface disposal programmes. Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada and Finland have opted for deep geological disposal of all waste. That has not been considered here, and it should have been.

Clearly there are understandable fears. They have been dealt with at Billingham, but they remain in Elstow, South Killingholme, Fulbeck and Bradwell. The Select Committee said that the feelings of the people at Elstow in Bedfordshire were based on reasonable scientific doubt. It is the same elsewhere. We should seek political consensus. We can allay those fears. That would be a responsible attitude. In addition, there are strong site specific objections. Bradwell is arguably wholly unsuitable on account of its geology, neighbouring facilities, position near the coast and the fact that it is a site of special scientific interest. On analytical evidence, criticisms similarly apply to some other sites. There are strong arguments why those specific sites are inappropriate. Therefore, to choose the "take it or leave it, these are the sites" option is clearly misguided.

It is also foolish to follow that road because no site criteria have been laid down. I ask the Minister to reconsider the Select Committee's recommendation that there should be site criteria, although his Department rejected this in its response. The Select Committee was in no doubt about that. In paragraph 280 it states:

"We therefore recommend that site selection criteria should be established in advance and published for each type of waste disposal route likely to be developed. Thereafter, the Department of the Environment should ensure that any possible future disposal site identified by NIREX should satisfy the site selection criteria for that disposal option."

The Department of the Environment is then undertaking a review. It should complete the review, establish the criteria and then we can make a judgment. People are not being convinced by the alternative procedure. A letter was sent to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) from a person living six miles from the proposed site at Fulbeck. It reads:

"I live about six miles away from . . . Fulbeck and am therefore sufficiently removed from the area to take an objective view . . . Because the issue is of such importance . . . there have been various meetings in the area at which speakers from NIREX have put their case. I have listened to this with great interest and even more so, because it could provide jobs for between 200 and 300 people . . .

However, I have also heard with even greater interest . . . the case not only against Fulbeck as a possible site on geological, hydrological and environmental grounds, but also about the thinking of choosing inland sites at all as possible areas to dump any sort of nuclear waste.

I have noted the undisguised reluctance of anyone from NIREX to state positively why or how Fulbeck or the other three sites were chosen and have been saddened and angered to see their indifference and patronising manner to many of the local villagers, who are extremely worried about their future and the safety of their families."

The Association of County Councils has expressed a related view. It believes that the procedure that the Government propose removes the possibility of full consultation on the Select Committee's report and completely bypasses democratic planning participation by local government in the local areas in question. The Liberal party and many other people — we are not exclusive about this—who care about local government reassert that local people and local elected representatives have a right to participate in such decisions and that they should not be retained in the House for their conclusion.

It would not be so bad if NIREX had any element of democratic accountability, but clearly it is an industry-biased body with no participation by people with environmental concerns or local government interests. So NIREX, which has a vested interest and is unaccountable, has put forward four proposals, and the Government have come to the House and said that that is what they want us to accept. The steamroller method that we are discussing is unacceptable. The Government must go back to the drawing board. We should look at all the options, not just one. We should treat the subject, on research needs, concerns, local government, the people and Parliament seriously.

I received a note of a telephone message from the leader of the alliance group on Bedfordshire county council, which said:

"Hope your resolve does not weaken."

Our resolve not only has not weakened so far, but, whatever happens tonight, it will not weaken. We shall go on until we persuade the Government of the folly of the course that they have taken.

11.56 pm

Mr. Nicholas Lyell (Mid-Bedfordshire): I speak for Elstow, in mid-Bedfordshire, in the heart of the county of Bedfordshire, which has had the threat of a shallow land burial nuclear waste dump hanging over it for longer than any other site.

I want to make my position on the NIREX proposals clear: I oppose them. I am amazed at the suggestion that a 300-acre shallow land burial site should be placed in the heart of a crowded inland county such as Bedfordshire, scarcely a mile from the nearest villages. There are five villages — Elstow, of which we have all heard, Stewartby, Houghton Conquest, Kempston and Wilshamstead—all within a mile or two of the site. The great town of Bedford, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet) and myself, is within a maximum of three miles, and its nearest border is scarcely a mile from the site. I cannot believe that that is the right place for such a nuclear waste dump.

I say that with some confidence because no other country in Europe has followed anything like such a

course. The only comparable site in Europe is in northern France, at Centre de la Manche. It is important to note that that site depends not on absolute containment, but, to a significant extent, on fail-safe drainage through to the sea. It is not even a site that is based on clay. It relies on placing the nuclear waste in drums, and if there should be an escape it flows down to the sea through monitored drains and is washed away by the tide.

However much experts may hope that an inland site such as Elstow will be safe, or however much they may even believe it to be safe, no one who is conscious of Murphy's law—what can go wrong will go wrong—could ignore the risk that at some point, in an area as large as 300 acres, over the decades and centuries the drums containing the waste will break down, the concrete will disintegrate, and the water bearing radionuclides will escape and find a pathway to man.

Those facts combine with the blighting effects of the development on the area, and the waste—an important issue for Bedfordshire—of a large amount of important brick-making clay, which has the capacity to burn itself. That is why Fletton bricks are the cheapest in the world. It is a great mistake that such a valuable mineral resource should be lost to the nation and the local industry.

Mr. John Carlisle (Luton, North): My hon. and learned Friend has referred to the blighting effects in the area that he represents. Does he acknowledge that my constituency of Luton, North and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, South-West (Mr. Madel) are also blighted by the proposal, and that the opposition in those constituencies is just as strong as it is in his own?

Mr. Lyell: I notice that my hon. Friends from those areas are present. The blight not only affects their constituencies but it spreads across beyond Sandy to south-west Cambridgeshire. Great anxiety is expressed as far afield as Milton Keynes and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Luton, South (Mr. Bright) who is not present tonight because he is abroad.

The problem with nuclear waste has to be solved. I have always made it clear that I support the nuclear industry. We need nuclear power not only to provide 20 per cent. of our electricity but to keep our children and grandchildren warm. Even if we were to close down the power stations today, which I would oppose, we would still be faced with the problems of existing nuclear waste. I support the Government in their attempt to tackle the problem.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): May I take the hon. and learned Gentleman back to his words on blight? I have spent half my life living within 27 miles of Windscale, and I know of no property anywhere in west Cumbria that is blighted to the degree that the hon. and learned Gentleman suggests. Yet he referred to hon. Members with constituencies adjacent to his within 50 miles and even as far away as Milton Keynes, and suggested that their constituencies would be blighted. Is he not exaggerating the case?

Mr. Lyell: The hon. Gentleman often makes sensible interventions, but, on this occasion, I do not think his intervention was up to his usual standard. As the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham) points out constantly, about 6,000 people rely on Sellafield for a job. It is hardly surprising that those people would look at the matter rather differently from those in a constituency which is simply getting the dumped waste and very few jobs.

The problem must be solved. So far, it has not been tackled in the right way. Initially, NIREX—mistakenly, in my view—sought to name only two sites—one at Billingham for intermediate level nuclear waste and one at Elstow for low and, at that time, short life intermediate level waste. We all know that the site at Billingham was cancelled, as the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) made clear at the beginning of his speech, on political rather than technical grounds.

The site was cancelled because public pressure, which I well understand, frightened away ICI. When ICI was frightened away, the nuclear industry no longer had the opportunity to make use of some underground caverns so large that one could drive a London bus 300 miles through them without retracing one's tracks. That was probably, geologically, one of the best sites in Europe. That is important, because the political aspect is as strong in my constituency and those of my hon. Friends and other objectors as it is in Billingham. When I go on to develop practical, alternative solutions, I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear that point in mind.

Mr. Frank Cook: I caution the hon. and learned Gentleman. He should not allow his enthusiasm to run away with his eloquence. ICI was never frightened off. There are not 300 miles of roadway under the ground capable of taking a London bus. That is not the best site in Europe. The proposals were turned down because of the good sense of the community and of the Department. That was quite a misrepresentation by the hon. and learned Gentleman.

Mr. Lyell: I can at least agree that there was strong political pressure. I shall take the opportunity later to talk to the hon. Gentleman in more detail about the size of the caverns.

When Elstow was suggested as a site, I immediately asked the Government to conduct a proper comparative survey of alternative sites, including—bearing in mind Centre de la Manche in northern France—coastal sites. To be fair to my right hon. and hon. Friends, they listened. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government emphasised that, although it was for NIREX to propose sites, it was for the Department of the Environment to judge them. I hope that we never lose sight of that. It is not for the Department to put forward proposals and railroad them through. I do not believe that it is doing so, but I emphasise that it is vital, if the House allows this procedure, that we do not get on to tramlines.

In due course, in January 1985, the Government announced that they had ordered NIREX to bring forward at least two further sites for comparison. In fact, three further sites, including two coastal sites, have come forward. At the same time, it was emphasised—this was vital—that other methods were to be considered also. It was pointed out, fairly, that in comparing several sites it was not reasonable to expect every site to go through a preliminary planning inquiry simply to ascertain whether a drilling rig and other investigatory material could be put on it. I have never understood how it was sensible or

[Mr. Lyell]

logical to go through what would have been the charade of such a planning inquiry simply to enable investigatory procedure to take place.

In so far as the use of the special development order has caused the Government to move from the untenable position of simply plumping for one site to a proper comparative survey, I support them. I recognise that in some senses I am speaking of what is a gain for Bedfordshire, and I am pleased when we make such a gain for Bedfordshire. I am sure that other hon. Members understand that.

If the House allows this SDO to proceed, we must not simply go to sleep and leave it to NIREX. We must continue wider investigations into all the alternatives. It is clear from the reaction in the House, which I understand and support, that it will be hard to gain the public acceptance for disposal of nuclear waste that we must gain, even for a coastal site. I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends to consider more carefully the altenatives, especially the deep-mined or sub-sea manifold-type solution.

The best practical environmental options put forward to the Government showed the costing of a deep-mined site. Such a site is acceptable as necessary for all intermediate-level waste. The costing of a deep-mine site is £2,500 a cu m — a horrendous amount. A fully engineered shallow land burial site—the Rolls-Royce solution for the Elstow, Fulbeck, Bradwell or South Killingholme sites — is said to be £615 a cu m, and that is horrendous enough.

The sub-sea manifold-type solution, which uses proven North Sea oil techniques and upon which I believe very responsible papers have been brought forward by Dr. Wheeler and others, is costed at about £410 per cu m. that is less than any of the other proposed solutions, even the preferred solution for the disposal of low-level waste. Therefore, I call on the Government not simply to leave it to NIREX but to do the following.

First, they should analyse carefully the true scale of the problems with which we are faced. The figures that I produced last week in my speech — they were the Government's own figures — indicate that the total volume of low-level waste relevant to the four sites whose future we are debating is only about 63,000 cu m when it has been compacted. It is 191,000 cu m divided by a minimum of three, bringing it down to about 63,000 cu m. That is less than a quarter of the amount that is to be placed in Drigg in the years up to 2030. It will be noticed that I have modified my figures. That is because in answer to one of my questions the Government modified their parliamentary answer from a fifth to a quarter. But that is still less than a quarter of the amount that is to go to Drigg.

Only one qualification needs to be made. That figure does not include the low-level waste from the decommissioning of Magnox reactors. However, I believe that I am on fairly firm ground when I say that a decision has not yet been made about exactly when or how to decommission, or about whether it would be sensible to remove low-level waste from the decommissioned sites when the highly radioactive cores are to be left on site in any event.

Secondly, I ask the Government to study carefully compaction and incineration systems. Thereby the volume of waste could be reduced by significantly more than the factor of three to which I have just referred.

Thirdly, I ask the Government to set up a system properly to monitor all nuclear waste. At the moment we do not really know which parts of low-level waste are significantly dangerous and which parts of it are perfectly harmless. Monitoring will not only enhance public confidence but will probably show that large quantities of allegedly radioactive waste are completely harmless and can and should go on to a council tip. The BPO study says that a great deal of merely suspected material is to go to these sites. That is nonsense.

Fourthly, there should be serious and urgent thought about how to deal with intermediate-level waste. About 200,000 cu m of such waste will have to be buried deep. To add a small amount of low-level waste to that, at marginal cost, is likely to bring down even further the figures I have given.

Fifthly, the Government should look searchingly at the comparative costings. I have already dealt with that aspect and the fact that the sub-sea manifold solution may be cheaper.

Finally, the Government should ensure that Parliament, local authorities and the public are kept fully and fairly informed about the progress of the investigations and of the consideration that is being given to the available methods of disposal.

A crowded county is not the place for this type of waste. It is doubtful whether shallow land burial is the right solution. There are alternatives. I approve of the fact that we are tackling the problem, but I hope that we shall tackle it in a broader and more open-minded way.

12.14 am

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Fortunately, we are discussing this evening the disposal of low-level irradiated materials. They are similar to those to which I referred when I complained about the deposit of some of these materials in a domestic repository in the village of Cowpen Bewley, in my constituency. That material still reposes there, and is strictly monitored by the Northumbrian water authority to ensure that the drainage mentioned by the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) does not occur.

There is a tale of incompetence, inconsistency, dishonesty, treachery and, I fear, incest to relate. I refer to the incompetence of NIREX, which entered the fray with a very badly prepared brief. It proceeded to bombard the unwitting electorate with a blizzard of bland assurances which included everything from granny's alarm clock, two cigarettes a year, the risk of crossing the road, and closing the window at night to tanker loads of chlorine. I suppose that if someone was crossing the road to obtain two cigarettes and closed the window with a tanker load of chlorine to make sure that the building he left was secure, granny's clock might get very alarmed, but NIREX almost told such childish and puerile stories to try to convince the electorate that its proposals were acceptable. Sadly, such a patronising attitude was bound to antagonise rather than placate an anxious public.

Moreover, NIREX was also responsible for the inconsistency. The definitions of the types of radwaste were changed with monotonous regularity. Two and a half years ago NIREX started with three categories: high,

intermediate and low. Those categories were then changed to high, high-level intermediate, low-level intermediate and low. Persistent questioning about where one couuld draw the line of distinction between those different classifications led only to more confusing explanations. We do not hear about the "high" anymore. That has been shelved and forgotten until NIREX has solved its problems. In addition, "high-level intermediate" seems to have disappeared from the scene. Now we have simply low level and the category that we are discussing tonight, "very low-level" waste.

I come to the dishonesty of NIREX, which has manifested itself in the way that it has moved its goal posts. I do not object to people moving goal posts, so long as that movement is consistent and in one direction. That allows us a fall-back position, and we may know exactly where the next questionable area will arise, but the goal posts have been moved not only from side to side, but to and fro and up and down. We have been thrust into a game of almost three dimensional chess. NIREX has done that with the changes in the design facilities. They have gone through such a mangle of modification that the Advertising Standards Authority was compelled to rebuke NIREX for giving the public misleading information.

Moreover, NIREX has been dishonest in describing the type of facility and the method of management. It has also been dishonest in describing the means of transport. When it staged its display of a geriatric Deltic-diesel running at about 75 miles per hour into a fuel flask, it stressed that barrier wagons would be used on each flask, but one went into Seaton power station in the constituency bordering mine a fortnight ago without a barrier wagon. I am not accusing British Rail of breaking any regulations. According to its rules, it acted perfectly safely, but I accuse the CEGB and BNFL of misleading the public by making such statements.

Treachery is a strong word to use, but only 48 hours ago, in a Committee Room off the main corridor, and only 18 months after NIREX had accepted the Ministerial instruction about Billingham, it was still referring to Billingham's suitability as a site for the disposal of such waste. Such action leads some people to think that perhaps the whole exercise tonight might be no more than a charade or an elaborate hoax to con a gullible electorate into thinking that democratic processes really work. They could be no more than circus hoops for ministerial lapdogs to leap at and through and to land, just as adroitly as before, on the predetermined site at Bedford.

We have heard how unsuitable Bradwell, Fulbeck and South Killingholme are. When it is realised how suitable is transport to Bedford, and how the clay content is so suitable at Bedford, reasons for rejecting the other three sites will be found. This could be no more than an elaborate con job.

On the question of incest and NIREX, I have to point out that NIREX was begat by BNFL and the UKAEA in a menage a quatre, with the CEGB in the most unsavoury degree of kindred with the SEGB. The patriarch of this inbred household was the Department of the Environment itself. In other words, it is totally introvert, totally introspective and totally incestuous. Until that constitution receives an infusion of new and healthier blood, the animal is doomed to premature death from incipient blindness.

Let us try to remove some of the blindness and take away the blinkers. What should be done? I refer specifically to all kinds of radioactive waste, not particularly to the low-level waste to which the order refers. The volume of such stuff is not necessary. We are dealing with it in the wrong way. We should not be creating it in the way that we are, to start with. We should stop recycling it by crushing the Magnox cassettes into a crumbled swarf. I suspect that the reason why we do that is that we do not have the technical expertise to remove the cassette without breaking it. Perhaps our research should be in that direction.

If we were able to manipulate the cassettes and to store them in dry conditions above water, with circulated air correctly filtered and at the right temperature, there would be no need to look at them again. We would then be able to contain the volume of the stuff to about one thirtieth of what we create at present.

Some Magnox stations have had their licence extended by more than 50 per cent. of their design life. We are told reliably, since Chernobyl, that some which are currently operating would not be granted a licence today. So why do we not decommission them? Why do we not use the existing buildings as stores or dry silos? Why can we not pack drums and cassettes in them? Why can we not pack them right up to the ceiling, seal them, and put our radiation signs on them? We could even build our pathetic Stonehenges of recognition, as suggested this week in the feeble competition in the United States, and build concrete monoliths on top so that people recognise them in 1,000 years' time.

Talking of monoliths, I remind the House that a NIREX spokesman compared some of the means of disposing of this stuff underground with monolithic structures which he said could be created in such a manner that they would outlast creation itself. That idea did not last long, because it was pointed out just how fragile and friable concrete can become in certain circumstances. He soon plugged for the salt mine-type disposal, so that the salt crystals have a self-filling, backfill role to play. That is an example of how NIREX mislead the public.

Putting the waste in the very buildings that created it and sealing them would at least contain the problem to the sites that are already blighted by the creation of the stuff. Why should we spread our filth all around the kingdom? By disposing of it in a way that would keep it dry, corrosion would be prevented. It would be kept cool and it would be possible to monitor it. That would enable us and our successors to learn if all was not well with the insidious legacy that we decided to bequeath to our offspring, and enable them to redeem it and package it safely.

We do not clean our kitchens by collecting the dross under the mats, so why should we treat the country like a collection of mats? Having changed the rules of consultation once from those promised originally, the Minister should listen again as he listened before, but sadly not for long enough. He should learn from the old soldiers' adage, "Keep your enemy where you can see him and within your sights." If the Government will not do that, and if they are intent on dumping the waste, dump it in Dulwich.

12.25 am

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): A brief from NIREX about its proposed investigation of four named sites reached me, and presumably other hon. Members, only yesterday. Had it been sent a month ago, it would have been a brief about investigating four sites for the

[Sir Bernard Braine]

disposal of intermediate nuclear waste. That is not the position now; the order refers only to low-level waste. Our protests in the past two debates have evidently borne fruit, and for that we must be truly thankful.

I invite the House to examine the proposal to include the site at Bradwell in Essex, which is within the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Government Chief Whip and not far from my own. I hope to show that its inclusion throws considerable doubt upon the whole procedure. The brief, at paragraph 18, states:

"Before NIREX can marshall the particular arguments to support the development of a repository, it must acquire detailed information on the geology and hydrogeology necessary for the design and assessment of a repository. The Secretary of State for the Environment asked NIREX to name three or more sites for investigation so that comparisons can be made."

That sounds eminently reasonable, but in paragraph 20, under the heading

"How will NIREX Choose its Preferred Site?",

the brief states:

"Throughout the investigatory stage, NIREX will consult a wide range of bodies whose expertise or interests will contribute to the design and assessment work. Such consultations will take a variety of forms: in some cases they are required by legislation, in others they are a matter of common sense and courtesy."

I shall have something to say about the common sense and courtesy displayed thus far by NIREX.

Paragraph 25 of the brief, under the heading "Why These Sites?", reads:

"The four sites chosen for detailed investigation were identified following a painstaking site selection process, starting with areas of search defined by geological considerations (recognising the value of clay environment for its ability to retard and inhibit the movement of radionuclides to man)."

It then refers to various criteria.

The first criterion is the geological nature of the site. Paragraph 26 asserts that Bradwell has

"very good geology with up to 50 metres . . . of clay."

That is all that it says on the subject of geology. The site has to satisfy a number of criteria, but Bradwell does not satisfy even one of the criteria laid down by NIREX. What is said about the geology of the area is complete nonsense. Either NIREX is incompetent because it has not studied the known facts or, worse, it has deliberately ignored them.

I have a copy of a report drawn up by the environmental protection unit of the Institute of Geological Sciences at Harwell. This was published in June 1980 and has been available to NIREX, to the Government and to hon. Members ever since. The report describes work carried out for the Department of the Environment acting on behalf of the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Wales, and for Scotland and the Commission of European Communities as part of its research programme into radioactive waste management. The report examines the suitability of the Bradwell site for the disposal of radioactive waste. I will quote from the report because it goes to the heart of the matter. Under the heading,

"Potential for the disposal of radioactive waste",

and referring to Bradwell, the report states:

"The potential for the disposal of radioactive waste beneath Bradwell is poor. The London clay is only 50 metres thick and only 34 metres of this is true clay. The clay may be a partial hydraulic continuity with the chalk and this renders it unsuitable even for shallow burial of low-level, high-bulk radioactive waste. The clays of the Lower London Tertiaries are insufficiently developed to act as a containment formation. The chalk is a valuable public supply aquifer in the region to the west and for this reason must be considered unsuitable. The Upper Greensand is a thin, confined aquifer offering no potential and even though the Gault offers low transport rates and a high sorption capacity, it is insufficiently developed to satisfy the low and medium level radioactive waste disposal criteria."

Remember that those facts have been known since 1980. The report concludes:

"There is little potential for the burial of radioactive waste beneath Bradwell . . . Shallow burial of low-level radioactive waste in London Clay is not feasible owing to its limited thickness and the proximity of the chalk aquifer which may be in partial hydraulic continuity with the clay."

Despite the specialist jargon, we have here a clear statement from the most expert body that could have been summoned to carry out that task. I ask the House to contrast that report with the sentence or two in the brief that was sent to hon. Members only yesterday.

Both versions of the facts cannot be correct. I invite the Government to have a close look at the report which I have quoted. That report is not, of course, the only document available that should be studied. I understand that a report, prepared by the Electro Watt Engineering consultancy at the request of NIREX, reaches similar conclusions to those in the Harwell report. I have not seen the consultancy report and I must not lead the House to believe that it will support the argument that I am advancing. However, I want to know whether the former Secretary of State for the Environment ever saw either of those reports. I want to know whether the present Secretary of State, in the brief time that he has had available after assuming office, has studied those reports. I take this opportunity to congratulate him on achieving his high office. I am sure that he will bring great flair and distinction to his office. However, I doubt whether he has seen these reports.

Why has there been so much secrecy? Why do independent experts say one thing and NIREX something else? Perhaps the answer can be found in the arrogance and extraordinary failure of NIREX to provide even basic information to Essex county council, which, after all, is the planning authority. The House will recall that when we first debated this matter on 13 March, on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Colchester, South and Maldon (Mr. Wakeham) and the Essex county council, I complained and asked that a proper request made by the council should be granted and that details of the borings carried out before the building of the Bradwell nuclear power station, which is adjacent to the Bradwell site, should be made available. That request was ignored.

In April, I received a letter from my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Energy, which stated:

"I am happy to say that CEGB have advised me that they have now sent to Essex County Council, via NIREX UK Ltd., copies of cross-sections of boreholes made for the foundations of Bradwell Power Station."

By the time of our second debate on 13 May, the information had still not been supplied. The chief executive of the county council has informed me that it arrived only on Monday.

Who are these people to defy Parliament? Who are they to mislead Ministers? The Minister told me in writing that the information had been passed to Essex county council, but he was misled. What right has anyone to deny a properly elected local authority basic information upon which it can form a judgment?

We begin, therefore, knowing that NIREX has chosen in Bradwell a site which does not satisfy the geological criteria. Nor does it satisfy any of the other criteria. For many years, the area has been subjected to inundation from the sea. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for

Colchester, North (Sir A. Buck) will remember the east coast flood disaster of 1953 and how the entire coastline from Harwich to Canvey island in the Thames estuary was inundated by the sea. The area is liable to flooding, yet this is the site at which it is now proposed to store low-level nuclear waste. What nonsense.

The road and rail communications do not satisfy the criteria laid down by NIREX. They are almost non-existent. As I have said previously — this would be laughable if it were not for its tragic implications—the site is adjacent to a fault line which, since the 17th century, has seen four earthquakes, the last in 1884. *[Laughter.]* —That is not a laughing matter. The last earthquake in England was in Essex and its epicentre was only four miles away from Bradwell. People were killed and buildings were destroyed.

What can one say about the competence of experts who choose a site that does not satisfy even one of the criteria that they have laid down for selection?

Dr. Michael Clark (Rochford): Does my right hon. Friend agree that as Bradwell is patently unsuitable for the site of nuclear waste storage, those of us who live in Essex and who represent Essex constituencies have nothing to fear from the special development order?

Sir Bernard Braine: There is something to be said for voting for the order and getting the investigation over as quickly as possible. However, the Minister told us that it will take many months, so people will be left in uncertainty for a long time. But I concede my hon. Friend's point. For Bradwell that may be the easiest way of disposing of this unpleasant business. However, the way in which this matter has been conducted so far does not inspire any confidence in NIREX or the industry.

Sir Trevor Skeet: Does my right hon. Friend not see that four sites are locked into the procedure and that the Minister has said that if NIREX carries out its borings and finds that two or three of the sites are unsuitable, they will immediately be released? All the uncertainty and blight will be lifted. The most likely sites to be released are South Killingholme and Elstow.

Sir Bernard Braine: I have great respect for my hon. Friend, but he is trying to make the best of a bad job. Having regard to Bradwell's known geological unsuitability, the site should never have been chosen in the first place.

My colleagues from Essex will readily agree that, more than any other area in the kingdom, our county has been the repository of noxious and dangerous wastes. Indeed, 72 per cent. of the hazardous waste and 50 per cent. of the commercial waste deposited in Essex in recent years has come from outside the county. It has been the county council's policy to reduce the volume of waste, to regenerate derelict land in co-operation with the private sector and to promote employment and tourism, capitalising on the twin advantages of the M25 and our growing reputation as the gateway to Europe.

The Bradwell proposal goes against everything that Essex county council, on behalf of our constituents, has sought to achieve. That Bradwell could become a repository for low-level nuclear waste runs counter to its policies. The chief executive told me today that all this is having a damaging effect on what the council is trying to achieve. From Colchester in the north to my constituency in the Thames estuary people are worried. Yet the Bradwell proposal has been a non-starter from the beginning.

I also find it astonishing that there has been no real study of alternative methods of storing either intermediate or low-level nuclear waste. It is not that there is no alternative. The speech of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) will bear reading for days to come. He referred to the POWER system for nuclear waste disposal which makes use of proven offshore oil industry technology and which has been in use throughout the world for 20 years. It costs only about two thirds of that for land sites.

What should we do? I can understand what my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford (Dr. Clark) said. There is a case for approving the special development order so that borings can proceed without delay. At least three of the communities might then be relieved of further anxiety. However, where it is clear, as it is at Bradwell, that the site should never have been chosen in the first place, we should then be agreeing to go through a charade, involving a waste of public money. For that reason I will find it difficult to vote for the order. If it is passed, and I expect it will be, I must ask the Government to insist on a study of the two expert reports I have mentioned and I must call for an explanation as to why these have so far been ignored.

12.45 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): There is something slightly wrong with this debate, in that not only are we debating at 1 o'clock in the morning a serious matter of importance ultimately to every part of the country, but we are dealing with the consequences of having a nuclear power industry without dealing with the causes of nuclear waste.

Conservative Members who have made passionate and effective speeches on behalf of their constituents against the deposition of nuclear waste in their constituencies should ask themselves a couple of questions. If they do not want it in their constituencies—and they obviously and patently do not—are they suggesting that it should go somewhere else, or will they view the matter logically and say that they are opposed to the nuclear power industry? If they do not do that, this debate will go on and on, because all our people say quite properly and correctly that they do not want nuclear waste.

It may be that we are debating nuclear waste being dumped in a number of thinly populated rural areas, but as the sites are turned down one by one—and I am sure that they will be turned down by one means or another —other more densely populated places will be tried. No doubt there will be pressure once again for dumping at sea, and there will be problems as the dumping gets nearer to urban areas. Every night a nuclear waste train passes through my borough on its way from Bradwell. It passes through London and eventually it reaches Sellafield. The dangers of that are obvious.

The use by the Government of a special development order is yet another consequence of the denial of democracy and the secrecy that surrounds the nuclear industry. Why are the Government not prepared to allow local planning authorities to discuss the NIREX proposals? It is because they know very well that in every case, and wherever this dumping is proposed and whoever is in control, the local authority and public opinion will ensure

[Mr. Jeremy Corbyn]

that planning permission is refused. The consequence of a nuclear industry is that the Government take over the quite proper functions of local authorities in order to inflict this blight on our country.

I ask those Conservative Members who have spoken so strongly against the order to think further about the consequences of dumping. They all represent local interests which oppose this dumping. Will they vote for the order, even though they are against it? They should think the thing through. If they are opposed to the order—and I am sure that many of them genuinely are—I hope that they will vote against it, and that their hon. Friends who support the order will take the view that unless they also are prepared to vote against it, we will be back here in a few months debating the same thing for a different part of the country.

The dangers of nuclear power, and nuclear power itself, were debated a few weeks ago following the Chernobyl disaster, a disaster that could not happen, in the same way as the disaster at Windscale in 1957 or the Three Mile Island disaster could not happen. I appreciate that we are debating the sites for waste disposal, but we must also bear in mind where the material comes from in the first place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman must not talk about that. He must confine his remarks to what is contained in the order.

Mr. Corbyn: I am speaking about what is in the order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The order contained NIREX proposals for sites for the dumping of low-level radioactive waste. Those proposals are a denial of local democracy and are a step towards other dumping that could well take place, as other hon. Members have said. We talk about safety. I do not know how many hon. Members are scientifically trained. I am not in any sense a scientist, and I expect that 90 per cent. of hon. Members are in a similar position. However, we are all quite capable of understanding that the technology that exists to protect people from long-life, half-life or short-life radioactive waste is entirely fallible.

It was originally proposed that this material should be put in unlined trenches. It was then proposed that it should be put in concrete-lined trenches. It was later proposed that perhaps it should be buried and that perhaps the higher-level waste should be vitrified. From time to time other proposals were dreamt up, but none of that technology has been known to exist for anything like the life time of the waste that it is supposed to protect and encase. This House has responsibility to face the consequences of voting for a nuclear policy if we cannot dispose of the waste that this industry creates.

I accept that even if we closed all the nuclear power stations tomorrow—I wish that were the case—there would still be a problem of nuclear waste from power stations and other sources. Therefore, some proposals must be made for the safety of that waste. However, as hon. Members have pointed out, there is a problem in respect of every site that has been suggested. At Bradwell there is the problem of flooding and of the water table. The same problem exists at the Bedfordshire site, and the same problem will exist in respect of every other site.

I hope that the House will think seriously about what we are discussing. We should think of the consequences of the nuclear accidents and leaks that have taken place. We should reject the order and insist that local authorities should have an opportunity to hear local representations and to discuss the issue. We should reject the steamroller of central Government, which is very much the hallmark of the new Secretary of State for the Environment. We should look to a future that provides safety for our environment and people.

There is no question but that cancer deaths have been caused by nuclear power and nuclear dumping. In my mind there is no question but that in the long term cancer deaths will result from the Chernobyl incident. Now is the time to take stock of the dangers of nuclear power, nuclear waste and nuclear dumping. We should reject the order and look to a future that protects our environment, instead of hobnobbing around the country destroying one area after another.

12.52 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): This matter affects my constituents directly, and because of that I had thought of making many comments about what is proposed, but in view of the lateness of the hour I shall not do so. I am anxious that others of my right hon. and hon. Friends should have the opportunity to participate in the debate. I and they will therefore confine ourselves to about five or six minutes each. I very much hope that because of that the Minister will not assume that we are making any concession to what he proposes.

I oppose the special development order and will vote against it, on both narrow and broad grounds. I shall deal first with the narrow grounds. I am against a special development order per se, because it bypasses the ordinary democratic procedures. Furthermore, it is an inappropriate way for us to regulate any form of planning development because conditions need to be imposed. A statutory instrument cannot be amended, and this House cannot therefore impose appropriate conditions on a development of this kind.

I shall also oppose the SDO on a broader ground that falls into two parts. First, the road down which we are being asked to go is wrong. The argument against the choice of Fulbeck is very powerful. It has major drainage problems, it is subject to seismic disturbances, there are faults on the site, and the clay is not of adequate uniformity.

I make those points simply to tell NIREX and the Secretary of State that we are aware of the relevant criteria. We know that Fulbeck does not match up to them, and any attempt to move the goal posts will be pounced on by us and denounced.

My last point is also a broad one. I do not think for a moment that this system of disposing of nuclear waste is appropriate. I agree entirely with what was said by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell). The nuclear industry is now more vulnerable that it has ever been. It would take very little for this country to become wholly hostile to it. One of the things that would make the country hostile would be a waste disposal policy that was unacceptable. This waste disposal policy is unacceptable to my constituents, and I believe that it is unacceptable to the community as a whole.

In the course of the next 18 months we must make urgent and pressing inquiries into alternatives. I support everything that my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) said about the

alternatives and in particular about volumes and cost. My suspicion is that at the end of the day the differentials in cost between an acceptable and an unacceptable system are not great, but even if the distinction is great, that is a price that we will have to pay, first, for public confidence, secondly, for a continuation of the nuclear industry, and thirdly, for justice to my constituents.

12.56 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I also shall try to confine my remarks, since it does not seen that I shall have the luxury of having as much time as some other hon. Members have rightly taken. We should have had a much longer debate than the three hours that we finally secured.

Every hon. Member who casts a vote tonight should stop and ask himself, "How would I vote if this special development order affected my constituency?". That is the question that all hon. Members have to ask themselves when they go through the Division Lobbies.

Four hon. Members are faced with the problem, and they have been ably supported by hon. Members of all political parties representing their neighbouring constituencies. I want to place on record my thanks for the support given to me and my constituents by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), by my hon. Friends the Members for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh).

My constituency has had this hanging over its head for the past year. It is an industrial constituency with much unemployment. The proposed area has been chosen, as the hon. Member for Great Grimsby indicated, for no other reason than that it happens by pure chance to be owned by the Central Electricity Generating Board, a partner of NIREX. I want to emphasise the remarks that were made about the way in which NIREX has gone about its local public relations in my constituency, as in other constituencies

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) drew attention to the insensitive approach that had been taken at public meetings. I agree with him, but I have news for him. It transpires that the first man from NIREX whom I met in my constituency is the prospective parliamentary Liberal candidate for the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Hertfordshire, South-West (Mr. Page). I suggest tht the Liberal party gets its act together and explains to its prospective candidates the policy that its spokesmen outlined this evening. I will not have Liberal candidates coming to my constituency wearing the NIREX hat and taking the NIREX stand.

I come now to the position of the Opposition Front Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Copeland (Dr. Cunningham). I have respect for the speech that he made the other day. It was an honourable speech, and I applaud him for that, but he made it clear that if he were Secretary of State he would probably recommend a shallow burial facility such as has been recommended by NIREX. I am sad about that, but I respect the manner in which he stated his view.

There are alternatives. A blight is to be cast upon these constituencies. Just as I have a duty to oppose the possibility of a waste dump in my constituency, so also have I a duty to make sure that it is not foisted on the constituencies of other hon. Members. For that reason I recognise the challenge that has been made to me in previous debates.

One must address oneself to the whole question of the nuclear industry. As my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said, if we are to secure public confidence in the future of the nuclear industry we must recognise that the way in which we dispose of nuclear waste, particularly the method proposed by NIREX, could kill its future.

If it is Government policy to maintain the nuclear industry, they must recognise the intense strength of feeling on this issue. That feeling has literally spilled over into the Chamber this evening, but it is nothing compared with the strength of feeling that we see daily in our constituencies near the four sites and in the counties.

I should like to place on record the courteous way in which my hon. Friend the Minister and his colleagues have received us. They say that they listen, and I am grateful for the fact that they have scrapped their plans on intermediate-level nuclear waste, which they say was a result of our representations, but that is not enough. All it has shown is that we are right in what we say. It has made our constituents even more determined to oppose this move. I tell my right hon. Friend the new Secretary for State that I shall make his life sheer misery until he tears up this order.

1.1 am

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): The Fulbeck site is within a few miles of my constituency boundary, so I am happy to support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). The site is within 10 miles of 125,000 people. At first I thought that one of NIREX's criteria would be to seek an area of low population. NIREX has broken the first criterion that it set out.

I am sorry that the common denominator of the four sites is the fact that they are Government owned. It must be concluded that the Government looked for easy sites rather than the best. When I asked NIREX why it did not look at Scotland and Wales where there are far more remote areas than those being considered tonight, I was astonished to hear that the Department of the Environment had instructed that they were not to be considered. It is monstrous that NIREX is told that it must not consider the most appropriate and remote sites in the United Kingdom for a suitable spot.

My constituents' fears are based on their experience of experts. Thirty years ago the experts told us that asbestos did no harm. Thirty years hence we are told that it does harm. Thirty years ago we were told that the sort of reactor at Chernobyl could be used in the United Kingdom. Are we not glad today that we did not follow that advice? We must not always listen to experts when we make our decisions.

The experts do not appear to have noted that my area has a high water table. If nuclear waste is left in water one is exposing one's area to huge risks.

Lincolnshire and the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham form an area of considerable agricultural interest. Some 25 per cent. of the nation vegetables are grown there. Just suppose that the experts were wrong, and the water could get through. Just imagine then the horror of the vegetables being subject to radiation

[Mr. Richard Alexander]

without our knowledge. I accept that that is supposition, but we must be sure that this waste does not go in an area where the water table is so high.

I do not wish to speak for too long, but I do not want it to be thought that, because I am curtailing my remarks, I have little more to add. However, I shall make two further points, one of which my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham mentioned. The area of Fulbeck is an area of considerable geological disturbance. We have earthquakes, and the geological map shows that the crust of the earth is not safe there. Dry Doddington church, near the A1, is on a slope as a result of disturbances. It cannot be right, however we think of nuclear waste, to put it in an area of geological disturbance.

We must not be confused about the reactions of our constituents. They are not necessarily afraid of radiation. They are afraid of the unknown and of disruption to their lives, and these are natural and honourable fears for them. It would be wrong if I did not recognise that, or that the experts could make their lives a misery. On their behalf, I shall be voting against the order.

1.7 am

Sir Trevor Skeet (Bedfordshire, North): We are almost on the point of drawing stumps, but I feel that I should have the opportunity to say one or two things, although briefly because I know that one or two of my colleagues still wish to speak.

The nuclear industry is on the point of collapse, and with it will go thousands of jobs, unless we are careful in our response to one chance accident in the Soviet Union. It could be said that, because of Flixborough, where 32 people were killed, we should have closed our entire chemical industry. That did not occur. The crisis in the Soviet Union is no reason why we should place our entire nuclear industry in jeopardy.

The order is simple, and is only to allow an assessment of whether all or any of the land is suitable for the depositing of low level waste. It goes no further. It is being followed by a public inquiry into one of the sites that might be selected, or alternatively, all of them may be rejected. I said earlier that if, as my colleagues have said, the choice of sites in their constituencies is so absurd, they have nothing to fear.

It is useful to be able to say, "Let the geological surveys go through. Let us trace the water table and find out precisely where it is and the movement of the flow." This may take a year, but then those sites that are unsuitable, such as Elstow, will be discharged, and discharged for ever, and those sites that are suitable will be included.

It is worth bearing in mind—I have done a lot of work on this subject—that Bradwell has been storing waste for the past 15 years, has a nuclear power station, good geology with 50 m thickness of London clay and saline water with no local abstraction. It is not for me to judge the facts. All I am saying is that, when there are four sites, why should we say that none should be considered? I suggest that a public inquiry should be held at which the issues can be considered in depth.

Sir Bernard Braine: On what basis does my hon. Friend allege that Bradwell has good geology, and from which document was he quoting? Was it the NIREX document?

Sir Trevor Skeet: I can recommend the geological survey of that site. It is important that, when four sites are recommended, they should be examined cautiously. There should be a public inquiry lasting for about a year. We must be satisfied that people are given an opportunity to express their views fully. It is perfectly right for constituents to put forward their views, vigorously.

1.11 am

Mr. Edward Leigh (Gainsborough and Horncastle): I shall vote against the order tonight, but not because I oppose the development of our nuclear industry; I do not. I believe that, in an increasingly energy-hungry world, nuclear power will provide man's only salvation. I shall vote against the motion, not because I doubt that disposing of nuclear waste can ever be safely accomplished; I do not. I believe that world-wide experience, especially that of Canada, West Germany and Sweden, proves that nuclear waste can be disposed of safely.

I shall vote against the motion tonight because the only hope for a successful and progressive nuclear industry is to secure public confidence. It is said that the country cannot be governed on the NIMBY—"Not in my back yard"—principle. I agree.

The objectors to the order are not similar to those few who object to the building of motorways. In this case, whole counties are saying "No"—over 100,000 people in the county of Humberside and over 12,000 in my small part of Lincolnshire. We cannot turn our backs on that volume of concern. Democracy must proceed by way of consent.

At this late stage I beg the Government to approach the problem not in a spirit of bypassing normal planning procedures or of blighting four sites simply because they happen to be convenient, but in a spirit of developing a coherent nuclear strategy based on public confidence. Deep mining may be expensive. Destroying public confidence in the nuclear industry will be even more so.

1.13 am

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): I shall vote against the order tonight because I believe that what the Government propose in pushing it through will do enormous damage to the nuclear industry. I represent a steel constituency. We need cheap energy. The country should have a balanced energy policy. Over 150,000 people in my part of the world object to the proposals of NIREX. If one casts aside such opposition and ignores those fears and worries, one builds up opposition to the nuclear industry as a whole.

If my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government believes in the future of the nuclear industry, he must bear in mind the great fears that are felt as a result of NIREX's proposals about the waste disposal sites. We may be taking a decision which, in 20 years time, we will see as a watershed in the development of the nuclear industry. If we accept the order tonight and establish nuclear dust-bins in the constituency of the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown), we will be confining the nuclear industry itself to the dust-bin.

1.14 am

Dr. David Clark: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As I expected, this has been an emotional debate. It is interesting that only one Back Bencher could in any way be construed as supporting the Government's line, and I hope that will be reflected in the Division Lobbies.

Some hon. Members rightly used their local, technical and geological knowledge to substantiate powerful cases not only against siting nuclear dumps in their areas but against the order. One theme has dominated the debate and been taken up by every hon. Member — public confidence. The Government must take that on board.

I should like to raise some points that arose from the Minister's speech. How many sites will be considered before a public inquiry after the initial exploratory work has been undertaken? I think that many people understand that if the order is accepted, and if only one site is recommended after the exploratory work, only one site will be considered before a public inquiry, and the blight will be lifted from the other three sites. The Minister suggested, at a time of some turbulence and therefore may not have quite understood what he said, that more than one site would be considered.

Will the Minister give an assurance about the type of low-level waste, especially non-alpha material, that will be dumped? I have already asked the hon. Gentleman for that assurance. The Environment Committee specified certain types of waste that should be dumped.

I return to the debate's main theme of taking the public with us. Earlier—I think every hon. Member agrees—I praised the work of the Environment Committee. Much of the information in the debate has been drawn from the Committee's report. The Committee recognised the problem associated with public involvement. Paragraph 235 of the report states:

"Effective public involvement in decision-making is one major key to unlocking the present stalemate in setting up waste disposal sites."

Those wise words were written with due consideration after months of study. The Government are turning their back on them.

Through the SDO, the Government are bypassing the normal planning procedure and stifling public debate. They are not doing a service to the general public or the nuclear industry. I hope that hon. Members will join us in the Division Lobby to vote against the order.

1.18 am

Mr. Waldegrave: By leave of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to respond first to the two points put by the hon. Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark). First, we are using the definition of low-level waste used in last year's report by the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee. Secondly, if no site turns out to be suitable, no site will be considered before a public enquiry. I suppose that it is possible for NIREX to take more than one site, but the expectation is that it will take one or perhaps two sites. That is ultimately for NIREX.

I was impressed by the discipline of my right hon. and hon. Friends in restricting the length of their speeches. They made powerful points. They had already been put to me and to my right hon. Friends, but it was right that they should be aired again tonight. I shall have to reply to some of the more detailed points by letter. Nevertheless, in the short period available before the end of this debate I shall try to deal with some of them.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) said that there has been a great rush about this. A justifiable criticism of Governments of both parties is not that they have been in a great rush but that they have delayed taking a decision. It is now 10 years since the Flowers report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Is it not a rush that we are to vote tonight on this order?

Mr. Waldegrave: Criticism would be much more justified if we were to listen to the siren voices on both sides of the House and seek reasons for delay. That would be the easy and the obvious course to take, but it would not be right.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby used the word "duty" as an insult. I did not insult him, because he is doing what he believes to be his duty towards his constituents. The only point at which the debate reached a low level was when he sought to insult me in a variety of ways for doing what I regard as my duty.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Blackpool, North (Mr. Miscampbell) made the abolutely fair point that the Committee upon which he serves has said that no question of safety is involved if the design is correct and a proper place is found for the site. However, he then made a point that was taken up by a number of my hon. Friends, including my hon. Friends the Members for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) and for Gainsborough and Horncastle (Mr. Leigh). I was slightly disappointed to find that my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough and Horncastle had altered his initial response. My hon. Friend the Member for Glanford and Scunthorpe (Mr. Hickmet) also referred to the fact that, regardless of safety, it is worth spending more in order to buy confidence in the nuclear industry. I understand that argument, but the House has to consider the danger to the nuclear industry if it backs off yet again from taking the first step. Would that not do more ultimately to shake confidence in the nuclear industry?

Many right hon. and hon. Members, including myself, believe that a nuclear industry is needed by this country and that, because of environmental problems, it will be needed even more in the next century. Therefore, the duty of the Department of the Environment is to seek safe waste disposal systems. We have to gather all the evidence we can about safe ways of dealing with low-level waste and then recommend to the House a reasonable way forward.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) accepts that it is prudent to act now, but he said that action should be taken on a wider front. We have narrowed the problem and made our task somewhat easier by saying that we shall deal only with low-level waste. There is now sufficient consensus to allow us to proceed along that route.

The hon. Gentleman asked me a question that I was asked during my visits: why does not the Department of the Environment specify in detail the kind of sites that it wants? I understand that argument, but it contains dangers. My Department ultimately has to be the arbiter as to whether a particular site that the inspector may recommend is suitable. If the Department were to define what would be a suitable site, legitimate accusations would be levelled at it that an inside track was being offered to a particular type of site. That would narrow the nature of the inquiry.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) and several other hon. Members

[Mr. Waldegrave]

asked whether we could continue for a longer time with Drigg. Drigg has a finite capacity. I am writing to my hon. and learned Friend. I have also answered questions from him about it and have given him our best assessment, based on the available figures. The advice that has been given to me is that, after a reasonable assessment of the amount of compaction and after a minimalist assessment of the nuclear programme — by which I mean no expansion—we shall still need a site after 2010. I think my hon. and learned Friend referred to that date, and I do not disagree with it.

In view of the likely length of the inquiry and the time that it will take to build any facility that is agreed, it is prudent that we should begin, carefully and steadily, to go ahead. Indeed, care and steadiness in all our responses was the theme in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North (Sir T. Skeet). It would be tragic for this country's future if we damaged the nuclear industry's long-term prospects because of the understandable passion that the subject arouses, particularly in the present climate.

But care, steadiness and slowness have been the watchwords. Indeed, there has almost been too much slowness. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) spoke about the geological report called, I believe, the Robbins report, that deals with the Essex site. I am advised that NIREX knows all about that. If any of the sites are wrong, as he and others argue, the sooner we investigate them, the better. Indeed, my hon. Friend the Member for Bedfordshire, North rightly made this point. The sooner those arguments are put to the test and settled, the better for all concerned and the better for the country. Other proposals would have to be brought forward in due course if none of the sites was suitable.

Contrary to what some may think, hardly any hon. Members have argued tonight that there should be no disposal site. They have not even argued that there should be no shallow disposal site in the country. They have been arguing for the continuation of one existing disposal site, although it is not the most ideal site. That point has not really been made. Hon. Members have been arguing not against low-level waste, but against an additional low-level waste disposal site in another place.

It was responsible of Opposition Members not to stand against the concept of low-level waste disposal if a properly designed facility can be found. If they vote against us, it will be because of the special development order. With all respect, that is a bit thick coming from a party that used an SDO itself. If it is necessary to have a debate in Parliament for the very same reason as before, that must be a slightly illogical argument.

Dr. John Cunningham (Copeland): Since the Minister mentioned the use of an SDO by the previous Labour Government in respect of the extensions to the BNFL site in my constituency, I should put the record straight. The planning authority agreed the application. It was then called in by the Minister, and he decided to operate the SDO procedure. In other words, the planning application went through the normal local government planning procedures. We are saying that that should happen in this case, but it is not being done.

Mr. Waldegrave: I quite understand that the SDO procedure was used then to give the House a chance to debate the issue. The argument made about the time that alleged blight might hang over a community is one justification for using the SDO tonight, and for holding this debate. Although I respect the anxieties of my right hon. and hon. Friends, I hope that the House will, in the face of an unpleasant, difficult but utterly necessary duty, which is laid on us all, take the first step towards the safe disposal of these wastes. That duty is laid on us regardless of our view of the nuclear industry and its future. Having listened to the arguments with respect, I hope that hon. Members will reject them. Otherwise our successors will be landed with an even worse problem.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 166, Noes 244.

Division No. 193] **[1.30 am**

AYES

Alexander, Richard
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Body, Sir Richard
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Brown, N. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne E)*
Brown, R. *(N'c'tle-u-Tyne N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Cunliffe, Lawrence
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Duffy, A. E. P.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freeson, Rt Hon Reginald
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hickmet, Richard
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Lamond, James
Leadbitter, Ted
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
O'Neill, Martin
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Parry, Robert
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom

Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Powell, Raymond *(Ogmore)*
Prescott, John
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Ron Davies and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carttiss, Michael
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Colvin, Michael
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hill, James
Hind, Kenneth
Hirst, Michael
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jessel, Toby
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Maples, John
Marland, Paul
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Moate, Roger
Monro, Sir Hector
Morris, M. *(N'hampton S)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Neubert, Michael
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Phillip
Ottaway, Richard
Page, Sir John *(Harrow W)*
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raffan, Keith
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Sir Dudley *(Warwick)*
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Terlezki, Stefan
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Thurnham, Peter
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watson, John
Wheeler, John
Wiggin, Jerry
Wilkinson, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd and
Mr. Gerald Malone.

Question accordingly negatived.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, etc.)

INDUSTRIAL ORGANISATION AND DEVELOPMENT

That the draft Cutlery and Stainless Steel Flatware Industry (Scientific Research Levy) (Abolition) Order 1986, which was laid before this House on 30th April, be approved.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Social Security

1.40 am

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): I beg to ask leave to present a petition which has been signed by 2,845 people, representing 5 per cent. of the electorate of Gower who are concerned that the measures arising out of the White Paper would be harmful to those in receipt of social security benefits.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your Honourable House do not pass legislation arising out of the "Reform of Social Security" White Paper.

To lie upon the Table.

Community Care

1.42 am

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I beg to ask leave to present a petition organised by the National Society for Mentally Handicapped People in Residential Care that has been signed by a grand total of 58,395 people. It expresses the concern of those humble petitioners about the operation of the so-called community care policies with reference to adult mentally ill and mentally handicapped people.

The Petitioners pray that this Honourable House should halt the community care policy and reappraise the full range of provisions necessary for the overall care of mentally handicapped people by Royal Commission,

reverse the planned rundown and closure of hospital homes for mentally handicapped people and provide the means for them now to develop their own caring community with those suitable transformed to the proven, and successful village concept, thereby giving them their necessary place in the whole spectrum of care facilities for mentally handicapped people.

To lie upon the Table.

Nuclear Waste

1.42 am

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I beg to ask leave to present a petition from the county of Humberside. I present this petition as the representative of all the Humberside Members of all parties.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, The Humble Petition of the People of Humberside.

Sheweth—That United Kingdom NIREX Ltd are looking for sites for the storage or disposal of radioactive waste. It is known that sites in Humberside are among those being considered. It is also known that the Secretary of State for the Environment is proposing to make a Special Development Order granting planning permission for related exploration purposes. The under-signed are totally and absolutely opposed to these proposals because they believe that they could threaten public safety, that they would seriously diminish the area's economic and social development prospects and that radioactive waste should be stored or disposed of at the site of origin.

Wherefore your Petitioners pray that your honourable House will under no circumstances approve the Special Development Order allowing preliminary site exploration or associated works in connection with the storage or disposal of radioactive waste in Humberside and will take all such other action within the powers of the House to prevent a national radioactive waste storage or disposal facility being established in Humberside.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

The petition is signed by Mr. P. Wellings of County Hall Beverley. His signature is followed by 155,000 other signatures. That testifies to the overwhelming opposition that there is in the county of Humberside to the special development order that has been considered and accepted tonight and to any proposals to dump nuclear waste in Humberside.

To lie upon the Table.

South-West England (Development Assistance)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

1.43 am

Mr. Tony Speller (Devon, North): I have spoken on similar lines in the past on Ilfracombe harbour in February 1983, on regional aid for north Devon in November 1984, on the need for aid for Ilfracombe marina on 25 April 1985, and now today, a year later, on the ineligibility of north Devon and the south-west for access to the European regional development fund, which would be so vital to our area.

North Devon lost assisted area status following the statement on 30 November 1984 by my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who was then Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry. My hon. Friend mentioned the 35 per cent. of the country still covered by assisted area status, and said:

"I do not think that it would make any sense to raise that percentage to 40 or 45 per cent." — [*Official Report*, 30 November 1984; Vol. 68, c. 949.]

On that occasion, I voted against the Government, having several months earlier supported the enabling legislation nationally. Change is inevitable, but it should be logical change.

The Minister of State referred several times in that statement to travel-to-work areas as the basis upon which development maps are built. I pay tribute to Devon county council, North Devon district council and the Ilfracombe and District Development Committee, all of which have worked hard towards regaining some form of assisted area status, and all of which support me this evening. I also pay tribute to the Ilfracombe Harbour Development Group and the Ilfracombe and District Hotel and Catering Association, which, together with our North Devon Manufacturers Association and the chambers of trade and commerce, have worked in their specific ways for growth and prosperity.

When seeking more aid, it would be wrong not to mention some of our specific industries that have bucked the trend and expanded in hard times, hoping for profit as matters improve. Firms such as Sussmans, Shapland and Petter, Carpenters Workshop and many others, would be a credit to any other part of the country, but it is essential that we retain them in our area. I pay tribute to the work force of north Devon, from messenger to managing director and from shopkeeper to shop steward. Ours is an area where we work together in the common interest, with industrial disputes a rarity.

In November 1984, when my hon. Friend the then Minister of State made his statement to the House, he told us in so many words that although times might be hard in the south-west, they were much harder in Merseyside, Scotland and the west midlands. As a result, the finite funds available were to be given to more industrially depressed areas than north Devon. It was no secret that the Government had made that choice, and it is nonsense to suggest that there was some Euro mystique about the decision or the percentages involved. Before the changes, about 28 per cent. of the United Kingdom population lived in a development or assisted area. Later, the figure was 35 per cent. Within those figures, some areas, like mine, had fallen out, and others, like that of my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry—my hon. Friend the Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison)—had the good fortune to fall within the new assisted areas. There was some illogicality here and there.

I voted against the Government on the specific variation which removed most of the south-west from assisted area status, because that status is the key to our locked-out prosperity. Without such status, an area does not have access to European regional development fund grant aid. ERDF money helps the South-West water authority with reservoir construction, Devon county council with road construction and places such as Ilfracombe with much-needed harbour development schemes. With that pump-priming, many good things can happen. Without it, projects trickle out instead of coming flooding in. Less well known in the House, but equally important, is the fact that the Government direct Government business to firms in assisted areas. North Devon has lost out in that respect, despite being highly competitive in price and delivery.

Today, we were visited by workers from Appledore shipyard and other shipyards. Appledore is in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills), who is sadly absent today due to ill health but who supports what I have to say about his constituency. Appledore shipyard has nearly 650 workers and is due to lose nearly 100 of them. A little help from the fund could have enabled work to come to the yard which, although not in my constituency, employs many of my constituents.

I have set out the stall of north Devon at some length. It is an attractive stall full of saleable goods, but it lacks the investment essential for the stallholder to prosper. We are an area of small business and industry. I have mentioned Appledore. Only one other firm — the excellent and world-famous door specialist Shapland and Petter—employs over 600 people in my constituency or that of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West. We are small business and what is big to us is small beer in the rest of the country.

The unemployment figures show 3,000 out of work in Ilfracombe, but that conceals the fact that 49 per cent. of those aged between 16 and 24 are jobless. Half the young work force without work is as bad as anywhere in the country, yet Ilfracombe could mop up at least half that number if we were given the funds to develop the harbour on a coastline where there is no safe harbour for north Somerset, north Cornwall and north Devon and nowhere for the south Wales sailors to sail to in safety when the Bristol channel weather is bad.

Tourism is too often looked down on in the industrial world, but the West Country tourist board reported to us only last week that a mere £5,900 will produce a new full-time job in catering and tourism, and the holiday season could be extended, given investment in what could be called non-sun activities. Even in north Devon, the sun does not shine all day and every day.

Since north Devon lost assisted area status, we have had virtually no inward investment, while along the M4 and M5 corridor areas are increasingly prosperous because of easy access to centres of population. In north Devon, our link road is still "pending". On 23 April I was told by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport that an answer on the inquiry on stage 2 would be given as soon as possible —that marvellous governmental phrase which means as little as possible. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry confirmed on 13 May

[Mr. Tony Speller]

that a review of regional policy will take place this year. That is the key to my argument. My part of the world is a great self-help area, but we cannot finance from sparse local resources the sort of job creation schemes that are needed.

If the Government are to reconsider the assisted area status map, which provides access to ERDF funding—it is not always understood that unless an area has some form of status it does not have access to European funds—it will not be understood in my part of the world if we do not have that access. The prosperity of Bristol, nonsensically considered by Governments of all colours to be the head office of the south-west, improves the figures for Devon and Cornwall. In exactly the same way, the horrific unemployment figures of Ilfracombe were recently massaged into the bad, but not so dreadful, figures of Barnstaple.

I suggest that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State stops depending so much on the travel-to-work area. That is illogical in sparsely populated rural areas. He should base his thinking on the more logical criteria used by the Department of the Environment and the Development Commission. Those criteria include above average unemployment, an inadequate range of employment opportunities, an outward migration of working age people—neither of my grown children can find a job in my constituency—a population bias towards the eldery and poor access to services and facilities. Every one of those criteria is met in north Devon.

Yet over the past few days, the tin industry in Cornwall, shipbuilding, ship repairing and the small boat businesses of Devon, and the problems of our major industries of agriculture and tourism all fill in the colour red for danger over the future prosperity of my part of the world.

Circumstances change so quickly and drastically. In July last year, Ilfracombe's youth unemployment was 31 per cent. In January this year it was 50 per cent. In July last year, overall unemployment was 20 per cent. By January this year it was 33·5 per cent. Bideford has 30 per cent. unemployment and the Barnstable figure is 22 per cent.

Earlier today, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry made two valid points in the debate on the shipbuilding industry. He said that most shipbuilding areas have the advantage of being in an assisted area, with the access to funding that that brings. Secondly, my right hon. Friend said that a great deal of public money was to be spent through various agencies to help those made redundant from shipbuilding. He also said, in answer to an intervention from me, that it is not easy to alter the boundaries of the development area map. Appledore in north Devon is an efficient, highly productive, under cover, year-round yard. It should be included in a development area because every other shipyard is included in a development area. I suspect that during the review in November 1984, north Devon was probably one of the last areas to be excluded from any formal status. I trust that it will be one of the first back.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams) *rose——*

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Does the hon. Member for South Hams (Mr. Steen) have the consent of the hon. Member for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) and the Minister to speak?

Mr. Speller: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

1.56 am

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): First, I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Devon North (Mr. Speller) for his customary robust and powerful speech on behalf of his constituents and, as important, the whole of Devon and Cornwall. He has done a great service by raising this important matter, even at this late hour.

I should like to make two observations. First it is now well known that regional aid distorts. It persuades firms and businesses to go to areas to which they would not normally go. I speak as a former Merseyside Member of Parliament with experience of how harmful regional aid was to that area. It persuaded car manufacturers to come to Merseyside, but as soon as the economy went into reverse and they encountered problems, they immediately pulled out of the areas in which they had received regional aid. Firms in areas which qualify for regional aid pull out like that because they have the least money to lose. The concept of regional aid must be looked at carefully.

My second point is that in areas like Devon and Cornwall rural deprivation is aggravated by regional aid, because it persuades people living in rural areas to search for work in urban areas which are declared assisted areas and receive funds from Europe to provide jobs. This deprives rural areas of jobs. Rural deprivation is aggravated by the placement of assisted areas in large urban conurbations.

If the purpose of the regional fund is to give larger sums of money to smaller geographical areas that have been redrawn to make them smaller, that is a mistake. There is overwhelming evidence that the more public money we pour into declining areas, the more it accentuates and accelerates their decline. One must place public funds where there is a partnership with private funds, and that means not just in declining, ailing large industrial conurbations, but in areas of growth. The map should be redrawn so that aid is not concentrated in areas that are in decline, but is provided in areas that are growing or arresting the decline.

In that context, my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North has performed a great service, because he has pointed out that areas like his and mine in south Devon should be included. They are not large industrial conurbations at the end of their lives: they have a future and are areas of great growth. We need the help of Europe to make those areas grow faster and create more jobs. I should like to hear what the Minister has to say, and I know that the House will welcome him to the Dispatch Box and hope that he will be able to say some helpful and constructive things.

1.59 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I should like to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Devon, North (Mr. Speller) and for South Hams (Mr. Steen) for bringing this subject before the House. It is a tribute to their tenacity that not only tonight but on previous occasions they have sought to defend their constituents' interests by seeking Adjournment debates.

I join my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North in his commendation of the work force in the south-west of England in general and in his constituency in particular. That work force is noted for its moderation, diligence and excellent record as a wealth creator in services and manufacturing. My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North graciously spoke about the support of my hon. Friend the Member for Torridge and Devon, West (Sir P. Mills) who is indisposed and cannot be here tonight. I am sure that he will read the *Hansard* report with interest. My hon. Friend the Member for South Hams and my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North spoke eloquently about rural deprivation.

Although this is not the sort of debate in which one should take issue with colleagues, I am sure that my hon. Friend the Member for South Hams will agree that most forms of regional aid — whether section 7 or development area assistance — involve just such a partnership. In other words, there is a minority percentage of money going in from the public sector which means a greater proportion of private sector spend. Where possible, we try to incorporate the idea of a partnership between the public and private sectors when it comes to the deployment of funds for the support of investment of one sort or another.

I repeat my thanks and those of the House to my hon. Friends for presenting this opportunity of debating the important issue of the application of the ERDF to north Devon and the south-west of England generally.

Under ERDF rules, assistance is normally available only for areas receiving domestic regional aid. We have rehearsed these arguments on previous occasions. The main areas in the United Kingdom that are eligible for ERDF are, therefore, the assisted areas. Thus it can be seen that eligibility for the ERDF reflects United Kingdom domestic regional priorities and this leads me to two main aspects underlying present ERDF eligibility in Devon and Cornwall.

First, there is the assisted areas map. Changes in the assisted areas map announced in 1984 resulted, for the reasons that I stated earlier, in changes in ERDF eligibility for parts of north Devon and the south-west of England. Perhaps I could refer to the map review by saying a few words about travel-to-work areas—a core point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North—and their importance to regional policy.

The new assisted areas map reflected the most recently identified employment needs of the country, because the basis of the map was the new TTWAs. The assisted areas map is based on TTWAs because they are the closest available approximations to self-contained labour markets covering the whole country. We do not pretend that they are perfect, but they are the closest approximations. They are therefore the best available basis for nationwide comparison of relative need for employment opportunities.

TTWAs are also the smallest areas for which the Department of Employment publishes rates of unemployment. Data on community patterns based on the latest census in 1981 became available in 1984 and formed the basis of a review of TTWA boundaries carried out by the Department of Employment. The procedure adopted in the review identified "job foci"—wards or groups of wards with concentration of employment—and then attached to these those wards with which there are strong commuter flow links in order to meet the self-containment criteria of the percentage level of those both living and working in the area.

As my hon. Friends are aware, the Government undertook a fundamental review of our regional policy in 1984. There was a wide measure of consultation with interested parties outside Government and nearly 500 submissions were received from organisations and individuals. As a very important element of that review, we amended the assisted areas map so that it should more closely reflect the areas of greatest need and changes in the pattern of employment since the previous review. Before deciding which areas should receive assisted area status, we looked at a variety of objective indicators.

The parts of Great Britain that have suffered particularly severely from the effects of the recession are those which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North identified, have had a high dependence on traditional industry. We looked at industrial and occupational structures in order to assess in which areas this was most particularly a problem.

I listened carefully to my hon. Friends and understand the arguments that they deployed as well as the development problems of their constituencies. No doubt those development problems may figure in some future consideration of a map, but I cannot say tonight when this review will take place.

We also considered the levels of those economically active and growth in labour supply to gain an indication of the future size of labour markets. The final two criteria we considered were an urban indicator and distance from main markets, again factors to which my hon. Friends referred.

My hon. Friend the Member for Devon, North will see from this that the designation of assisted areas was an issue which was given a great deal of careful thought. On the basis of the objective criteria that we considered, we could not justify continuing Devon and Cornwall's assisted area coverage at its previous level in preference to the relative needs of other parts of the country.

Mr. Speller: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way and also for his full description. I have a letter of 13 May, signed by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, which says that there will be a new review during this year. I just bring to the attention of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary that, whether it be in tin or shipbuilding, there have been fundamental changes since the review two years ago.

Mr. Butcher: I am coming to that point almost immediately. In those areas of Devon and Cornwall which remain assisted, since the introduction of the new policy offers of regional selective assistance of nearly £6 million have created 1,300 jobs, while regional development grants of £600,000 have created 217 jobs.

I am fully aware of my hon. Friend's concern, which he has expressed on many occasions, but there is nothing that I can usefully add at this stage to what he has already heard. We are carrying out a review of the administration of regional policy with the objective of ensuring that the schemes operate with maximum effect and economy from the point of view of both user companies and staff operating them. As my hon. Friend will undoubtedly be aware, there are many other hon. Members who also claim

[Mr. Butcher]

—many with vehemence—to have the most pressing case for their areas to be upgraded or reinstated as assisted areas.

Mr. Steen: Perhaps my hon. Friend could feed in to his Department the point that I was trying to put across. The criteria for assisted area status might be considered as well. By concentrating on the rundown areas, one is pulling work away from areas which are not yet run down.

Mr. Butcher: My hon. Friend made that point clearly in his concise speech. When in due course the policy is re-examined, that will be a factor for consideration and the same historical criteria that have been used on previous occasions may not necessarily be used. This may be the occasion when he and I should take issue on the so-called mature or declining areas and those which he believes are yet to go into decline unless something is done. Coming from an erstwhile urban environment, he will recognise that there are still urban parts of the country which look forward to an industrial renaissance, albeit very much with their own private sector and locally based initiatives being at the heart of it. We must entertain hopes that there will be such combustion in the so-called mature industrial areas.

I must re-emphasise that, while we shall, of course, listen to all representations, it would have to be a very strong case indeed to justify adjustments which could have repercussions elsewhere and undermine the stability of the present assisted area map. Such stability is essential to the success of a policy intended as an incentive to private sector investment.

I now turn to the second aspect of the related question on which I have already recently given my hon. Friend a parliamentary answer and on which I had an exchange recently in the House with the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) That is the role of the European Commission in the decision about the working population coverage of the assisted areas map as a result of the 1984 regional policy review. I appreciate that this question has been the source of much concern recently in the south-west and so perhaps I could again take the opportunity of relating to the House the circumstances of our decision.

As a Community member state we are under an obligation, under the provisions of articles 92 and 93 of the treaty of Rome, to obtain the approval of the Commission for any proposed changes in regional aid systems. If changes are implemented without Commission approval, the Commission may demand repayment of any aid granted illegally.

As a result of the last regional policy revision in 1984, the United Kingdom Government decided on various changes to our systems of regional aid. One of the main features was an increase in the assisted area coverage of the working population in Great Britain to 35 per cent. Before formal notification, the United Kingdom undertook informal discussions with the Commission on the proposed changes and, as a result, had good reason to believe that the Commission would not approve any map that went beyond 35 per cent. without undertaking a major appraisal of United Kingdom regional aid. That could easily have resulted in a decision by the Commission to force a cut to below 35 per cent. Bearing that and other considerations in mind, the United Kingdom Government decided to introduce an assisted areas map covering 35 per cent. of the working population of Great Britain. That was of course an increase from 27 per cent. at the outset of the review. It was officially notified to the Commission, which raised no objection.

The legal obligation to obtain the Commission's approval would apply to any future changes in United Kingdom regional aids that the Government might wish to make. We have no reason to believe that the Commission's views on assisted area map coverage have since altered.

As a consequence of the Government's decision in 1984 on the assisted areas map, those areas that lost assisted area status, because we did not feel they merited preferential treatment over the rest of the county, also lost eligibility for the ERDF. They did not lose assisted area status just because they were outside the 35 per cent. coverage. A number of other areas excluded from the map were worse off, in terms of the objective comparisons which were made, than some of the areas in Devon and Cornwall which lost assisted area status. Such areas would thus have had stronger uses for inclusion if coverage had been widened.

This has been an unusual Adjournment debate because it has been justifiably introduced as a means of seeking to obtain clarification and, indeed, to exert pressure on behalf of constituents. In due course, the coverage and criteria of assisted area maps may be further considered. Whay my hon. Friends have said tonight will have to be referred to in such a course of action. However, I cannot say when that will happen. All I can do is thank them for their sense of timing and tenacity in defending their constituents' interests.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twelve minutes past Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 22 May 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

GREAT YARMOUTH OUTER HARBOUR BILL

Order for Third Reading read.
Queen's consent, on behalf of the Crown, signified.
Read the Third time, and passed.

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 5 June.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed, on Thursday 5 June.

BRITISH RAILWAYS (STANSTED) BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [24 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed, on Tuesday 3 June at Seven o'clock.

HARWICH PARKESTON QUAY BILL *(By Order)*

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [28 April] That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed, on Tuesday 3 June at Seven o'clock.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

Criminal Statistics

1. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department in which police force districts in England and Wales there has been a reduction in the total number of crimes since 1978.

4. **Mr. Jim Callaghan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the number of victims of offences of violence against the person.

5. **Mr. Gould** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many crimes in England and Wales in 1985 were not cleared up.

11. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish in the *Official Report* the police force districts in England and Wales in which the total number of crimes has risen by *(a)* less than 25 per cent., *(b)* less than 33 per cent. and *(c)* more than 50 per cent. since 1978.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): Crime throughout the country has been rising for more than 30 years. Recorded crime has increased in all police force areas since 1978, and I shall publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage increase in each force area between 1978 and 1985. The number of offences of violence against the person recorded by the police in England and Wales in 1985 was approximately 122,000; 40 per cent. more than the number recorded in 1978. This compares with an increase of 42 per cent. in offences of violence against the person between 1973 and 1978. It is not possible to provide a figure for the number of offences recorded in a year which are not later cleared up, because some offences are recorded and cleared up in different years, but the difference between the number of notifiable offences reorded by the police and the number of offences cleared up in 1985 was 2·2 million.

Mr. Clelland: In the run up to the last two general elections the Conservative party promised the people of this country security in their homes and safety on their streets. As the Home Secretary has just informed the House that things are substantially worse than when the Conservative party came to office, may we have an assurance that similar false promises will not be made at the next general election?

Mr. Hurd: The Labour party will not get very far if it tries to persuade people that crime was invented in 1979. The number of recorded crimes has been increasing steadily for 30 years. When we came to office we found a demoralised and under-strength police force, a grossly neglected prison service and courts that had inadequate powers. In all those areas, as we have shown again this week, we have steadily strengthened the public's defences against crime.

Mr. Jim Callaghan: In 1979 the Conservative party came to office on a policy of law and order. In the light of the disturbing facts about violent crime that the Secretary of State has just given the House, what practical measures will he take to allay the fears of the public, and of old-age pensioners in particular, who are now virtual prisoners in their own homes in inner city areas? What does the right hon. Gentleman intend to do?

Mr. Hurd: Hardly a week goes by without us making an announcement or taking measures directed towards that end. This week's announcement is that, once again, we are launching a substantial expansion of the police forces in England and Wales in order to provide better protection for the public.

Mr. Gould: As two thirds of all reported crimes have not been cleared up, may we not conclude that the police, through no fault of their own, are unable to keep pace with the rising tide of crime? Does the Home Secretary admit that the belated and inadequate increase in police resources that has recently been announced merely serves to emphasise the seven wasted years under this Government in the battle against crime?

Mr. Hurd: When we took office we acted at once to remedy the gross deficiencies in the strength of the police service, and there was a long period of police expansion. Now, after a pause and following a thorough study of the proven needs of the police forces, we have announced a new programme.

If the hon. Gentleman is saying that the Opposition would do more for the police, he must accept that if they continue to say that they will give priority to everything, they will, in fact, give priority to nothing.

Mr. Boyes: Does the Home Secretary's reply not show categorically that Tory policies are not working? Does it not also show that the Government can offer neither hope nor solutions to those living in deprived areas? The Prime Minister may go to the two dozen or so people who voted Conservative in Scotland and utter the words "care" and "caring" 15 times in her speech, but the citizens of this land know that she does not mean it. They are looking towards a Labour victory at the next election, so that the next Labour Government can make the streets and people's homes safer places.

Mr. Hurd: No electorate in its senses, having looked at Labour's past record and at the attitude of so many Labour Members to the police today, would support the Opposition if the priority of the electorate were greater protection against crime.

Mr. Lyell: In addition to strengthening police manpower, increasing and improving police powers and increasing the powers of the courts, do not the public have a role to play in combating crime? Have not our neighbourhood watch schemes, which have been greatly expanded, worked so well in London that last year burglaries fell by 11 per cent.?

Mr. Hurd: That is certainly true in some parts of the country. The House will be pleased to note that burglaries across England and Wales fell by 3 per cent. last year. There are now 9,500 neighbourhood watch schemes—twice the number of a year ago—and they are playing an important part in crime prevention.

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley: Although we all regret the increase in crimes, especially crimes of violence, will my right hon. Friend applaud the work done by victim support schemes, such as the one in Waverley, which have given practical and realistic help to the victims of crime?

Mr. Hurd: Victim support schemes are becoming increasingly important. I am delighted that the Government are able to give substantial help to the National Association of Victims Support Schemes and that, for the first time, we are now also able to give some help to local schemes.

Mr. Gale: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the recently announced increases in police manning will be welcomed by all those with a genuine interest in the reduction of crime? Is he further aware that there has been a dramatic decrease in the incidence of drink-related crimes in Scotland during the past 10 years since Scotland changed its licensing laws? Will he confer a similar benefit on the people of England and Wales?

Mr. Hurd: I think that that is another question. I made the Government's views of principle known to the House earlier this week. I believe that the case for a reform of the licensing laws has been established. Timing is a different matter.

Mr. Alex Carlile: We should all welcome the increases in police manpower announced recently by the Home Secretary, but does he not accept that grudging reality is rather different from the rhetoric of the Prime Minister at last year's Tory party conference? Why has the Home Secretary not accepted the views of Sir Kenneth Newman on the need to increase police manpower in London?

Mr. Hurd: The Metropolitan police, the Police Federation and many others would like a greater increase. At the beginning of last autumn we set in hand two thorough reviews—one for the Metropolitan police and the other for the forces outside London. It was as a result of those reviews of need—precisely the criterion that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister laid down—that we made our careful announcement this week. We look forward to increases in the operational strength of police officers of 2,600 outside London and 1,800 in London.

Sir John Farr: The House must agree that it is important to increase the number of police officers and, if possible, restore the bobby on the beat in those areas where he has disappeared, but does my right hon. Friend agree that it is equally important to equip the police with the latest most scientific and modern anti-crime devices available?

Mr. Hurd: I agree. I know that my hon. Friend has an interest in some of those projects. I hope shortly to receive the conclusions of the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the equipment needs of his force. We have had some proposals from him already. As soon as I receive the considered report we shall move to take decisions as quickly as possible.

Mr. Dubs: Despite the Home Secretary's fine words, is it not true that over the past seven years the Government have utterly failed on law and order? Although the Home Secretary has paid lip-service to crime prevention methods, the Government have done nothing about methods for preventing crime. Is that not one of the reasons why the crime wave is out of control?

Mr. Hurd: That was an amazing statement by the hon. Gentleman, who is usually careful in putting forward matters. The fact of the matter is that under my predecessor, and now, we are giving increasing prominence to crime prevention, as witnessed by the seminar held at No. 10 Downing street in January. That was a thoroughly practical effort, which we are now following up, designed to ensure that the different professions and interests understand what they can do in practice to make our homes, streets and places of work safer. If Opposition Members, instead of conniving and going along with their thoroughly destructive attitudes towards the police, would join in the crime prevention effort, place by place, the cause would be greatly advanced.

News International Plant, Wapping

2. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received concerning the establishment of an inquiry into the latest incidents at Wapping; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend has written to me to suggest an inquiry into the conduct of demonstrators at

Wapping. I have also received representations from right hon. and hon. Labour Members for an inquiry into police action. I do not consider than an inquiry would be the right way forward. Those who have been charged with criminal offences are being dealt with by the courts. The way forward lies in sensible co-operation between the police and responsible trade unionists to reduce disorder and prevent violence, which only the trouble-makers want.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply and for his letter. Is it not clear that many of those who went to Wapping went there prepared for and intending to commit acts of violence, and acts of violence against the police, yet, when the police defended themselves, they were immediately accused of brutality? Did my right hon. Friend notice that within minutes almost of the events taking place, Labour Members, including an Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, were falling over themselves to attack the police and accuse them of brutailty? Does that not make a mockery of the new-found role of the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), who seeks to paint himself as the spokesman of the party of law and order—an attitude that is more appropriate to the Whitehall theatre than to the Palace of Westminster?

Mr. Hurd: It is extremely worrying that so many leading members of the Labour party, inside and outside the House, especially in London and Manchester, should take every opportunity, without proper investigation, to blacken and swipe at the police. What we are trying to do in Wapping, which is becoming a thoroughly dangerous situation, is to try to persuade the print unions, which have a dispute with Mr. Murdoch, to exercise their rights of peaceful picketing and demonstration in such a way that they do not attract to the scene the trouble-makers to whom my hon. Friend referred. I hope that it will be possible for them to pursue their dispute, if that is what they want, without attracting violence to it.

Mr. Tony Banks: Is the Home Secretary aware that Murdoch is nothing more than a cheap little crook who, through his actions, has caused the social disruption and economic distress among printers that we are witnessing in Wapping? Is the right hon. Gentleman also aware that the difference between Labour and Conservative Members is that Labour Members who went there came back and told the truth about what they saw, as opposed to the blind prejudice and ignorance of Conservative Members? Will the Home Secretary hold an inquiry, because Labour Members have nothing to hide?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman does not even try to hide the fact that he and a number of his London colleagues—though not all—immediately assume that when there is any trouble the police are at fault. He has a long record in that regard, and yields only to his former leader on the GLC. Parliament has provided means, through the independent Police Complaints Authority, for a thorough investigation, supervised by the independent authority, into any complaints that may be made against police operations. That is the proper remedy for any genuine complaints.

Mr. Marlow: Would not an inquiry possibly be of great benefit, because it might also prove that not only are there Militant Labour Members of the House, anti-police councillors such as Bernie Grant and pro-terrorist prospective parliamentary candidates such as Ken Livingstone in the Labour party, but, indeed, that Socialists are involved in organising violence in our capital city against our police force?

Mr. Hurd: We do not need an inquiry to establish those facts, because those concerned repeatedly condemn themselves out of their own mouths. What is inadequate is the response of the Leader of the Opposition, who thinks that it is enough to give an occasional gentle rap over the knuckles, when it should be made clear that the people taking this line will not be supported in their efforts to be elected to this House on the next occasion. — *[Interruption.]*

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Let us keep the temperature down.

Mr. Soley: Would not the Home Secretary be behaving a little more responsibly if he took this opportunity to remind many of the hotheads on his own Bank Benches that many police officers, including senior police officers, are also deeply disturbed about the way in which events got out of control on 3 May? Indeed, his own Minister has taken up some of the suggestions made by the Opposition that are necessary to deal with this problem. Does he agree that the very small minority of people who were shown on the police video to be throwing things came from Right-wing parties, as shown in the advertisement in *National Front News?* Would it not be all important if the Government stopped using the police to deal with the industrial consequences of their economic failure in many industrial relations disputes throughout the country?

Mr. Hurd: I cannot agree with the hon. Gentleman's last point. As he knows, the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has absolute operational independence and, therefore, it is not for my hon. Friends or for me to give him instructions as to how he should conduct his duties and responsibility for protecting those who wish to work in a particular place. I agree with the hon. Gentleman's first point. Every sensible person, as well as the police, is concerned at the pattern that has developed at Wapping, and that is why I have spoken about it several times in the last few weeks. I certainly give credit to those Opposition Members who have been seeking to throw light, rather than darkness, on the situation and who have been helping to establish some contact—not yet quite sufficient—between the police and the print unions. As I indicated in my main answer, I believe it is down that path that a solution to the policing side of this problem can be found.

Police Priorities

3. **Mr. Hoyle** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department has carried out any research into differences in perceptions of police priorities between the police and the general public; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): The Home Office has carried out or funded a good deal of research into public attitudes to the police, and the wishes of the public appear to be broadly in line with police priorities.

Mr. Hoyle: Is the Minister aware that independent surveys, including the one by Merseyside council, have shown that there is a different concept in the minds of the

public as to what they would like from the police and what they are given by the police authorities, particularly chief constables? Does he agree that if we are to conquer the fight against crime we must have the collaboration, co-operation and confidence of the public in the police? Despite what he said about having carried out surveys, will he look again at this matter to discover what the public really want from the police?

Mr. Shaw: I accept what the hon. Gentleman says. If he looks at the studies that were done in Merseyside and in the constituency of his hon. Friend the Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith), he will see that the public are most concerned about immediate emergency response, crime investigation and deterrent presence on the streets. Those are the three priorities that they have in common with the police. Where I part company from the hon. Gentleman is in the belief that locally substituted so-called police watch committees can produce anything of worth in the fight against crime, and the sort of rubbish that is produced in the Greater Manchester area is a disgrace which I trust the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman) will get rid of.

Mr. Forman: Are not police priorities already set out, at any rate in the Metropolitan area, with admirable clarity in the various divisional and district plans? Are not those a good way for senior police officers to consult, and take soundings from, the local population and to respond to concerns about such vital problems as vandalism and hooliganism?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. He will be aware that the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis, in designing his force goal for 1986-88, took into account a wide range of opinion polls as well as the needs of the police. In his goal he sets out the reduction of criminal opportunity, the enhanced detection of specific criminal offences and enhanced support for the victims of crime. I am sure that everybody would concur with those attitudes.

Mr. Madden: Will the Minister confirm that the priority to recruit more regular police from ethnic minorities remains a high priority in his Department? In this context, will he confirm that his Department will support the expansion of the police cadet force in West Yorkshire, which is seen as an important way to recruit more young people from the ethnic minorities into the regular police?

Mr. Shaw: On the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question, I am very much interested in that suggestion. However, cadet forces are extremely costly and the police authority in West Yorkshire must take a view on that proposal.

As to the first part of his question, I assure the hon. Gentleman that chief constables all over the country, as well as in the Metropolitan police area, are doing everything that they can to increase ethnic recruitment. The Metropolitan police had a recent exercise, as a result of which 139 applications were received, which was encouraging, but in the end few applicants decided to press on. I hope that they can be encouraged to do so.

Mr. Patrick Thompson: Does my hon. Friend agree that nothing has done more damage to the public perception of the police than the attitude of many Labour councils? Does he also agree with the perception of many of my constituents in Norwich that the police are burdened too much by administrative paperwork? Is he aware that many of my constituents, particularly when vandalism occurs on housing estates, would like a greater police presence there and available when required?

Mr. Shaw: Yes, and there is much room for improvement in the recruiting of police in Norfolk, where the police authority has for some time allowed a substantial range of vacancies to exist. I trust that they will now be filled.

Mr. Maclennan: Does the Minister agree that it is the perception of the public that children should enjoy the benefit of police coming into schools to explain dangers to them? Will the Government accept the amendment that has been carried in the other place to enable that to be ensured?

Mr. Shaw: I am sure that the answer to the last part of the hon. Gentleman's question is not for me, but in regard to the objective that he seeks he must be right. Surely every education authority should welcome police presence in schools to deal with the many pressures with which young people are faced.

Mr. Hayes: Now that the Labour party is somewhat humourously masquerading as the party of law and order, will my hon. Friend ensure that as many members of the public as possible go into Labour party committee rooms, where they will see a poster on the walls of most of them saying, "It is far better to break the law than to be poor"? Will that not show the public the perceptions of the Labour party towards the police?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend is right. There is far too much paranoia about the way in which the Labour party seems to view the police. The police are the custodians of the law, and everybody in government and in opposition should support that concept.

Child Abduction

6. **Dr. Godman** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with chief constables and the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis the co-ordination of police intelligence and information in crimes involving the abduction of children.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In December 1982, following the Byford report on the case of the Yorkshire ripper, procedures were introduced to ensure the fullest police co-operation and co-ordination of activity in the investigation of apparently linked major offences, including cases of child abduction. These procedures use specially developed and compatible force computer systems to store and analyse information. We are satisfied that they meet operational requirements.

Dr. Godman: With regard to part II of the Child Abduction Act 1984, is the Minister satisfied that close regard is paid by English police authorities to Scottish court orders? Does he agree that this is especially important at English airports and seaports?

Mr. Shaw: I fully understand the hon. Gentleman's point. I should like further details of individual cases where he thinks that that is not being correctly done. I assure him that the procedures are being tightened up and that police forces now have compatible systems of communication to enable this to happen quickly.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: The number of children who go missing each year is a matter of great concern. More than 20,000 children went missing in 1984, many of whom were abducted. Should not my hon. Friend promote a missing persons register for children, to include details of the circumstances in which they went missing or were abducted, so that the circumstances of the crime can be compared and a crime pattern analysis unit developed along the lines of the one that is working so well at Hendon?

Mr. Shaw: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's substantial interest in this subject. However, I have explained to him that it is unnecessary for police national computer systems to be altered to provide adequate data for proper crime pattern analysis. I remind him that in 1984 there were 99 cases of child abduction, of which 71 per cent. were cleared up quite quickly.

Firearms and Crossbows

7. **Mr. Kilroy-Silk** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state for each year since 1978 the number of crimes in England and Wales involving the use of *(a)* any firearm, *(b)* a shotgun and *(c)* a crossbow.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In 1984 a total of 8,376 notifiable offences were recorded by the police in which firearms were reported to have been used. Of these, 994 involved the use of a shotgun. Figures for earlier years are given in the criminal statistics published annually. Information on the use of crossbows in crime is not recorded centrally.

Mr. Kilroy-Silk: Does the Minister accept that both the police and the public are legitimately concerned about the increase in the number of violent crimes in which weapons are used, but that the Police Federation's proposal that life sentences should be imposed for the carrying of firearms rather than, as is now the case, for their use would reduce the incentive for criminals to escape without using them and that in that sense it would be counter-productive? Would it not be far better to impose on the buying and keeping of shotguns restrictions similar to those that are currently applied to the buying and keeping of firearms?

Mr. Shaw: On the latter point, I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. There is disquiet, because it is thought that there is a substantial difference between the security requirements that govern both categories of firearms. However, he will be aware that the correct policy is to balance the requirements of the legitimate users of shotguns and the requirements of safe keeping, which should not inhibit their use. As to the hon. Gentleman's first point, he will be aware that substantial changes are being made to the sentencing policy for these offences. He will also be aware that in relation to the Criminal Justice Bill, which is shortly to come before the House, there is a proposal that those who carry firearms in furtherance of crime should be subject to a maximum life penalty.

Mr. Thurnham: When serious crimes are committed by children under the age of 14, will my hon. Friend consider strengthening the powers of the magistrates' courts and also lowering the age of discretion so that they can be dealt with?

Mr. Shaw: I appreciate that this is a complicated matter. My hon. Friend is quite right when he says that many crimes are now committed by young people. The average age of male criminal offenders is 15. Therefore it is important to examine what should be the correct penalty. However, I do not believe that it would be right to make the sweeping change that my hon. Friend suggests.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will the Minister explain why we allow the manufacture, import or sale of crossbows in this country, particularly in view of the increasing number of crimes that are being committed with them and the number of injuries that have been caused to livestock? Surely we should simply ban crossbows, which cannot be justified.

Mr. Shaw: There is a substantial difference between the attitude towards this problem of Opposition Members and that of the Government and the Conservative party. Many people are engaged in perfectly legitimate sporting activities which could include the use of crossbows. Provided that sporting facilities are available, with proper membership of properly organised clubs, crossbows can be used in perfect safety. The law relating to the abuse of weapons in a public place is satisfactory.

Mr. Stanbrook: Should we not consider the mandatory imposition of a sentence of imprisonment for the illegal carrying of firearms, a sentence to be served consecutively in any event where another sentence has been imposed?

Mr. Shaw: I take note of my hon. Friend's request, and that matter will surely be discussed.

Mr. Soley: Is this not yet another example of the Government failing to put their money where their mouth is on crime prevention? Is it not a fact that the Minister has already turned down a suggestion from me that we set up a proper committee in the Home Office to look at the needs and duties of legitimate users and balance them with the needs of new legislation on shotguns, crossbows and pistols? Have they not turned it down without even considering it or the implications for police officers and for the public? Why will the Government not treat the matter seriously and set up a committee at the proper level in the Home Office to make recommendations for the House to consider?

Mr. Shaw: We are indeed discussing the problem of crossbows, their distribution and their sale with the trades concerned. As we did in the case of martial arts weapons I trust that we shall achieve a level of control over distribution that will prevent them falling into illicit hands. If the hon. Gentleman represents the party of freedom and fairness, I assume that when it comes to major public order offences it is the freedom to throw bricks and the fairness is that they are all regulation size.

Sir John Farr: Does my hon. Friend accept that the vast majority, if not all, of these crimes were committed with illegally held firearms? Handguns are now coming into use to an increasing extent. Will he confirm that the ordinary law-abiding firearms owner in Great Britain is in no way involved?

Mr. Shaw: I can tell my hon. Friend that there are 820,000 certificate holders of shotguns. I am confident that all those will use their weapons correctly and will seek to keep them in a safe place. I remind my hon. Friend and

the House that there are a substantial number of uncertificated shotguns in circulation, many of which are imported.

Mr. Alex Carlile: Is the Minister aware that crossbows and other deadly weapons can now be bought all too easily by anybody through mail order advertisements in a magazine called "Survival Weaponry and Techniques", which disgracefully W. H. Smith is selling all over the country? What will he do about it?

Mr. Shaw: The absolute number of crossbows in circulation is extremely small. The absolute number of incidents involving injury in relation to crossbows is extremely small. I have already set in hand an investigation as to what more can be done. In relation to the law governing abuse of weapons in public places, criminal offences would be committed.

Civil Defence

8. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if emergency planning officers were asked to take any action in response to the Chernobyl nuclear incident.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Our information is not yet complete, but we know that several local authorities had to take specific action and a number had to respond to inquiries.

Mr. Leigh: Did those emergency planning officers who were employed by nuclear-free authorities have any more success in reducing the effects on their population of radiation from Chernobyl than their colleagues in Conservative areas who over the years have been given the resources to make provision for their populations? Did the radiation from Chernobyl part, as the waters of the Red sea, round nuclear-free cities? Is not the Labour party imposing a cruel hoax on the British people by pretending that self-indulgent unilateral motions on nuclear freedom are any substitute for proper civil defence?

Mr. Shaw: My hon. Friend has clearly kicked the Labour party where it hurts in relation to nuclear-free zones. He will be aware that the nuclear-free zone is a public hoax which has no relationship whatever to the proper protection of our citizens in time of emergency in peace or in war.

Mr. Campbell Savours: Is the Minister aware that, while the people of west Cumberland are committed to the future of nuclear power, there is some concern there as to what might happen if an emergency arises from Sellafield. Can he give an absolute assurance that the planning programmes to ensure the fullest security of that part of west Cumberland are in place, that there are no deficiencies and that the Government are perfectly satisfied with the arrangement that exists?

Mr. Shaw: I understand fully the concern expressed by the hon. Member for Workington (Mr. Campbell-Savours). I can assure him that as a result of all the aspects of the Chernobyl incident there will be a complete review of the precautions and the plans that should be made. In relation to my responsibility in the Home Department for civil defence emergencies, I have already written to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment asking that we participate in such discussions.

Visitors (Overstaying)

9. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what further steps he proposes to take to prevent visitors to the United Kingdom overstaying their period of leave; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. David Waddington): We have no proposals for major changes in our present arrangements which place the weight of identifying likely overstayers on the judgment of immigration officers at the ports of entry. My right hon. Friend announced to the House on 26 March that he has authorised increased resources for this year. I can assure my hon. Friend that we shall continue to pursue with vigour our selective investigations into apparent overstaying after entry.

Mr. Proctor: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that in a recent letter to me he indicated that 5 per cent. of the visitors from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan who were checked into the country were not subsequently checked out? If that percentage were spread over the millions of visitors from the New Commonwealth and Pakistan last year, it would lead to the number of overstayers being about 50,000. What further action will my hon. and learned Friend take in vew of that figure?

Mr. Waddington: I do not think that my hon. Friend is explaining correctly the purport of my letter. What I was saying in the letter was that we put on to the computer people who enter and who are in certain categories. Certain categories of people who enter are supposed to be checked out. As no fewer than 40 million people go through our embarkation controls every year, it is not surprising that often people who have left the country have not been registered as having left. That is a very different kettle of fish.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I am grateful to the Minister for putting his hon. Friend in his place, but will he accept that the real problem with immigration control is that far too high a number of people who are refused visas would be perfectly legitimate visitors to Britain?

Mr. Waddington: Most visitors to Britain, and certainly visitors from the Indian subcontinent, do not require visas anyhow. What the hon. Gentleman is talking about is the fact that some people are refused entry when they present themselves at our ports of entry. The truth is that the whole system of control depends on the skill of immigration officers and on their ability to distinguish in the great majority of cases between bona fide visitors, who can be relied upon to leave when they say they are going, and others who cannot be relied upon to leave. All the evidence tends to prove that our immigration officers are very skilful in identifying those who cannot be trusted to leave.

Mr. Budgen: When my hon. and learned Friend next makes a statement on the subject, will he please comment on the recent report of the Home Affairs Select Committee, which shows that very substantial fraud is still being perpetrated by those who attempt to enter the country from both India and Bangladesh?

Mr. Waddington: I have read the report, and its conclusions are very important. I hope that all hon.

Members will pay heed to what is said. There is, or course, no doubt that there is a great deal of fraud. It is right that that should be reflected in the report.

Mr. Janner: Does the Minister accept that the real problem at Heathrow is not those who are let in who should not be, but to those who are held up who should not be? These are genuine, decent visitors coming to see their families and friends, many of them in my constituency? Does the Minister accept that many of them are still harassed, persecuted, held up and treated with a lack of decency or compassion instead of being given the proper welcome that they should have?

Mr. Waddington: I am sorry that the hon. and learned Gentleman should have put his question in that way. He should be emphasising that 99·8 per cent. of those who present themselves at our controls at Heathrow are admitted with no trouble and that 99 per cent. of all visitors from the Indian subcontinent who present themselves at the controls are admitted without any trouble. The hon. and learned Gentleman does no service to anyone by trying to paint a picture of genuine visitors to Britain having trouble entering our country. That is not the true picture.

Mr. Marlow: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the greatest civil liberties is the civil liberty of the vast majority of the population of this country who do not want visitors to come to this country to abuse our systems and take advantage of our generosity when they have no right to do so?

Mr. Waddington: I am sure that my hon. Friend will agree that there should be a sensible, humane and efficient system of control. We have always taken the view in this country that it is better to have firm control at ports of entry than to have an all-pervasive system of after-entry control. I do not think that Opposition Members should cavil at people being questioned at Heathrow. If we have a softer line at Heathrow, we shall finish up with a much fiercer system of after-entry controls, which people will not like.

Mr. Dubs: A few minutes ago the Minister said that there was a "great deal of fraud" at the points of entry to this country. That is an unwarranted slur on the many honest people who come here. What evidence does the Minister have for that claim?

Mr. Waddington: I did not say anything of the kind. My recollection is that the Select Committee report relates to control in the Indian subcontinent. The report concludes that there is a great deal of fraud, and that has been demonstrated on many occasions. The hon. Gentleman has been to the Indian subcontinent and knows that many people come along every year—and this is one of the strange phenomena involved in the matter—who admit that they have not told the truth on a previous application and who wish to make a new application in which they intend to come clean.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Hirst: Does my right hon. Friend recall that when she spoke last year of her determination to reduce inflation to 3 per cent. this spring her claim was ridiculed by the Opposition, who said that that could not be done? Does she therefore agree that last Fridays's announcement that inflation is down to 3 per cent. and falling is welcome news, especially for savers, the elderly and business? Does she also agree that the present low level of inflation is in marked contrast to the appalling levels which followed Labour's last spending spree?

The Prime Minister: Yes, that is a remarkable achievement and is greatly to the credit of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is also of particular benefit to pensioners, who can be certain that their savings will not be plundered as they were during the lifetime of the last Labour Government.

Mr. Healey: Mr. Speaker, you will recognise that I am in an unfamiliar position. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition is elsewhere making certain that the next opinion poll gives the Labour party an even bigger lead.

Will the Prime Minister get in touch immediately with her right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence in Brussels and instruct him not to agree to new American chemical weapons as the NATO force goal and to make it absolutely clear that Her Majesty's Government will under no circumstances accept the deployment of such weapons in Britain as that would represent a major escalation of the arms race and be even less acceptable to the British people than the use of F-111 bombers for the attack on Tripoli?

The Prime Minister: I notice that the opinion polls said yesterday that the Centre Right parties would lose in Holland. I notice that the result yesterday was a convincing victory.

As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, the United Kingdom has received no request from the United States for the deployment of chemical weapons. If any such request were made we would have to consider it under all the circumstances of the time. Britain has manufactured no chemical weapons, and the United States has manufactured none since the 1960s. The culprit is the Soviet Union. I wish that the right hon. Gentleman would concentrate his efforts on criticising the Soviet Union instead of doing everything to reduce Britain's capacity to deter it.

Mr. Healey: Is the right hon. Lady aware that the extreme Right party in Holland, which is the equivalent of her party in Britain, lost heavily in the election, but that the Dutch Government had the courage to make it clear that they oppose the acceptance of new American chemical weapons as a NATO force goal and are completely opposed to the deployment of such weapons in Europe?

The Prime Minister: Holland decided to accept cruise weapons. In fact, the party that was for cruise weapons —*[Interruption.]* Will the right hon. Gentleman never criticise the Soviet Union for stockpiling such weapons? Is he always concerned to give aid and comfort to it and to make certain that we have nothing to deter it in its use of them?

Sir Peter Blaker: Does it not require rather difficult mental gymnastics to believe in deterrence in relation to nuclear weapons and not in relation to chemical weapons?

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr. Speaker. It also shows the unwisdom of unilateral disarmament. We unilaterally disarmed with our chemical weapons many years ago. Far from following suit, the Soviet Union still stockpiles and increases the production of its chemical weapons.

Dr. Owen: Does not the case for Britain retaining its nuclear capacity and for NATO having nuclear weapons mean that we can denounce the folly of the Soviet Union in stockpiling chemical weapons and that Britain should have no truck whatever with the deployment or stockpiling of chemical weapons by the United States as part of its NATO force levels?

The Prime Minister: If we were asked to deploy them we should have to look at the request at the time and have regard to proper defence and deterrence. It would be folly to tell the Soviet Union now what our answer would be. I notice that the right hon. Gentleman embroils himself in that folly.

Mr. Terlezki: In view of the all-party visit to Moscow this weekend, will my right hon. Friend send a message to Mr. Gorbachev telling him to get rid of 300,000 tonnes of chemical weapons, because he is the guilty one who is stockpiling and using those weapons? Will she also ask Mr. Gorbachev to tell the delegation the truth about what happened during the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl in the Ukraine, to ensure that all the other nuclear power stations in the Soviet Union do not go the same way as the one at Chernobyl?

The Prime Minister: The delegation is under the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Lord President, who will carry my views to Mr. Gorbachev. It will be saying something about how strongly we feel about chemical weapons and the fact that, even under our chairmanship, the disarmament negotiations are not getting anywhere, and the fact that the Soviet Union is still stockpiling them. With regard to Chernobyl, I think that we are making headway under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency and I hope and believe that we shall get the full facts and be able to profit from what we learn.

Q2. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Wallace: This year Britain has the chairmanship of the chemical weapons disarmament committee at Geneva. Does the Prime Minister not think that it is unworthy of our chairmanship for us to agree to the further American production of binary chemical weapons? Will she give us some hope by telling us, instead of agreeing to the proposition, what steps she proposes to take during the period of British chairmanship to get a treaty to rid the world of these weapons?

The Prime Minister: No such request has been received. I do not know how we would deal with it if it were received. We would have to look at the request in the light of all the circumstances at the time. I have made that perfectly clear. We shall have our own proposals in the chemical weapons negotiations, and we have been pursuing proposals for challenge inspection anywhere. Of course, the Soviet Union would not agree to that. Again the fault rests with the Soviet Union for continuing to manufacture and stockpile chemical weapons, and the censure should be on the Soviet Union.

Q3. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that a large number of people believe that the need to improve the quality of public services is as great as, and possibly even greater than the need to make further cuts in the basic rate of income tax? In the light of this will she apply any additional resources that are generated by economic growth in pursuit of both those objectives rather than in the exclusive pursuit of one of them?

The Prime Minister: We have strict priorities within total constraints. Everyone must live within constraints, otherwise, whether individuals, Governments or businesses, they will soon be in difficulty. By having strict priorities we have been able substantially to improve the resources devoted to the Health Service and to pensions. That must be done under overall constraints and priorities. Many people who receive below average earnings are asking for increased pay because they think that their net take-home pay is too low. The way to increase the net take-home pay of such people without adding to industrial costs is to reduce the standard rate of income tax.

Q4. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: At the Tory party conference in Perth last Friday the Prime Minister declared that she would set about slaying the dragon of unemployment. Will she remain conscious of the fact that in Scotland 380,000 people are unemployed? After the shipbuilding and British Rail redundancies that figure will be considerably increased. Will the Prime Minister accept the advice of some of her senior Back Benchers and change her policy? More important, will she flex her muscles and get the British Steel Corporation to spend the £90 million that is urgently required to save Ravenscraig and Motherwell?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Gentleman is aware, I have replied to questions about shipbuilding on a number of occasions. The acid test is how many orders we can get in a world where there are very few orders to be had because there is so much surplus tonnage still swinging on the buoys. There are surplus ships to the tune of 42 million tonnes, and that is equal to the output of all the world's shipyards for two years. The hon. Gentleman asked about Ravenscraig. He is aware that it is being kept in commission during the lifetime at least of the current corporate plan of the British Steel Corporation. On the general problem of unemployment,

"the only answer to the economic problems which have dogged Britain ever since the war is to improve the performance of our manufacturing industry. That means higher productivity, better design, more vigorous salesmanship, more reliable delivery and servicing."

That is what the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) said on 4 February 1977.

Sir David Price: In the light of that reply, has my right hon. Friend received a message that came out of yesterday's debate on shipbuilding, that the whole House requires action against the Japanese, who speak the language of free trade and practice protectionism? In conjunction with our European colleagues, will she put an act together to defeat this current yellow peril, which has destroyed industry after industry in Britain?

The Prime Minister: Regarding my hon. Friend's comments on the Japanese in relation to shipbuilding, he may be thinking of the nuclear vessel order which went to the Japanese. I believe that that matter has already been referred to the European Commission on the ground that the price was such that it may amount to dumping. Regarding the fact that Japanese markets are not as open as ours, we have already made our views known vigorously. That is a reason for wanting to hold GATT negotiations as soon as possible.

Q5. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eadie: Does the Prime Minister recall the answer that she gave on Tuesday about the National Coal Board's refusal to re-employ 40 victimised miners who went to a tribunal, which recommended that they be reinstated? Does she recall that her reply was that NCB activities were governed by an Act of Parliament? Is she aware that the NCB is in breach of that Act of Parliament in relation to those victimised miners? Will she instruct her Attorney-General to investigate the matter and report back to the House?

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman has anything like that to say, he should say it to the appropriate quarters. The management of the NCB on detailed decisions—the hon. Gentleman knows this because he operates the legislation——

Mr. Eadie: It is in a parliamentary Act.

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman will listen, I shall answer his question. The management is not for the House, but for the NCB.

Later—

Mr. Pavitt: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Does it arise out of questions?

Mr. Pavitt: Yes, Sir. In answer to questions, Mr. Speaker, you will have heard the Prime Minister state that when the Inter-Parliamentary Union delegation goes to the Soviet Union the Lord President of the Council will convey her views to Mr. Gorbachev. Mr. Speaker, you are the custodian of the traditions of this House and for 100 years it has been the tradition that the Inter-parliamentary Union is Parliament, and is different from the Government. Therefore, this is an infringement of an old tradition. Is there anything that you can do to protect the independence of both the IPU and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in these circumstances?

Mr. Speaker: As President of the British branch, I have sent a message to my opposite number in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Faulds Further to that point of order——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have rather a lot of business before us.

Mr. Faulds: Very briefly. I am a member of the executive of the IPU. You, Mr. Speaker, and the other members of the IPU will know that on a foreign visit it is essential to differentiate between the views of the IPU and the views of the Government. It is a fact, which now, unfortunately, perhaps cannot be corrected, that the Prime Minister was totally incorrect to put that reading on the visit to Moscow.

Mr. Speaker: I have no knowledge of other messages which may be sent by other people.

Ministerial Statements

3.31 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point of order on a statement which the Paymaster General is to make this afternoon to the House on a White Paper called "Building Businesses—Not Barriers", and which was made in the other place at 11.30 am.

You will recall the concern expressed on both sides of the House about unelected Secretaries of State in the other place making statements. To deal with that difficulty our procedure has undoubtedly been for statements to be made at the same time in both Houses of Parliament. Today the practice of issuing statements at the same time after Question Time has been broken. Today the statement was given by the Secretary of State for Employment in another place after its Question Time on the last day of the sitting at 11.30 am. Despite the Opposition's protests that that would mean that the elected Members of this House would learn of the contents of that statement through the media —a practice deplored by both sides of the House—the Government insisted on making the statement, and gave the justification that the rules of the other place required it.

Apart from the fact that the statement could have been given in both Houses at another time, the Secretary of State for Employment, in making a statement to the other place, has clearly given a calculated snub to the rights of the elected Members of this House.

It now becomes clear that a second statement is to be made in the other place at 3.30 pm, so it would have been possible for two statements to be made simultaneously in both Houses. Therefore, I ask you, Mr. Speaker, to rule that this Government decision is a calculated snub to the democratically elected rights of Members of this House, and I ask for your protection.

Mr. Speaker: I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to make that point, but I am not responsible for what goes on in another place.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It may be helpful if I offer a few words of explanation. The deregulation statement today is an important announcement, which I am sure the House will wish to have before the spring Adjournment. To do that, we had to have an announcement on the last sitting day of the other place. That means that it sits at a different time, and earlier than this place. It is an unusual and extremely rare occurrence. I recognise that this causes genuine difficulties. Perhaps we could discuss this through the usual channels here and in another place to seek to ensure that it does not occur again.

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): On the point which has just been made by the Leader of the House, I understand that the House of Lords is hearing a Government statement now at 3.30 pm. The point which my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) made is that it would have been perfectly possible for both statements to be made, as normal, at the same time. I hope the Leader of the House will return to that matter. On the business statement, could I ask the right hon. Gentleman to note that at a time—[HON. MEMBERS: "We have not heard it yet."] Very well.

Later—

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): May I follow up the point made by the Leader of the House? With your good offices, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Leader of the House to convey the feelings of this House that it is quite unacceptable that the Commons should have a second-hand statement and dog-eared answers. We bitterly resent the fact that this House is losing out because of yet another struggle between two publicity-mad Cabinet Ministers, both of whom are jostling to get their statements out first so that they may be first in front of the television cameras.

Mr. Biffen: There is a serious problem here; I accept that at once. I hope that the matter can be resolved by proper consideration through the usual channels. I do not think that the somewhat over-generous rhetoric which the right hon. Gentleman has just used will enable that to be done. In answer to the specific point about the statement on the Calcutt report, to be made shortly by my right hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces and which will be subsequently repeated in the House of Lords, that is not strictly analagous with the statement which was made by a departmental Minister who sits in the House of Lords, and which is then followed by a statement in this place. There is a problem which can be resolved by proper and measured considerations through the usual channels, and I hope we may proceed in a constructive sense.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. Points of order take time out of business questions. I think that many of these questions could be raised with the Leader of the House at business questions, because they are patently not matters for me.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will take it, but it must be a matter for me.

Mr. Leighton: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Are you aware that, today, I heard Lord Young in an interview on "The World at One" with Sir Robin Day discussing his statement in another place before we had it in this House? I ask you, Mr. Speaker, is that right and proper?

Mr. Speaker: I heard it, too. I share the views that have been expressed and I also listened with care to what the Leader of the House said about them. I do not think I can say any more.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Well, I will try.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is not the truth — we all know what has happened—that the Secretary of State for Employment insisted on making a statement himself this morning?

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Campbell-Savours *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have no idea.

Business of the House

Mr. Denis Healey (Leeds, East): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for the first week after the recess?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business for the first week after the recess will be as follows:

TUESDAY 3 JUNE—Opposition day (14th allotted day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion entitled "Government Economic Policies and the Level of Unemployment".

Motion on the Channel Tunnel Bill (Procedure).

The Chairman of Ways and Means has named opposed private business for consideration at seven o'clock.

WEDNESDAY 4 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Building Societies Bill.

Motion on the Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations.

THURSDAY 5 JUNE—Second Reading of the Channel Tunnel Bill followed by a motion for committal to a Select Committee.

FRIDAY 6 JUNE—Private Members' motions.

Mr. Healey: I ask the Leader of the House to note that at a time when the Government's own figures show that their economic policies have brought growth to a halt in Britain, and when one industry after another is announcing massive redundancies, the Government have not been willing to defend their policies and the Opposition have had to compel them to do so by using one of their Supply days to debate unemployment and economic policy as soon as we return after the recess.

Secondly, as the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday refused to give a penny more for our education system at the very moment when the new Secretary of State for Education and Science was promising it more resources, can the Leader of the House ensure that the Government make an early statement on whether they will make more money available for educational building, books and equipment to restore a system which Her Majesty's inspectors, in their report which appeared yesterday, have found to be in near-terminal decline?

Thirdly, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us when the terms of the motion for committal of the Channel Tunnel Bill will be available to the House? Can he assure us that there will be ample time for petitioning?

Fourthly, can the right hon. Gentleman tell us when the Government will be making a statement on the report of the Top Salaries Review Body?

Finally, as the present policies of Her Majesty's Government on South Africa are robbing that unhappy country of what may be its last chance of peaceful progress and threatening to destroy the unity of the Commonwealth, can he assure the House that it will have an opportunity to debate these matters before the recess, and especially before the critical meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers at the beginning of August?

Mr. Biffen: I shall take the points of the right hon. Member for Leeds, East (Mr. Healey) in reverse order. I recognise that there is great interest in having a foreign affairs debate as soon as possible after returning from the recess.

Mr. Healey: South Africa.

Mr. Biffen: Such a debate will certainly be able to encompass South Africa. I take note of the right hon. Gentleman's comment about the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' meeting.

As is customary, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will be answering a question later this afternoon on the Top Salaries Review Body's report. Further copies of a letter from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to all Members about the Government's response to the report will be made available through the Whips offices and the Vote Office.

Mr. Bowen Wells (Hertford and Stortford): When?

Mr. Biffen: Later this afternoon.

I understand the interest in the procedures relating to the Channel Tunnel Bill and I can confirm that both the motions on procedure and committal will be tabled later this afternoon. The Government will allow a generous amount of time for them to be debated. I believe that when the terms are seen, they will be judged to be fair in respect of petitioning.

The right hon. Member for Leeds, East asked also about education policy. I am sure that he will join me in congratulating my right hon. Friend the Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) on his appointment to the important Department of Education and Science. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that he will not be disappointed. My right hon. Friend is one of nature's communicators. He has a good story to tell and he will be anxious to use the facilities of the House as appropriate. The right hon. Gentleman was obviously looking back nostalgically to the days when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer. But I do not for one moment believe that the latest statistics from the Central Statistical Office about the rate of growth in the economy vindicate his lurid phraseology. I assure the right hon. Gentleman that we shall be deploying similar arguments in the debate planned for Tuesday 3 June.

Mr. Healey: I shall resist the temptation to follow the right hon. Gentleman——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Even the Leader of the Opposition may normally ask only one question. But does the right hon. Gentleman wish to raise a point of explanation?

Mr. Healey: I have two questions to ask about what the Leader of the House just said.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am very sorry, but the right hon. Gentleman is not in order.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): As we have a new Secretary of State for the Environment, whose views on that subject appear to be somewhat ambiguous following the Channel tunnel planning application, will my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House give an assurance that there will be an early debate on the green belt? In that way those of us who are greatly concerned will have an opportunity to elucidate our views.

Mr. Biffen: I have known my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment for many years, and ambiguity is the last characteristic that I would ascribe to him. But I shall, of course, draw his attention to the interest expressed in having a debate on the green belt. I can say only that it will not take place during the week that we return.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): Has the Leader of the House seen early-day motion 873, bearing the signatures of 122 hon. Members, which deplores the production, possession and use of chemical weapons?

[That this House deplores the production, possession and use of deadly chemical weapons; and calls on Britain to reject United States plans for their further production, which will be ratified at a meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Defence Ministers in Brussels on 22nd May.]

Will the right hon. Gentleman bear in mind the fact that, of the countries involved today in Brussels in the decision-making process in NATO, this country alone has had no full-scale debate on the matter in its national Parliament? Will he redress that imbalance, so that we can show that the majority of people in this country are opposed to any decision to deploy chemical weapons here, or in any European country?

Mr. Biffen: I have indeed studied early-day motion 873. I am sure that the hon. Lady will appreciate that the merits of the topic were considered during Prime Minister's Question Time. I cannot very helpfully add to that. However, we should be having a debate on the defence White Paper soon, and that might be an appropriate occasion for her to make her arguments.

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): As we are now to have two late-night, and perhaps all-night, sittings on 3 and 5 June so that the Government can try to pull the Channel Tunnel Bill out of the quicksands of confusion into which it has sunk, will my right hon. Friend consider softening that preliminary skirmish in the long war of attrition that will accompany the legislation, by allowing greater latitude to individual petitioners and by making some concessions to them that will give them adequate time to put their petitions before the House?

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says, but I think that I might be allowed to observe that gentle threats of all-night sittings are hardly the most obvious tactic to win friends and earn sympathy. Nevertheless, I realise that my hon. Friend speaks with great feeling and with genuine constituency interests. I take account of what he said. The motions are of course amendable, so my hon. Friend may consider that possibility.

Mr. Jack Ashley (Stoke-on-Trent, South): Is the Leader of the House aware that a group of very angry ex-service men who claim that they were disabled through negligence, and a group of parents of dead ex-service men who claim that they were killed through negligence, went to see the Secretary of State for Defence, together with hon. Members from both sides of the House? They were given a hearing, but they have not now heard a word from the Ministry of Defence in 13 weeks. They rightly feel that they have been treated with contempt by the Secretary of State. Will the Leader of the House have a quiet word with him and tell him that those people are getting very angry and that they deserve an answer?

Mr. Biffen: The right hon. Gentleman has raised that point with me before. I recognise its force, but he will realise that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence is the last person whom one would wisely accuse of being contemptuous of the sufferings and misfortunes of others. It could well be that the delay is due to the fact that the matter is receiving very measured consideration. But I shall certainly make those representations for the right hon. Gentleman.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): Does not my right hon. Friend agree that there is need for a debate on a matter that is worrying many hon. Members on both sides of the House — the infiltration of Militant Tendency into local government affairs? It is especially worrying in my constituency in Southampton where, at the last election, several Militant Tendency candidates took key positions on various committees—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must ask a question about the business for next week.

Mr. Hill: May I ask my right hon. Friend whether it is possible to have a debate on that very important matter next week?

Mr. Biffen: There might be some difficulty in establishing any ministerial responsibility for these affairs —but that responsibility exists must clearly be evident from the occurrences of the last few days. I would have thought that we were doing quite well from the public recognition of the dangers of militancy, without necessarily having to debate it here.

Mr. Robert Kilroy-Silk (Knowsley, North): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that we debated the industrial dispute in the prison service while negotiations were being conducted? Would it not now be sensible to have a further debate, so that the House can actually hear about the agreement reached between the Home Secretary and the Prison Officers Association and also about the Government's proposals to reduce the appalling levels of overcrowding that impose considerable burdens on both inmates and staff? Would it not at least be a courtesy to the House if the Home Secretary made an oral statement about the conclusion of the dispute?

Mr. Biffen: The hon. Gentleman raises a problem relating not merely to prison staff but to conditions in prisons generally. I shall certainly draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary to the hon. Gentleman's request for a statement.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I noted my right hon. Friend's response about the Top Salaries Review Body. Will the response that will be given later this afternoon be set in the context of alterations in salaries for people lower down the particular trees and the importance of setting those salaries in the context of moderation of salaries and wages generally?

Mr. Biffen: Within a few moments, my hon. Friend will have before him the full text of a reply by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and also a letter from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Any attempt on my part to summarise them would be imprudent.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): May I endorse the call for a debate early after the recess on the problems of southern Africa in particular, as opposed to foreign affairs in general?

If, on Tuesday, the motion on procedure in relation to the Channel Tunnel Bill results in a defeat for the move to short-circuit the normal procedures, may I take it that

we will not proceed hastily to a debate on Thursday but will be allowed a proper amount of time to proceed at the normal speed?

Will it be possible to have an early debate on the problems of the victims of the Abbeystead pumping house disaster two years ago tomorrow, who have still not been compensated although others who suffered bereavement subsequently have received compensation from the Government?

Mr. Biffen: If the Government are defeated on Tuesday, we will have to reconsider the wishes of the House.

I shall certainly study the other points that the hon. Gentleman raised. However, on his point about a debate on southern Africa, I recognise that that will be a matter of continuing interest and we will have to see how matters stand when the House returns after the recess.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Although I accept that it will not be easy to tempt my right hon. Friend into another debate on the press, does he accept that the real discourtesy this morning was not the fact that the other House had a statement but that the press had advance notice of what was in that statement? Is it not rather rich that Ministers can come to the Dispatch Box, as they did only a few days ago about university grants, and say rather grandly, "The House will have the full figures in the Library tomorrow," when we all know full well that we will see them before they are placed in the Library? Would it not be a good idea to discuss this matter openly?

Mr. Biffen: There is some merit in that, but there is also a considerable amount of difficulty.

Mr. Speaker: Yes, well . . . *[Laughter.]*

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Is the Leader of the House aware that there was a great deal of discontent last night because many hon. Members could not get the call to speak in two controversial debates — that of the shipbuilding industry and that of nuclear waste — because the debates were crammed into three hours? Why is it necessary to steamroller business through the House when there is a small amount of legislation before Committees which will be debated by the House? Is it because the Government intend to rise before the royal wedding, much earlier than usual, to get themselves on television? Will the Leader of the House arrange to deny that rumour by fixing up an important debate on shipbuilding and unemployment on the day of the royal wedding so we can see which is the most important business of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that even now, and especially in Scotland, there is interest in what time we shall recess within the period from the end of June to mid-August. I can only say that there is one date which is fixed in my diary and that is the date of the Oswestry agricultural show. As the hon. Gentleman knows, there are real difficulties in trying to manage business when there are so many demands and topics to be discussed. I would say, mildly, in self-defence, that there is a good reason for not having had a statement yesterday.

Mr. Harry Greenway (Ealing, North): Does my right hon. Friend accept that the procedures relating to Select Committees are in urgent need of fresh attention following this week's debate? Can we have an early debate on that?

Mr. Biffen: I think I would like time for the bruises to heal before we have a further debate.

Mr. Robert Parry (Liverpool, Riverside): In the light of the recent written reply by the Home Secretary concerning the possible use of CS canisters and plastic bullets in England, will a statement be made in the near future and will there be a debate on that important matter, bearing in mind the fact that a number of innocent children and women in Northern Ireland have already been killed by plastic bullets?

Mr. Biffen: As the hon. Gentleman will know, that has been considered by the House from time to time. I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friends the Home Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the interest that he now shows.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Following the points made so correctly by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), I too have noticed that a debate on the Channel Tunnel Bill (Procedure) on 3 June is to be followed, with the presumed success of that debate, by a further debate on the Second Reading on 5 June. Far be it for me to suggest that the business of 3 June might carry over to 5 June, but will my right hon. Friend assure the House that he will use his considerable powers to ensure that not only the voices of the big battalions but the voices of the ordinary people of north-east Kent are heard during the petitioning procedures?

Mr. Biffen: I take note of the point. Indeed, it will be part of the more general debates that will take place on the week we return. I quite understand the point my hon. Friend has made.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): The Leader of the House will recall that last week I asked him for a debate on British Coal. In view of the fact that 4,000 jobs will be lost in Yorkshire, 2,000 of which are in my constituency which already has a 25 per cent. male unemployment rate, is it not time that we had that debate? Is it not time that we looked at the direction of British Coal before it is too late, before it is completely decimated, and we run into the problems that existed in the 1960s?

Mr. Biffen: I understand the point that the hon. Gentleman makes. He made it all the more effectively by virtue of the temperate way that he presented it. I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. The hon. Gentleman might like to bear it in mind that unemployment could be relevant to the debate which we shall have on 3 June.

Mr. Anthony Beaumont-Dark (Birmingham, Selly Oak): In view of the growing system, which is more time-honoured than honourable, whereby tame questions are put down to which explosive answers are given—one sees an example in today's reply to Written Question 234 on the Top Salaries Review Body—is it not time that the House debated whether such questions and statements are to be at the behest of Government or the main Opposition parties? If a statement is made on a contentious matter, it is not honourable and proper for democracy if such a statement is given in answer to some lame question.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I am not lame.

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I was not suggesting that my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East was lame. I said that the question was lame. Could not we have debates

[Mr. Beaumont-Dark]

on these matters which affect many people in this country? Let us debate what we think should be statements and what should be questions so that we can deal with the problem of slipping in a question just before the bank holiday so as to ensure a little less trouble.

Mr. Biffen: For someone as generous as my hon. Friend, I thought that it was quite unnecessary for him to cast such aspersions——

Mr. Beaumont-Dark: I did say that he was not lame.

Mr. Biffen: He just left the impression, which was not easy to break, that it was coded language. However, a long-standing tradition that has applied to Governments of both major parties is that these announcements are made in a form that has now become customary. Perhaps my hon. Friend should consider the answer before judging whether it is that explosive.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I thank the Leader of the House for changing his mind and for personally asking the Ministry of Defence to investigate the circumstances in which British prisoners of war died after interrogation by Dr. Kurt Waldheim's German army group. Can we have an assurance that the inquiry will be carried out swiftly, that there will be a statement to the House thereafter, and that Waldheim's part in the interrogation by this army unit will not be ignored? Is the right hon. Gentleman aware of the Prime Minister's answer to me that a number of documents are missing from the Public Records Office that are believed to refer to Dr. Waldheim and this unit? Will he assure the House that he will look at these documents to ensure that there is no cover-up — as there has been by other Governments, including the Yugoslav Government—as I am sure that Her Majesty's Government would not wish to be accused in these circumstances?

Mr. Biffen: I do not accept many of the implications that the hon. and learned Gentleman makes, but I shall happily draw all his points to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): In view of the continuing state of lawlessness in Northern Ireland, and in particular the disgraceful antics of the Labour party aspirant to this place from Brent, East — Mr. Ken Livingstone—when he sought to persuade the Dutch not to return two convicted terrorists to Ireland, will my right hon. Friend arrange for an early debate on security in the Province?

Mr. Biffen: The problems of the Province should properly be a constant charge upon consideration in this House, and I shall draw the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to the suggestion that we might have an early debate.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Does the Leader of the House recall the debate on the quorum for the Committee to consider the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill? The Chairman of Ways and Means gave an undertaking that he would seek to set up a Committee of Inquiry into the private Bill procedures. Has the right hon. Gentleman also seen the article in *The Daily Telegraph* which suggested that the Department of Transport was vetoing that inquiry? Surely he has a duty to uphold the Chair at all times, and he ought to be facilitating the placing on the Order Paper as soon as possible of a motion relating to the inquiry, so that it can go ahead, and he should not allow the Department of Transport to prejudge the outcome.

Mr. Biffen: The plans for setting up a Committee are well advanced——

Mr. Bennett: When?

Mr. Biffen: I hope to be able to satisfy the hon. Gentleman's anxieties before very long. I have not seen the article in *The Daily Telegraph*, but if its contents are as alleged, quite frankly it is moonshine.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. Friend is well known for the interest that he takes in European political matters. He will have noticed the excellent election results in the Netherlands yesterday, when a determined and responsible Government were rewarded by recognition by their electorate and returned for yet another term of office. Will he give the House an early opportunity to debate the relevance of the Netherlands election results to politics in this country and allow us to draw the obvious conclusions?

Mr. Biffen: As ever, that is a most enticing proposition, but I must say in a somewhat sour fashion that a limited amount of Government time is available. However, my hon. Friend is one of the best free shooters on the Back Benches, and I am sure that he can find some way of raising the matter.

Mr. Robert N. Wareing (Liverpool, West Derby): As it is still the Government's intention to cut mortgage interest payment benefits for the poorest people in our society, is not it time that we had an early debate so that the Government can explain to my constituents who are one-parent families, disabled and unemployed, what role they see for them in their property owning democracy?

Mr. Biffen: There might be some merit in having a debate, if only to enable that rather strong presentation of the Government's position to be put into a much more accurate context. But just now I cannot see the likelihood of a debate being available because of the pressures of so much Government legislative business.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: When we have a debate on political indoctrination in our schools — examples of which were given so ably in another place earlier this week, led by Baroness Cox—can we also look at the difficulty of getting the police into our schools to talk about crime prevention and not breaking the law?

Can I also draw my right hon. Friend's attention to Question 43 on Thursday 8 May in which I asked the Prime Minister when she expected to receive the report of the Top Salaries Review Body? Written Question 234, which stands in my name today, was not planted, but is a follow-up to that original question.

Mr. Biffen: That is the most withering rejoinder that I have heard for some time. As to my hon. Friend's other point, the decisions taken by another place will have to come back to be considered here, and I very much hope that he will then have a chance to make the point that he has made with great persuasiveness.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On Friday 6 June, who among nature's communicators on the Government Front

Bench will be responding to the temperate motion on the conduct of the Prime Minister? Would not it be helpful to whoever does so to know whether the Prime Minister intends to ask for a retraction from *The Observer* newspaper and from Mr. Linklater and Mr. Leigh about their allegations on pages 142 and 143 of their book that the Prime Minister's stated knowledge about the selectively leaked letter from a Law Officer to a Minister of the Crown in fact existed a good deal earlier than she told the House?

Mr. Biffen: I would like the hon. Gentleman to go into the recess with a certain anxiety and anticipation. Therefore, I do not propose to tell him who will be handling that debate. But as is said in the best military terms, the response will be appropriate to the challenge. As for the hon. Gentleman's other points, I shall make sure that they are made available to the person who will be handling the debate.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): I realise that all of us, other than my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), will have to contain ourselves in patience and await the result of the Government's comments on the report of the Top Salaries Review Body. But I cannot believe that the combination of even the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer means that my right hon. Friend does not know what is in the answer to my hon. Friend's question. After all these years, will he admit to being a convert to incomes policy, even if it is only in the public sector, and could not outside industry follow the same lead?

Mr. Biffen: I have heard some mischievous questions in my time, but that one clearly invites me to imply that a reasonable interpretation of the correspondence to which my hon. Friend referred is that it represents a statutory incomes policy. My hon. Friend must be responsible for his own interpretation, and should not try to plant it upon me.

Business (Deregulation)

4.9 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to make a statement on Government action to relieve the burden of unnecessary regulation. We are publishing today a White Paper entitled "Building Businesses — Not Barriers". It contains a balanced series of new proposals for reducing the administrative and legislative burdens on business as well as a report on the progress made in furthering the proposals made in the last White Paper on this subject, "Lifting the Burden".

The White Paper reflects our firm belief that only by removing barriers to business will enterprise flourish and the essential creation of wealth and jobs follow. It presents a balanced programme that recognises that Government have a role in providing legal protection for workers, consumers and the general public, as well as protecting the environment and our quality of life. However, it also recognises that unnecessary regulations act as an inhibition to business growth and job creation.

In the White Paper, the Government have maintained these protections while still taking a series of significant steps forward in giving business the freedom to grow.

There are nearly 80 new proposals in "Building Businesses — Not Barriers". First, the work of the enterprise and deregulation task force, liaising with deregulation teams in Departments, will ensure that there is a proper analysis of the effects of proposed new rules and regulations on businesses.

We shall modernise the use classes order to allow a somewhat wider range of changes in the use of buildings or land to take place without planning permission. We shall permit businesses with planning permission for two or more alternative uses to change between these without the need for further planning applications. I stress that we do not propose to change the law on working from home.

We shall be setting up a major review of value added tax and small businesses, considering such issues as accounting for VAT on a cash basis rather than using invoices, and an instalment system for VAT payments.

We are introducing a more personal approach by civil servants in their dealings with business, so that responsibility will be linked to individual, named officials. We shall be reducing the duplication of visits by Government officials. PAYE and national insurance inspectors are now co-ordinating their visits to companies and we are introducing a pilot scheme to co-ordinate visits by Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise officials.

These are just a small sample of the efforts being made throughout every Government Department and agency to cut red tape and improve communications. Our proposals are carefully measured. None cross the fine dividing line between liberty and licence.

As well as concentrating on reducing domestic burdens, the White Paper also reports on progress towards cutting the bureaucracy imposed by EEC regulations and directives. Following an initiative made by the Prime Minister, a task force has been established within the European Commission to scrutinise all future proposals that might affect business, so that the costs of compliance can be minimised.

[Mr. Kenneth Clarke]

At the same time as publishing "Building Businesses — Not Barriers" the Department of Employment has launched a booklet "Cutting Red Tape". It summarises the contents of the White Paper in a popular and easy-to-digest way.

There can be few more urgent tasks than to create the climate for growth of employment. The more people concentrate on running their businesses, free of unnecessary barriers, the better for jobs, and more jobs is our aim—one, I am sure, shared by both sides of the House. This White Paper will help jobs without losing any necessary protections for the public. I commend it to the House.

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): The Paymaster General's statement has a certain familiarity about it, not because it was made earlier in the other place, but because it very much follows the recommendations made in the previous White Paper on this subject, on which a statement was made on 16 July 1985. Much of the rhetoric in the Paymaster General's statement masked a further attack on the protection of employees, the reduction of controls on the employer and the continued processes heralded in the last statement, made on 16 July, on "Lifting the Burden". The motive of that White Paper, as the Paymaster General will no doubt accept, was to sacrifice the principles governing the green belt, health and safety, and industrial rights.

Is the Paymaster General aware that the phrases contained in his statement were exactly the same as those made on 16 July 1885 by the right hon. Member for Croydon, Central (Mr. Moore)? Does the Paymaster General realise that the words and phrases, lifted from column 171 of *Hansard*, include:

"enterprise to flourish . . . essential for the creation of jobs. . . . a central task force is being set up . . . Essential protection for workers, consumers and the general public . . . protect our quality of life . . . the balance between liberty and licence". —[*Official Report*, 16 July 1985; Vol. 83, c. 171.]

Was the same word processor used for the two statements? Remarkably, I found that on 16 July 1985, there were 80 proposals in the White Paper, as there are 80 proposals in this White Paper.

Will the Paymaster General recognise that many of the proposals in this White Paper are embodied in the first White Paper? A great deal of rhetoric has been employed in this statement about creating enterprise and jobs. How many jobs have been created since the last exercise in cutting red tape? It was suggested that 8,000 jobs would be created, but in reality, 4,000 jobs a week have been lost since that statement.

Is the Paymaster General aware that the survey conducted by his Department justifying measures in the White Paper clearly showed that the burden of VAT was the main consideration for small companies, but again, the White Paper offers only a promise of further reviews, the payment of VAT on HP terms and that civil servants will visit less often and be nicer? Does he accept that the real reason for this White Paper is yet another attack on the limited employment rights of workers, rights that are identified in the White Paper, and which are shown in the survey not to be a difficult problem for small businesses?

Can the Paymaster General honestly justify his belief that the measures in the White Paper will provide jobs? For example, what help will be provided by imposing a deposit of £25 on workers who go to an industrial tribunal, removing the rights of pregnant women to return to their companies, reducing the time off for trade union members to conduct trade union activities at the place of work, or removing unfair dismissal and redundancy rights for hundreds of thousands of workers in many companies?

Will the Paymaster General accept that the real purpose of this White Paper, masked in rhetoric to justify deregulation, is to cut employment rights and increase unemployment? As the House was reminded by the statements in the press today and yesterday, a further 20,000 bus workers are to go on the dole as a result of deregulation of the bus industry.

Mr. Clarke: I am disappointed that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) began by attacking these proposals for lifting various unnecessary administrative burdens on business as somehow an attack on workers' rights or a reduction of essential public control. The hon. Gentleman was a supporter of the Government who left office in 1979, leaving industry with its profits, its prices and its wage rates controlled, and under a huge burden of bureaucracy. That greatly weakened our industrial base as we went into the worst of industrial recessions. The White Paper's proposals are a series of modest steps that will get rid of unnecessary bureaucracy. The American experience, contrasted with the European experience, shows that that can only help in generating new jobs by leaving businesses more free to concentrate on the most essential tasks.

The hon. Gentleman mentioned various public policies that he said were threatened. The White Paper says that there is to be no change in policy on the green belt and the proposals made for town and country planning are modest and sensible, and allow greater flexibility for high tech companies in particular. It is made plain in the White Paper that there is no attack on the concept of health and safety at work and no intention to lower standards.

The hon. Gentleman rather dismisses the review of VAT, but it is to be a wide-ranging one, and I touched in my statement on some of the important matters that it will cover. It will also cover the operation of the new penalty system that is being introduced, after consultation, into the VAT system.

As to employment protection, the hon. Gentleman cites various measures that he says are an attack on working people. I do not think that it is easy to get indignant about the proposal that the legal entitlement for time off for trade unionists should be confined to those trade union matters that are relevant to the company where the official works.

The other changes will enable the labour market to be more flexible and they will make it easier for employers to offer different types of employment. They will also encourage the growth of part-time and short-time working and the other forms of employment that are growing, both in this economy and in every other modern economy.

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman dislikes the fact that in this statement the same favourite phrases appear as appeared in the statement that was made by my right hon. Friend who is now the Secretary of State for Transport. However, it was made in 1985, not in 1885 when Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister. I am sure that my right hon. and noble Friend is glad to know that he is carrying on the same Tory tradition as existed then. Of course we are pursuing the same theme. That is because we are pursuing the same policies. We are deregulating in order to enable

business men to concentrate on the essential task of building up their businesses. The fact that there were 80 proposals then and that there are a further 80 proposals now shows that we are maintaining a good rate of progress. They are the result of looking at the activities of all branches of government.

Mr. Prescott: But how many jobs have been created?

Mr. Clarke: For the first time in this country we are questioning the growth of administration and bureaucracy since the second world war. We are seeking to reduce it in the interests of enabling businesses to be more free to create new jobs.

Mr. David Howell (Guildford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that this White Paper, like the last one, is thoroughly constructive and is to be welcomed, and that it is entirely in line with the new pattern of work and the new employment landscape that the Opposition will not begin to understand and, when they do understand it, quite wrongly oppose? I accept that in both "Lifting the Burden" and this new White Paper questions are tackled about the position of the self-employed, but the widespread impression still exists that the Inland Revenue is hostile to the self-employed and to the growing army of people who wish to organise their affairs in that way. Will he look particularly at that matter and consider how it can be changed?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend also accept that the time has come when the Government might recommend to Members of this honourable House that they, too, might consider returning to the self-employed status that they once held in order that they may understand the problems that face the self-employed in this country?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. The number of self-employed people is growing strongly. About 12 per cent. of those who are working in this country are now self-employed. That number is likely to increase, and it should increase if we follow the kind of developments that have taken place in successful modern economies elsewhere. We have already taken steps to help the self-employed. Probably the most significant step was the reduction in their national insurance contributions. The White Paper proposes that the issue of 714 certificates to those who legitimately require them to work in a self-employed capacity in the building industry should be speeded up. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer will seek to ensure that no hostility to legitimate self-employment prevails inside the Inland Revenue. I agree entirely with the general drift of my right hon. Friend's questions.

Mr. Ron Leighton (Newham, North-East): Does the Paymaster General not recognise that the more chatter we hear from him about deregulation the more unemployment increases every month? Furthermore, are not the rights of workers being reduced? They can appear before an industrial tribunal where their case is upheld, but, in the case of the miners who were dismissed, the National Coal Board still refused to reinstate them.

The main thing that is being deregulated is accountability to this House. The Paymaster General must realise that all this was dealt with elsewhere this morning. The noble Lord, Lord Young, dealt with all of this on radio. All the House of Commons is getting is the fag-end. The Paymaster General comes to the House as a messenger boy. Is that not an insult to the House of Commons?

Mr. Clarke: On the hon. Gentleman's first point, it is essential that we should have a good and effective system of employment protection law, but that does not mean that we should retain obsolete or over-complex provisions which deter employers from offering new employment to those whom they might otherwise engage. That is the general theme that runs through this package.

On the hon. Gentleman's second point, he knows that all Governments have Ministers in both Houses of Parliament. My right hon. and noble Friend and I have worked together on this package. We worked together also on the drafting of this statement. We have followed the ordinary practice of making the statement together on the same day in both Houses. It was to the surprise of my right hon. and noble Friend and me when we noticed that, because of our anxiety to make the statement before the recess, we were due to deliver it on a day when the rules of another place required my right hon. and noble Friend to make his statement in the morning but the rules of this place did not enable me to make it before 4 o'clock. We try to explain Government policy to both Houses in accordance with the positions that we hold, but I am afraid that the practice of both Houses does not enable my right hon. and noble Friend and me to guarantee that we can synchronise our watches and rise in both Chambers at the same time. As their Lordships are sitting earlier than this House today, their Lordships have the advantage over us.

Mr. Michael Grylls (Surrey, North-West): Does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that it is clear that he and his right hon. and noble Friend have made real progress in slaying the dangerous dragon of red tape? Therefore it would be more sensible if, rather than criticising, the Opposition were to recognise that the reason this country has created jobs at a slower rate than in the United States is that we have been over-regulated. This deregulation programme is probably the single most constructive measure we can take to create new jobs at a faster rate.

Will my right hon. and learned Friend look at the deregulation units in the Departments and examine whether they could be a little more effective and act more quickly? Perhaps a junior Minister in my right hon. and learned Friend's Department could be made responsible for deregulation. The recent problem that we experienced when responsibility for family credits was laid upon businesses would not then arise. We might also avoid the somewhat farcial situation that has arisen over the working of the Data Protection Act 1984. The policy is working, but we should like it to work a little faster.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend who, throughout his time as a Member of Parliament, has been urging this kind of policy on successive Governments. I am glad to hear that he is pleased that it is now being implemented in successive White Papers. We intend to keep up the effort. The White Paper explains the new deregulation arrangements that have been established throughout Whitehall. We have reached this stage following the co-ordination that was carried out by my right hon. and noble Friend and me of the activities of various Departments. Junior Ministers in those Departments have been involved in the exercise. Indeed, they are responsible for the detailed proposals that are contained in the White Paper and for their execution. We

[Mr. Clarke]

have ensured that deregulation in high on the agenda in each Department in Whitehall. There are effective deregulation units in each Department.

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): The two alliance parties welcome, so far as it goes, the Government's attempt to compensate for the hugely increased burdens on business because of high real interest rates and the extravagant unit labour costs that are due to the absence of an incomes policy. I commiserate with the Paymaster General. The statement, having been deferred from yesterday until today, when it could have been made simultaneously in both Houses yesterday, means that his right hon. and noble Friend asserted his complete leadership of the Department by delivering it four hours before the Paymaster General rose in this House.

Will the Paymaster General give an assurance that the scheme to co-ordinate visits from the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise Departments will not decrease the honourable rule that no single Department should divulge to another Department answers that it has received from a citizen in respect of its departmental requirements?

As for the proposal that responsibility will be linked to individually named officials, before the Paymaster General proceeds down this very dangerous avenue in which his Government have already established a most unhappy precedent, will he and his right hon. and noble Friend read carefully the report of the Treasury and Civil Service Select Committee, which was published today, on relations between civil servants and Ministers? It lays down in firm, all-party terms the need for no repetition of the circumstances in which a young civil servant at the outset of her career was named in respect of a piece of behaviour for which she was in no way responsible.

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman began by expressing support, for which I am grateful, although he wrapped it up rather heavily thereafter. Of course my right hon. and noble Friend is the head of Department and Secretary of State for the Department. I assure the hon. Gentleman that, if he thinks that this was the result of any planning, it was at a remarkably late stage that my right hon. and noble Friend and I realised that the rules of our respective Houses would mean that the other place would act first in its discussion of this proposal.

I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no change in the existing rules on the confidentiality of information about individuals between Departments as a result of the White Paper. The proposal about named officials will not, of course, mean that there is any transfer of ultimate responsibilities. It is Ministers who will remain accountable to this House for the way in which policy is drawn up and executed. The intention is that we get away from the situation where a business man or an individual citizen can sometimes feel that he is dealing with a literally faceless bureaucracy and have no idea who is handling his problem in a particular Department. The result should be an improvement in the relationship between Departments and citizens to the advantage, I should have thought, of both officials and citizens.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Does the White Paper herald the bringing under control of the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise by the Minister's own Secretary of State, so that they do not in future issue practice directions or regulations that undercut what his Department is doing? This is very important. For instance, there is the change in the rule that, after a VAT inspector has certified accounts as being in accordance with his Department's requirements, a subsequent inspector can cancel that and say, "No, I don't agree with the previous inspector." It is very important that a Minister in his own Department should see in advance and approve all changes in the Inland Revenue practice directions and regulations that do not pass through this House, and similarly in the case of Customs and Excise. Has this now been arranged as a working process so that the Treasury and its subsidiaries do not undercut the valuable work done by his Department?

Mr. Clarke: It is my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the team of Treasury Ministers who are accountable for the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise, and it is to them that the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise report. I am glad to say, however, that liaison between my right hon. Friend the Chancellor and his team of Ministers and the team of Ministers in my Department is very good. In regard to our responsibilities for small business in particular, we ensure that, with our representations, the representations of my hon. Friend the Member for Rossendale and Darwen (Mr. Trippier), the Under-Secretary of State for Employment, who takes a close interest in these matters, are regularly put into the Treasury and taken into account when the Inland Revenue and Customs and Excise are considering the way in which they behave.

Mr. James Lamond (Oldham, Central and Royton): Is the Minister aware that what he referred to as bureaucratic regulations, particularly in regard to planning, have over a number of years often avoided rather unhappy situations? If he is trying to tell us today that change of use regulations, for example, have to be considerably modified or swept away, will he not remind himself of the cases that he, like all hon. Members, must have had, of the entrepreneur who has come along, spotted a redundant chapel and thought it would make a nice place for breaking up motor cars or boiling sheeps' heads? The people who live in the area, far from regarding change of use regulations as bureaucratic, see them as an important defence for them and their neighbours. Surely we must take that into consideration.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that we need an effective system of town and country planning control. I also agree that the present system has piled up over the years, often as the result of individual problems. I believe that it is important that we step back occasionally and make sure that the system as a whole corresponds to public needs but does not put unnecessary obstacles in the way of business expansion. The next stage, for instance, in the use classes order revision is to go out to consultation, again with a modified version of the proposals first put forward by the Property Advisory Group. I assure the hon. Gentleman that changes will be made only when we are satisfied that this can be done without damaging the legitimate interests of people living in residential areas who obviously do not want noxious businesses near where they live.

Mr. Henry Bellingham (Norfolk, North-West): While I welcome the White Paper as a positive step forward and

applaud the Minister on his presentation, which compares very favourably with that of the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott), who shows yet again that he is out of date and out of touch, will my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is not enough for the White Paper to talk in terms of officials giving their addresses and telephone numbers? What is needed is a complete change of attitude, so that all officials become more pro-business and more pro-entrepreneur.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I agree with his point. I am sure that most officials would welcome pressure to adopt such an approach. A great deal of effort is being put into training officials in Departments such as Customs and Excise to make sure that they improve their relationships with the general public and understand the needs of small business when they are carrying out their essential tasks.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): May I ask a question that is not necessarily hostile? Has the question of responsibility of named civil servants been discussed with the Civil Service trade unions? Regarding his answer to the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright), is the Minister entirely happy that ultimate responsibility will still remain with Ministers because, once individuals are named, the fact is that, like it or not, responsibility sticks to them? In the circumstances, and in the light of the agony of the Ponting trial, is there not yet again an argument, if the Government are going to do this, for setting up some body to which a civil servant who is in difficulty can turn? As long as ultimately one has the Cabinet Secretary as head of the Civil Service, in real terms it is very difficult for a civil servant to appeal.

Mr. Clarke: When the hon. Gentleman asks questions that are necessarily hostile, he sometimes asks easier questions than the ones which are not necessarily hostile.

I do not believe that any formal consultation has been carried on on this proposal. We will obviously be interested in any views that the Civil Service unions have. I would expect that officials in the relevant parts of the Administration will probably welcome the changes that we are proposing. I assure the hon. Gentleman that there will be no weakening of the constitutional position, whereby the responsibility rests with the Minister answerable to this House. Policy responsibilities that are properly those of the Government and of Ministers will not be wished on to officials.

When the hon. Gentleman goes into the last matter, of course, he goes far outside my field and far outside the White Paper. I do not believe that the White Paper will present any difficulties between officials and Ministers of the kind that he describes.

Mr. Tim Smith (Beaconsfield): As small businesses regard the recording and collection of VAT as the major burden that they have to bear, does my right hon. and learned Friend accept that the proposal for a major review of VAT will be widely welcomed by small businesses? Can he make sure that it will include the proposition made by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses for the elimination of VAT between registered traders on credit transactions? If accepted, that could reduce the burden of those traders very substantially.

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I assure him that it will be a wide-ranging review and can certainly look at propositions put forward by the National Federation of Self Employed and Small Businesses, which is actively interested in this matter. It will probably not be completed before 1987, but we are already taking some steps, such as our efforts to raise the thresholds. We have already had some success, although we still have to lobby further in the European Community. In addition, we have introduced some relief on VAT payments for bad debts. This, too, has been of benefit to some small businesses.

Mr. Ken Eastham (Manchester, Blackley): Is it not a fact that, when the original consultation document "Lifting the Burden" was issued, it was highly speculative as to the people being consulted and, in the event, workers' groups and the trade unions were never consulted? Many people look on this as a possible cowboys' charter. We have seen reductions in the standard of planning and building regulations and fire precautions. With regard to the emphasis on small companies, I remind the Minister that some of the greatest disasters have occurred in small firms. In 1981 at a small chemical firm in Stalybridge just outside Manchester, at which only 15 people worked, there was a fatality and half the town had to be evacuated. Are these the kind of standards that the Minister is encouraging?

Mr. Clarke: There is obviously an essential level of public safety and safety for people at work that nobody wishes to lower. The imposition of unnecessary or bureaucratic standards in industry is undoubtedly very inhibiting to business growth. The purpose of this exercise is to try to sort out the one without damaging the other —that is, to sort out those parts of bureaucracy that can be relaxed without damaging essential public safeguards. I hope that more people in the trade union movement will come to realise that a constant demand for ever more regulations to increase, as they see it, the rights of those in work can sometimes lead to damage being done to the interests of those not in work if the result is to discourage business or employers from taking on new employees.

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept, in relation to the use classes order that many of the concerns arise not because of changes within, say, parts 3 to 10 on different types of shop or extensions to shops, but because of activities in residential areas that may be offensive to the residents? Will he bear that seriously in mind when considering the matter? Will he also bear in mind that some of the changes proposed within the residential connotation, such as the change of use from hotel or guest house to a rest home, will cause considerable difficulty in many resort towns in my constituency in particular?

May I congratulate my right hon. and learned Friend on the proposals for redundant agricultural buildings? It is absurd that agricultural buildings of considerable architectural merit have in the past been allowed to fall into disrepair and decay simply because no alternative use could be found for them. Will he please encourage the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food to reconsider its policy of insisting that agricultural land must remain agricultural land for ever when at times it could be better used for leisure or recreational purposes without damage to the countryside or the landscape?

On the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Guildford (Mr. Howell), may I urge my right hon. and

[Mr. John Butterfill]

learned Friend to consider the position of the self-employed whose businesses may fail and who may be unable to enjoy the benefits that would otherwise accrue to those unemployed?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. On the town and country planning points, it will be easier to make progress with changes that give greater flexibility in the use of business premises. I think that those can go ahead rapidly. It is necessary to take more care over changes that might affect residential areas. I am sure that that will be the principal aim of the further process of consultation that is envisaged before we come to conclusions on the use classes orders.

I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said about the use of former agricultural buildings. That would be a great advantage to rural areas. In continuing conversations with my right hon. Friend the Minister of Agriculture. I shall bear in mind what my hon. Friend said about the present arrangement for protecting agricultural land.

As for the self-employed, we give a great deal of support through the enterprise allowance scheme and through the small business service to those unemployed who wish to become self-employed. I agree that it is important to bring home to the self-employed the possible consequences of moving into self-employment, particularly if the business fails. Obviously all our efforts are designed to reduce the risk of business failure.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Is not much of the document based on the mistaken premise that deregulation in the United States of America put several million people back to work during 1983, 1984 and 1985? Is not the real truth of the American success that its economy was reflated due to a very high budget deficit and PSBR, that they spent money to put people back to work and that they did not have to deregulate?

Mr. Clarke: I am not one of those who believe that any one cause can be identified for favourable or unfavourable movements in employment. This is not the occasion to debate the performance of the American economy over the last few years. Certainly there was an unintended increase in the American deficit, which had some effect on the economy. It involved a deficit that could not possibly be sustained by an economy of our size. An important element in the American experience has been the much more dynamic nature of their economy, the greater spirit of entrepreneurship which undoubtedly exists in America, and the fact that their experience of deregulation has enabled their most enterprising business men to make more rapid progress. In Massachusetts, where unemployment has collapsed from 11 per cent. or 12 per cent. five years ago to under 5 per cent. one of the elements was undoubtedly the fact that that is a much less regulated economy than the equivalent here or in western Europe.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): My right hon. and learned Friend has done a wonderful job in bringing this forward. One part that I heard with delight was the reference to the £25 deposit. I hope that he does not think that he can fob me and the rest of the business world off with that as the only thing that will help with industrial tribunals. We have twice been promised a thorough review of the activities and workings of industrial tribunals, particularly their legislation. The lawyers here may not agree, but I hope that my right hon. and learned Friend will have the courage to bring forward a review of legalisation.

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend has strong and clear views about the working of the industrial tribunal system, some of which I had the pleasure of listening to in the proceedings on the Wages Bill.

I am glad that we have given limited satisfaction to my hon. Friend by proposing for discussion a £25 fee. It has always been the aim of successive Governments to avoid unnecessary legalisms in the industrial tribunal system. We continue to have that aim. There are limits to how far one can go when a system which has been set up by statute decides on set awards of compensation. Anything we can do to avoid an increase in unnecessary legalism we shall continue to do.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Can the Paymaster General state clearly how many people the proposals will put back to work and how far his Department is prepared to go in eroding the conditions of workers and the protection afforded to employees in order to solve the problems created by his Government?

Mr. Clarke: The hon. Gentleman knows that it is impossible to put exact figures on the extent to which particular actions of Government will help to create more jobs, or the extent to which they will damage job creation. I believe that the White Paper will make it easier for business to create jobs in the economy. To return to a more rigid system of controls and regulation favoured by the Labour party would have the perverse, though unintended, effect of actually reducing the prospects of more employment.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Will my right hon. and learned Friend accept that in many respects the proposals follow the Small Business Bill introduced last Session? Will he accept further that there are in the proposals many interesting factors that have yet to be improved? It would be better in certain respects if we went for a package of deregulation and at the same time for a package which ensured that the legislation itself was reduced before coming into effect; in other words, we should have fewer regulations so that we do not have to deregulate afterwards.

Mr. Clarke: I happily acknowledge our indebtedness to my hon. Friend and others for the proposals which have arisen from the Small Business Bill and for their continued interest in the subject. It is a continuing process. Some of the proposals which I wish to implement will require legislation. The unit will continue to identify other areas where we can deregulate. The most important part of the proposals is that we will have a unit in the Department expressly charged with keeping an eye on what is emerging from the whole of Whitehall. In future no Department of Government can introduce fresh regulations without first considering their compliance cost for small business. It is the inexorable growth of more and more bureaucracy that the Government are trying to avoid.

Mr. James Couchman (Gillingham): Speaking for small business, may I point out to the Minister that the prospect of a co-ordinated visit by Her Majesty's inspector of taxes, the DHSS lady in regard to the national insurance contribution, and the water guard wishing to examine my

VAT returns is daunting and is likely to precipitate my throwing in the towel, not to mention possibly causing an untimely by-election in Gillingham.

To be more serious, does my hon. and learned Friend accept that one of the biggest barriers to growth in the hotel, restaurant, catering and licensed trades is the outdated licensing law? Does he agree that paragraph 8.54 on liquor licensing hours is disappointing? Will he speak to his right hon. Friend the Home Secretary about getting earlier action than is presently promised?

Mr. Clarke: I know that no business man welcomes a visit of any kind from officials in those departments, not least because it consumes much time. One co-ordinated visit should be better than visits on successive days, which might occur. On the licensing laws, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary made it clear earlier this week that the Government accept in principle the case for reform of the licensing laws. I have always believed that our licensing laws are archaic and much in need of reform. The Government will try to find out what consensus emerges for improvement and how soon it will be possible to bring proposals before the House.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Those of us who are interested in the development of the tourist and leisure industries will be especially grateful for the support that my right hon. and learned Friend, his noble Friend and the deregulation unit have given to those industries. Needless to say, we hope very much, as my hon. Friend the Member for Gillingham (Mr. Couchman) has said, that that support will be carried through into action and that there will be a change in the licensing laws.

I draw my right hon. and learned Friend's attention to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth, West (Mr. Butterfill). Chapter 5.7 of the report deals with the use classes order. It states:

"The Department of the Environment will be publishing early next month a consultation document which sets out the Government's proposals in detail."

Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that those of us involved with the tourist industry will be very concerned if consent is given for the conversion of small hotels and guest houses either to rest homes or to a return to the DHSS use that we saw two summers ago?

Mr. Clarke: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his first point. It is interesting that hon. Members who take most interest in the development of the fast-growing sectors of the economy such as tourism and leisure have welcomed this document and the initiative. I believe that many new jobs will be created through the Government's approach to tourism and leisure. I understand what my hon. Friend says about the use classes order. There will be consultation over that matter and I am sure that my hon. Friend's point will be made very strongly to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment before any changes are made.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): My right hon. and learned Friend will know by now that there is universal welcome from the Conservative Benches for the initiative that he is taking. However, will he tell the House whether he is satisfied about the progress that has been made in connection with the "Lifting the Burden" initiative adopted by his Department last year? Will he give the details of the progress that has been made? Does he believe that the same progress will be made, with the same speed, with the proposals that he has brought to the House today?

Mr. Clarke: Annex 1, appendix A, of the White Paper and, indeed, annex 1 generally, deals with a summary of the action on the proposals set out in "Lifting the Burden". I admit that one or two of the proposals have bitten the dust since "Lifting the Burden" was published. However, we have made progress with most of the proposals. The changes that have been made reflect the care that must be taken in sensitive areas such as health and safety, which hon. Members have mentioned today. This is a continuing process and our main anxiety is, as my hon. Friend would wish, that we should not lose the momentum behind the exercise.

Mr. James Hill (Southampton, Test): I see that planning appeals are to be speeded up. That will be appreciated. The document also states that planning controls will be reduced in some minor way. The whole idea of deregulation is to create job opportunities. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware of a campaign that I have been fighting on behalf of the six freeports in the United Kingdom? We are desperately seeking deregulation in such ares as Customs and Excise taxes and imposts, and on VAT between customers within the freeports. The lack of deregulation in the freeports is causing difficulties and is not creating job vacancies. Is there anything in the White Paper which will give me hope when I speak to the manager of the Southampton freeport?

Mr. Clarke: In answer to my hon. Friend's point about planning appeals by inspectors, we have now managed to release the results of the efficiency scrutiny report that we carried out, and targets have been set to reduce the handling time of appeals. That is set out in paragraph 5.17 of the White Paper, and I am glad to see that my hon. Friend is making use of the clear, shorter document, and that that has enabled him to ask this question.

Freeports will be involved in the review of VAT. My hon. Friend will be reassured to know that the full White Paper expressly mentions that as a matter for investigation. The impact of VAT rules and the application of VAT on the development of freeports will be examined.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's continued commitment to helping small businesses. I believe that "Building Businesses—Not Barriers" is a great success story that should be promoted throughout the country. Will my right hon. and learned Friend develop from annex 4 the question of wider competition in our postal services? Competition is healthy and small businesses can benefit from the alternatives that other fast letter carrier services can offer. In connection with the Registered Homes Act 1984 and the Nursing Homes and Mental Nursing Homes Regulations 1984, my right hon. and learned Friend will be aware of my anxiety that too many of these homes are springing up — rather like mushrooms — without proper controls. While I want controls to be reduced, will he reassure the House that no advantage will be taken of our old people when they need to be looked after?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend will have noticed, as I have, that parts of the trade union and labour movements are still keener on the barriers than on the businesses when it comes to a choice between the two. I also approve of competition in the interests of the consumer, and I shall draw his remarks to the attention of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who has responsibility for the postal services.

Swan Hunter (Redundancies)

Mr. Ted Garrett (Wallsend): I beg to ask leave to move the Adjournment of the House under Standing Order No. 10 for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that should have urgent consideration, namely,

'the announcement of redundancies today at Swan Hunter shipbuilders.'

I do not wish to detain the House for too long, but, in accordance with Standing Order No. 10, I wish to seek your permission, Mr. Speaker, to draw the attention of the House to the announcement this afternoon that Swan Hunter is to declare immediately 825 employees redundant. Some time should be allocated by the House to debate this matter.

The apathy of the House, the Government and indeed the nation is something which disturbs me very much, bearing in mind that we are still a maritime nation. Unless we take seriously the decline in shipbuilding, particularly in Tyneside and Wallsend, we are on a course which will mean the extinction of our maritime fleet, our defence capabilities and, of course, ultimately shipbuilding. On this premise alone, Mr. Speaker, I hope that you will approve my request for a debate on this matter.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Member asks leave to move the Adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter that he thinks should have urgent consideration, namely,

"the announcement of 1,000 redundancies today at Swan Hunter shipbuilders."

As the hon. Gentleman knows, the only consideration I have to bear in mind is whether to give this matter precedence over the Orders set down for today or tomorrow. I fully understand the importance of this matter to him and his constituents. I regret that I do not consider the matter which he has raised as being appropriate for discussion under Standing Order No. 10 and, therefore, I cannot submit his application to the House.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): We have listened to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, and I have no desire to challenge it, but this is clearly a major new development. We have just heard a statement about the redundancy of 350 people—tragically unnecessary—and the closure of the Geevor mine. Surely, with the Leader of the House listening to what has been said, we can expect a full statement tomorrow on the matter which has been raised by my hon. Friend.

Mr. Speaker: That is not a matter for me.

Sunday Times (Report)

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is within your knowledge that yesterday I raised with your office a possible point of order arising out of a report in the *Sunday Times* that the debate on Friday, resulting from my luck in the ballot, is to be squeezed out by the device of talking all through the night on the Channel Tunnel procedural motion. Let me say straight away that I acquit the Leader of the House of any such manipulation. I go further and acquit the Government Whips of having been in any way involved. My understanding is that Mr. Bernard Ingham took it on himself, in order to help press colleagues, to say that what was suggested in the *Sunday Times* should indeed take place.

Should a civil servant, however eminent and powerful, take it upon himself to make judgments on the business of the House of Commons? Is that his competence?

Mr. Speaker: I saw the report in the *Sunday Times* and I read it with interest. It is, of course, press speculation and I have no idea whether Mr. Ingham is responsible, but he is not a Member of this House and I have no jurisdiction over him.

Later—

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the point of order raised by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell)—I am sorry that he has gone—many of us would be quite happy to have his motion debated on Friday because it would be defeated by many votes. If the hon. Gentleman wants the debate, he may have it.

Mr. Speaker: As far as I am concerned, the motion is on the Order Paper and I shall be here on Friday.

Privilege

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I wish to raise a point which concerns your responsibilities as against those of the Liaison Committee.

Today, at midday, I gave a copy of PAC 185 to Mr. Christopher Moncrieff of the Press Association. PAC 185 is entitled "Cost improvement programmes in individual districts" — that is, health districts. The document consists of a reply from Mr. Victor Paige, chairman of the National Health Service management board, to a question I asked him in public session of the Public Accounts Committee while we were taking evidence on value-for-money developments in the National Health Service.

This is a matter for you, Mr. Speaker, because during the course of the Committee proceedings Mr. Paige, for obvious reasons, was not in a position to give a reply on the detail of particular health authority efficiency arrangements. He agreed to provide the answers as supplementary evidence. That evidence was received by the clerk of the PAC. It was not published by the Committee and is therefore unreported evidence.

It is a breach of privilege for a Member of this House to reveal unreported evidence given to a Select Committee. I make it clear that I am opposed to the release of unreported evidence which is either commercially confidential or classified. PAC 185 falls under neither of these headings. It is no more than the answer to a question which would have been given in public session of the PAC had the witness had the information available to him at that time. It is nevertheless, under present rules, a breach of privilege to reveal such a document's contents.

My breach of privilege was in the public interest. I have written to the Chairman of the Privileges Committee drawing attention to it with the request that my breach of privilege be referred to the Committee as a matter of complaint. Can you assure me, Mr. Speaker, that this matter will not be dealt with by the Liaison Committee, which is what we resolved during the course of the three debates we have had on the matter over the past two months, as I wish for a definitive judgment from the Privileges Committee which will enable the House to have access to these unreported documents, which should be in the public domain, because they are neither classified nor commercially in confidence.

Mr. Speaker: Have I got the gist of the hon. Gentleman's application? He wishes his own breach of privilege to be referred to the Privileges Committee. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I will carefully consider his application.

EDUCATION (NO. 2) BILL

Ordered,

That the Education (No. 2) Bill be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Accomplice Evidence (Northern Ireland)

4.17 pm

Mr. Seamus Mallon (Newry and Armagh): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide with certain exceptions for a mandatory requirement that an accused person in Northern Ireland shall not be convicted on the uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice.

I wish to bring in the Bill because of the grave concern in Northern Ireland about this practice. The concern is not confined to one section of the community. It transcends all political parties and it centres on the abhorrence of a practice which is sending people to prison for long periods on what can only be regarded as less than satisfactory evidence.

On many occasions in Northern Ireland the law has been used for the purpose for which it was never designed — it has been used to solve political problems — and every time that happens confidence in the law has been diminished and eroded. That is not a new experience for us. Some 180 years ago Jefferson warned the American people that if one sacrificed security for justice one would lose both. Tragically that is what we seem to continue to do in the north of Ireland, especially through the use of the supergrass system. The time has come for the Government to grasp this nettle. They must realise their responsibilities and try to resolve this matter in a satisfactory way.

The Bill which I wish to present seeks to abolish the use of uncorroborated evidence as the basis for convictions. The supergrass system places an intolerable burden on the courts and the judges and it distorts the public's perspective of the process of justice. It is almost grotesque to consider some of the elements of the system. Indeed, it is rather like reading a Kafka novel when one examines some of the studied elements of supergrass trials.

I shall give an example. A charge was brought—this is a matter of court record — on the evidence of a supergrass. A person was charged with

"possession on dates unknown with persons unknown of unexploded and undiscovered bombs."

The person charged with that charge, among others, is serving 15 years' imprisonment. I do not think that any society has a right to be complacent when that sort of anomaly arises.

We are never told by those who defend the supergrass system about the periods of remand. If we take 18 months as the average period spent on remand by an accused, we are talking about 1,050 years having been spent on remand before a judge has donned his wig or before a trial has begun. These are grotesque figures which must be challenged, and challenged in the only place where it is worth while to do so—on the Floor of the House.

There are many reasons why I must challenge the supergrass system. The first is that the evidence is dangerous. Judges challenge and make comments about the supergrasses, the accomplices, and we must appreciate the way in which ordinary people regard the system. In the Black case, for example, the accused were sentenced to 4,000 years' imprisonment, five of them receiving life sentences. The judge described the supergrass in that case as

"an active and wholehearted member of the IRA—up to his neck in terrorist activity and a dangerous and ruthless criminal."

[Mr. Seamus Mallon]

Yet sentences of 4,000 years' imprisonment were imposed on his word.

The Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland described the evidence of another supergrass and said that it would be

"a perversion of justice according to law, so contradictory, bizarre and in some respects incredible was McGrady's evidence and so devious and deliberately evasive was his manner of giving it."

That is the way in which he described him, yet he proceeded, on his evidence, to sentence three people to long prison sentences.

In the latest example — the Kirkpatrick supergrass trial — the judge described the witness as being very often mistaken and unreliable. He said that his evidence was "hard to reconcile" and sometimes deliberately false. What did he do? Twenty-seven people were convicted on that evidence, and they are still in prison.

The performance of some of the supergrasses, as my hon. Friend the Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) has confirmed, is less than impressive. They are criminals and in many instances they have demanded and obtained immunity, which is astounding. The core of the issue, however, is that in the north of Ireland, because of a decision of this Parliament, there is an abnormal judicial system. There is no jury. Only one person makes the decision. I ask one simple question: If a prosecution has to convince 12 people in one jurisdiction and only one man in another, in which place would the average man wish to have his trial held? In which place would we all prefer to be tried if that were the choice facing us? These questions put the issue into perspective because in reality the problem will never be overcome while we put such a tremendous charge on a judge, who has to warn himself that it is dangerous to convict on uncorroborated evidence. These mental gymnastics should not be the basis of law.

Immunity is something which worries many people, and it has desperately worried those in Northern Ireland. Here, where these laws are made, it might be worth considering again the words of Chief Justice Hale in the 1600s, who said:

"The truth is that more mischief hath come to good men by these kinds of approvement by the false declarations of villains, than benefits to the public by the discovery and conviction of real offenders."

That is something that we should remember when we give immunity to someone like Grimley, who was described by Mr. Justice Gibson as having

"little or no regard for the truth"

and who gave

"evidence such that one could place no reliance on it."

At the end of the trial, however, Mr. Grimley went straight through the doorway of the court with immunity, and he is not the only person to have done it. To date 15 have been granted immunity, and we want it stopped.

This is not something which happens only occasionally in Northern Ireland for it is now a system. It is a system within a system. Much as it is denied and disputed, the fact remains that there must be political connivance, and judicial connivance at the highest level, to allow this abomination to continue. In the four years since the system began there have been 10 supergrass trials and over 700 have been charged with multiple offences on supergrass evidence. About 100 — they are all members of the nationalist community, by the way — are still in prison as a result of that evidence. We shall have to live with the consequences and we must examine the issue extremely carefully.

I am aware, Mr. Speaker, of your concern about the time that is taken in debates such as this, so I shall conclude quickly. My Bill, which I hope to be able to bring to the Floor of the House, proposes quite simply

"that an accused person in Northern Ireland shall not be convicted on the uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice."

The Bill would define "corroboration" as independent admissible evidence which confirms in some material particular not only the evidence that the offence has been committed but that the accused person committed it. If the only evidence against an accused is that of a supergrass and no corroborative evidence can be found in the strict sense of the term, the accused should be acquitted. Natural justice requires that the guilt of an accused must be established beyond reasonable doubt. When we are dealing with witnesses that are as notoriously unreliable as supergrasses, it is clear that we must adhere to that criterion.

I leave the final word with Lord Gifford, who produced a remarkably clear analysis of the problem. The message of Lord Gifford that I would like to leave with the House is this:

"Parliament has legislated for an exceptional form of trial procedure in Northern Ireland, dispensing with the most important protection for the innocent in our judicial system. Parliament should also legislate to provide safeguards for the Diplock system, by a simple measure which provides that in a Diplock court there must as a matter of law be corroboration of the evidence of an accomplice."

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Seamus Mallon, Mr. John Hume, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mr. Kevin Barron, Mr. Kevin McNamara, Mr. Martin Flannery, Mr. Dennis Canavan, Ms. Clare Short and Mr. David Alton.

ACCOMPLICE EVIDENCE (NORTHERN IRELAND)

Mr. Seamus Mallon accordingly presented a Bill to provide with certain exceptions for a mandatory requirement that an accused person in Northern Ireland shall not be convicted on the uncorroborated evidence of an accomplice: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 167.]

Opposition Day

[14TH ALLOTTED DAY]

Economic Policies and Unemployment

Mr. Speaker: I must announce to the House that I have selected the amendment in the name of the Prime Minister. I must also tell the House that many hon. Gentlemen wish to take part in the debate, and I appeal for brief contributions.

4.30 pm

Mr. Roy Hattersley (Birmingham, Sparkbrook): I beg to move,

That this House strongly condemns this Government's economic policies which have led to the highest ever level of unemployment.

Almost exactly three years ago today, the Chancellor of the Exchequer forecast the date on which unemployment would start to fall. At a Conservative party election press conference, he said that the reduction would begin in early 1984. His forecast that the reduction would begin in the early days of that year was qualified by only one reservation: the estimate was, he said, his own. He added: "Take it or leave it for what it is worth."

Today we know exactly the value of the Chancellor's judgment. We know exactly what that was worth. Far from falling, unemployment has remorselessly increased. It has increased by 300,000 since the Chancellor predicted his reduction, by 200,000 since the date when the reduction was supposed to begin and by 2 million since the Government were elected in 1979. I ought to make it clear that the figure of 2 million is the record according to the Government's massaged figures. On the honest calculations, the seven-year increase since 1979 is 2·5 million.

Day after day the bad news grows. There is bad news for tin miners on Monday and for shipyard workers on Tuesday. The numbers of redundancies pile up day after day. Under the Government, unemployment has risen to higher levels than ever. Unemployment here is now worse than in Germany, France, America, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Denmark, Greece, Switzerland, Australia and many other countries. Seven years ago we were told that the effects of the international recession would be the same for those countries as it would be here.

The excuse that we suffer as the rest of the world suffers is patently false. So is the absurd notion, which no doubt we shall hear from the Chancellor this afternoon, that were we to improve employment, we would have to sacrifice improved inflation. That is no more sensible that to say that we should or could bring unemployment down by allowing inflation to rise. The two factors essentially have to go hand in hand.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No, I will not give way. The debate began very late. It is a brief debate and I shall obey Mr. Speaker's injunction.

The disgrace that we are debating today is not just the tragedy of the past seven years. We are discussing a continuation of the catastrophe. We are discussing it because the Government have no strategy for the reduction of unemployment and, I fear, precious little concern for the unemployed.

Budget after Budget, all we receive are diversions and distractions—profit sharing, job starts and job clubs. We receive nothing but gimmicks and exhortations to be patient, and the pretence that the Government are creating the conditions in which unemployment will naturally fall. We have heard that now for seven years. I must ask the Chancellor again the question which, on the record, he only answers at election time and then gets grotesquely wrong: when will a sustained reduction in unemployment begin?

The question is all the more relevant today in the light of the Chancellor's boast last week about the strength of the economy. If the economy is so strong, what is the Chancellor's excuse for saying that there is nothing that he can offer the unemployed? What sort of recovery is it that leaves almost 4 million men and women out of work? How long will they have to wait before they can enjoy some of the advantages that the Chancellor attempted to describe last week?

An answer of sorts was given last week by the Secretary of State for Employment acting in his capacity as Minister for Irrelevant Gimmicks. The noble Lord is clearly destined to play a crucial part in the future of the Government. He is to occupy the role so recently vacated by the right hon. Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph). He is to be the court jester. He will be what in King Lear was called the Fool but he will be the Fool in reverse. He will be the man who dresses up nonsense and pretends that it is wisdom. The noble Lord's speech last week was an example of that. Had I not seen that speech reported in every reputable newspaper I would not have believed that it had been made by a member of a responsible Administration. Seven years after the Government were elected, the Secretary of State for Employment announced how he would change the prospects for the unemployed. He said that he would organise a profound change in British culture.

We will recognise the new renaissance when it comes—this profound change in culture—because there will be a relaxation of hire car regulations and an abolition of licences for anti-shop lifting devices. In the new Conservative Camelot, private nursing homes will no longer be licensed. That is a strange industry around which to build our economic regeneration. However, this new unregulated Eldorado is not an immediate prospect. The Secretary of State for Employment is issuing a consultative statement and that will be followed by a definitive White Paper. When all that happens, the absence of regulations will slowly create the conditions in which job growth will begin.

If the noble Lord's ideas were simply silly, neither they nor he would matter, nor would they need to detain us now. However, some of the ideas related to reducing unemployment are positively pernicious. It is pernicious to restrict the rights to maternity benefit. It is pernicious to limit the right to appeal against unfair dismissal. And it is especially pernicious to pretend that the unemployment figures can be reduced by penalising those already in work.

Unemployment has not risen during the past seven years because of regulations within the economy or restrictions within the labour market. It has risen because of the Government's policy. Seven years ago we were told

[Mr. Hattersley]

that reductions in Government borrowing and cuts in public spending, a tight grip on the money supply and the consequent high interest rates and over-valued sterling would create the conditions in which employment would increase and unemployment would fall. In both particulars exactly the opposite has happened.

Despite the bogus claims about job creation, the counting of part-time jobs as if they were full-time, the intentional over-estimation of the number of people in self-employment, the truth is not in doubt. The Bank of England states that the real record of job creation between June 1983 and June 1985 is the equivalent of 24,000 employees in full time jobs, not the 250,000 which the Government fraudulently calculated. The Government's figure was almost 10 times greater than the real figure.

The Government's claims grow more bizarre day by day. This morning on the radio in one of those performances which lose his party so many votes, in one of the performances against which the Leader of the House and the Home Secretary have warned him, the chairman of the Conservative party claimed that the Government had created 1 million jobs since 1983. I must tell the Chancellor that I cannot imagine anybody buying a second hand political party from that man.

The truth is that even on the Government's own figures we have lost 1 million jobs since 1979. The Chancellor shakes his head but I have no doubt that one of the civil servants in the Box will provide him with the proper abstract of statistics. On the OECD figures, to which the Government contribute, it is clear that we have lost more jobs since 1979 than all the rest of the EEC put together. We have lost them largely because of Government policy — interest rates higher than the rest of Europe, an exchange rate which subsidises imports and penalises exports, and the Government's short-sighted refusal to invest resources in jobs and people.

One of the reasons given by the Government for ever-rising unemployment is earnings increases which outstrip inflation. I dare say that we shall hear something about that this afternoon. However, when it is convenient — for example, in party political broadcasts—the Government boast about earnings increases which outstrip inflation. So I ask the Chancellor again a question which he has failed to answer before and which the Chief Secretary has similarly failed to answer: Are the Government pleased or sorry that wage increases have bounded away over the past two years in the way that the figures demonstrate?

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No. I have made it clear that I think it right to make my speech as quickly as possible and allow other hon. Members to do the same. I am doing the hon. Gentleman a favour because I am helping him to catch Mr. Speaker's eye as the afternoon wears on. The Chancellor's Parliamentary Private Secretary is saying something, but whether it is to me or to the Chancellor, I am not clear.

It was the people who received those extra wage increases of whom I assume the Secretary of State for Employment was speaking when he said last week

"We have never had it so good for the 87 per cent. who are in work."

That comment combines ignorance, callousness, cynicism and stupidity in equal measure.

First, that comment is ignorant because it is statistically untrue. The lowest paid 10 per cent. of men and women in work are worse off than they were seven years ago. The Institute for Fiscal Studies tells us that since the cost of living rises at a different speed and in a different way for pensioners and the other recipients of benefit, any benefit scheme which has increased only according to the official RPI results in the pensioners and the other recipients of benefit being worse off than they were seven years ago. Gallup tells us that over the past seven years 30 per cent. of the population has been directly affected by unemployment. All those people are worse off materially than they were seven years ago.

But the statement of the Secretary of State for Employment is wrong and ignorant in particular because it disregards the millions of families who are worse off because of the deterioration in the services on which their comfort and security depends. Perhaps more important, the noble Lord's statement was callous because it urged the prosperous to forget the disadvantaged. It was cynical because it hoped to construct a party political majority of the selfish and the uncaring.

Most important of all, and the point that I want to make to some extent, was that the idea that the 87 per cent.—a figure conjured out of statistical ignorance by the Secretary of State—had never had it so good was stupid because it did not recognise, and he did not understand, that even the prosperous cannot enjoy the full fruits of their prosperity in a society which is cruelly divided between employed and unemployed, between rich and poor, because most of the families who are still in work, even the families which have not been touched by unemployment over the past seven years, rely on public services for their health care and for the education of their children.

The families still in work, to whom the Secretary of State for Employment was presumably referring, are concerned about the physical conditions of their environment. All of them know that the National Health Service, the education service and the environment have deteriorated over the past seven years and they know that unless we begin to spend money on rebuilding dilapidated Britain now, in five, 10 or 20 years the nation will not be able to afford the cost of escalating deprivation. *[Interruption.]* If hon. Members believe that that is not true, they do not inhabit the real world of Britain since 1979 where schools and hospitals are in physical decay and where even according to the Government's National Economic Development Office the decay now runs at such a rate that, unless we try to arrest it soon, there will be no hope of rebuilding Britain into a decently equipped society.

What is more, the people who suffer from the lack of services, the people who want to see the building programmes and the environment improved with new schools and hospitals, know that by putting the unemployed back to work their public services and environment could be improved.

Men and women in secure employment know that a society that accepts permanent unemployment breeds despair, and they know, too, that that society which breeds despair breeds crime. The claim that they have never had it so good rings very hollow indeed to those families who have seen violent crime rise by 40 per cent., burglaries by 54 per cent. and vandalism and criminal damage by 76 per cent. All those deteriorations in law and order have come

about since the Government were elected and since unemployment escalated and brought with it the despair that brings violence. That is why a concentrated campaign to put Britain back to work is not just the compassionate option; it is the sensible option. It is the option dictated by the self-interest of us all, for it is to the direct material advantage of men and women now at work; men and women who want and need better housing, roads, hospitals and transport. The truth — I repeat it again — is that without adequate public services it is impossible for most families fully to enjoy their private earnings.

I give a fashionable example. It is an example so fashionable that it appeals to the new Secretary of State for Education and Science—the concern about litter, which I recognise, and I am glad to see that he has recognised, as something which affects Britain. I tell the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) who has inherited his initiative that litter in Britain will not be cleared by Mr. Richard Branson. It might be cleared if unemployed youths no longer stood on street corners in all our cities, and it might be cleared if councillors were allowed to finance adequate street cleaning. It might be cleared if the Government had the sense to realise that it is absurd to spend £6,000 a year on keeping a man or woman out of work when there are urgent tasks for those men and women to do.

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hattersley: No. I have made it clear that I shall press on, and that will allow the hon. Gentleman to speak if he catches Mr. Speaker's eye.

The position is clear. The Chancellor talks persistently, and will no doubt do so this afternoon, as if unemployment costs Britain nothing and as if putting Britain back to work is the expensive option. In fact, unemployment costs Britain £20 billion a year in benefits paid and taxes forgone. Unemployment costs Britain another £30 billion a year in lost production. It is simple lunacy, no less for those in work than for those who are unemployed, to allow money to be wasted and to allow the waste to continue when the money now spent on unemployment and the workers could combine to build a better Britain.

I ask the Chancellor a simple question and I shall keep on asking it until he has the courtesy to answer. I know graciousness is not a characteristic that is most noticeable — *[Interruption.]* Somebody from the Front Bench shouted, "It takes one to know one." We do need to improve the education system, do we not? How does the Chancellor justify a policy which leaves Britain short of houses, hospitals and schools and at the same time keeps 400,000 construction workers on the dole? It does not make sense because those people could be put back to work, thus reducing unemployment and making an important contribution to the quality of life and the prosperity of Britain.

Putting Britain back to work is an urgent necessity for all our people, employed and unemployed alike. Reducing unemployment, initially by about 1 million in two years, is the policy to which the next Labour Government will give overall priority. It is a policy to which everything else must take second place. To achieve that aim — and achieve it we shall — we will specify firm targets for borrowing and spending and will make sure that spending remains within those targets and is concentrated on job creation.

The Prime Minister spoke movingly to one of her Back Benchers today and said she was always prepared to listen to suggestions for extra expenditure if they were matched by ideas about where the money could come from. Let me give her one suggestion. It is right economically, socially and morally to use available resources for investment in public sector capital to reduce unemployment rather than use them to reduce the standard rate of income tax to 25p. It may not appeal to those small groups of cynics and self-interested people whom the Secretary of State for Employment tells us have never had it so good. Those are the people who have already enjoyed the tax cuts from Government. What I have suggested is right for Britain and it is what most of our people want.

To achieve the reduction in unemployment that we intend I concede at once that the next Labour Government will have to postpone some policies which are desirable and necessary in themselves. I say and I shall continue to say that it is our overwhelming intention to make every other objective secondary to a reduction in unemployment. If resources are concentrated on that overwhelming necessity, it will be possible to begin putting Britain back to work. We shall begin to put Britain back to work. That is what our people want and that is what the Labour Government will do.

4.53 pm

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Nigel Lawson): I beg to move, to leave out from 'House' to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof,

'congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the success of its economic policies in securing the lowest rate of inflation for over 18 years and steadily rising employment.'

The House is united in its concern to see an end to the prolonged rise in unemployment and a steady reduction in the numbers out of work. What divides us is how that can be achieved. This debate is taking place on what is virtually the third anniversary of the general election of 1983, and I am delighted that the Opposition wish to commemorate that historic event. It is worth recalling what the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) had to say in the moment of truth in the aftermath of that massive defeat for his party. He said:

"Our economic policy—the promise to put Britain back to work — was a net vote loser. Our vague hopes of achieving growth through Government spending were barely understood and rarely believed".

Three years later the right hon. Gentleman is again peddling the same economic panaceas that were so rightly rejected in 1983. A massive increase in public expenditure — no less than an extra £24 billion, as my right hon. Friend the Chief Secretary has said — is once again paraded as the answer to unemployment. It was wrong when it was put into practice in 1974, it was wrong when it was so decisively rejected by the British people in 1983, and it is wrong today. The only consequence of a policy of massive spending by a Labour Government would be a massive increase in public borrowing, a massive increase in taxation and a massive increase in inflation, leading to financial collapse and the inevitable recourse to the International Monetary Fund.

The right hon. Gentleman is right about one thing. The solution to unemployment must lie in large measure in enabling the economy to generate faster growth for a

[Mr. Nigel Lawson]

sustained period. Whatever the arguments for higher public expenditure, the creation of a more efficient and more competitive economy is not one of them. Indeed, if anything the reverse is the case. It is no coincidence that the two most successful economies in the world, those of the United States and of Japan, have a markedly lower level of public expenditure and taxation in relation to their gross domestic product than we have in this country.

There is no pseudo-Keynesian short cut to a better performing economy. It requires entrepreneurs prepared to seize opportunities and take risks, high quality management, with a firm grip on costs, and high quality investment—not least in research and development. It requires a well-trained and well-motivated work force and a market economy free of unnecessary interference and restrictions of all kinds. Starting from where we were in the United Kingdom after years, indeed decades, of movement away from the market economy, it is inevitably a long and slow process, but let there be no doubt about the progress that we have already made.

In the latter part of his speech the right hon. Gentleman made a number of somewhat selective statistical comparisons between now and 1979. We all remember, especially those of us on the Government side, the critical situation that the Government inherited in 1979, the aftermath of the winter of discontent. There was rampant inflation, public expenditure out of control, widespread and unsustainable overmanning in most of British industry, grossly excessive public sector borrowing and untrammelled trade union power, and business morale was at rock bottom. I have no wish to look back to that, though perhaps the public do need to be reminded from time to time.

The British people delivered their verdict on the first four years of this Government, and they did so in no uncertain manner, in June 1983. That argument is now over, and in the most decisive way it could be.

There is no point in the right hon. Gentleman or the Opposition trying to have a replay of the 1983 general election. The question now is what has happened since June 1983. Since then our economy has been growing at 3 per cent. a year, the fastest rate of growth in the European Community. By June 1983 inflation had already fallen to its lowest level since the 1960s, and has now fallen still further to 3 per cent. Despite what the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook said, the number of jobs has risen by almost a million, industrial investment is up by 32 per cent., manufacturing productivity is up by 8½ per cent., manufacturing exports are up by 19 per cent., and manufacturing investment is up by 31 per cent.

Moreover, all this has been achieved despite the twin traumas of a year-long coal strike and an oil price that has fallen from $30 a barrel in June 1983 to less than $13 a barrel today—two storms that we have successfully weathered in a way that would simply not have been possible had we taken the advice of our critics and abandoned the prudent economic policy we have been consistently pursuing and will continue to pursue.

Indeed, figures published today show that since the turn of the year, while the oil price has tumbled, our foreign exchange reserves have actually risen by very nearly $1 billion. In all this progress the achievement of low inflation has been the cornerstone. When my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was bold enough to say, a little over a year ago, that she could foresee inflation down to 3 per cent. by the end of this Parliament, this was widely derided as an impossible dream, yet it is now a fact, well ahead of schedule, with the prospect of continued low inflation in the months and years ahead.

Of course, inflation has come down virtually worldwide — not surprisingly, since all the major economies have been pursuing much the same anti-inflation policies as ourselves. It is only the Opposition who are out of step—still trapped in the malign time-warp of the 1970s.

The fall in inflation has been considerably greater here than in most other countries. During the last Labour Government, when the right hon. Gentleman was Minister with responsibility for prices, inflation in the United Kingdom was 5½ per cent. more than the average of the European Community as a whole. Today our rate of inflation is, if anything, below the European Community average.

It is, of course, perfectly true that over the past six months or so there has been something of a pause in worldwide economic growth. In Germany, as well as in Britain, industrial production has been pretty flat, while in both France and Japan it has actually fallen. Even in the United States the rise during that period has been very modest. But this is no cause for alarm. As the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development put it in its economic outlook that was published last week:

"Economic conditions in the OECD area have changed to an unusual degree over the past six months or so, and very largely for the better . . . These developments have significantly improved the near-term prospects for OECD inflation and growth."

What seems to be happening is in a sense the mirror image of what happened during the two great oil price hikes of 1973 and 1979, when there was a delay of several months before output was decisively affected. Not surprisingly, oil producers tend perforce to be prompter in cutting back their spending than oil consumers are in increasing theirs, and the initial effect of the industrialised world of higher disposable incomes as inflation comes down tends to be on saving rather than on spending.

I would still expect the gains to the United Kingdom from lower oil prices, in terms of economic activity, and therefore employment, to exceed the losses over the months ahead, and for world growth to resume as vigorously as ever, so this is no time for a change of policy, least of all for a massive increase in public expenditure, as the Opposition parties advocate.

If increased public expenditure were the remedy for our ills, then indeed the voters might be tempted to support those who have always maintained this to be so, but it is not so, as bitter experience should have taught us. Of course, we need to have a keen sense of priorities within public expenditure, and we also need to find ways of securing better—much better—value for money for the vast sums that national and local government spend.

Take education, for example, which was mentioned by the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook, and about which there is widespread and understandable concern. The latest available figures show that the taxpayer and the ratepayer in this country spend roughly the same per pupil in school as Germany does, some 20 per cent. more than Japan does and as much as 50 per cent. more than France. Yet this is manifestly not reflected in what parents rightly care about: standards and values and the child's preparation for the

real world of tomorrow. These are the problems that we have to grapple with. At the same time, we need to continue the process of reducing the burden of taxation, not as a social service but as both a moral duty and as an essential means of improving our national economic performance.

A new study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies has shown that since we have been in office we have lightened the burden of taxation on those both at the top of the income scale, where tax rates approached the point of confiscation, and at the bottom of the income scale, where the hardship was greatest. But ordinary people, on middle incomes still pay, altogether, 38 per cent. of every extra pound that they earn. That is too much.

Let no one take tax cuts for granted. If we fail to control public expenditure, it will not be a question of how much the burden of taxation on ordinary families can be reduced; it will be a question of how much it has to go up, and if the right hon. Gentleman were ever to resume office it would go up massively, for the idea that Labour's programme could be paid for simply by taxing the so-called rich is manifest nonsense. The sums simply do not add up.

As the Engineering Employers Federation has recently pointed out, this is a moment of opportunity for British industry. Inflation has come down sharply, as have, even more sharply, industry's non-pay costs. Interest rates, both short term and long term, are some 2½ points lower than they were a year ago and the pattern of exchange rates is also considerably more favourable than it was a year ago.

World markets are about to expand again as the benefits of the oil price fall flow through. Whether that opportunity is successfully grasped, or largely dissipated, will depend on management's determination to control its unit labour costs, the Achilles heel of the British economy.

There is a further bonus to British industry from greater success on this front, where so far we have been doing conspicuously less well than our principal competitors, at the expense of jobs in particular, for a marked improvement in the trend of British unit labour costs would do more than anything else to improve sentiment in the financial markets, thus facilitating further reductions in interest rates. It was above all in this context, the context of our rigid and malfunctioning labour market, with its damaging consequences for jobs, that I put forward in the Budget my proposal for a possible tax incentive for a switch to profit-related pay, on which I am now engaged in consultation with industry.

The purpose of encouraging workers to have part of their remuneration directly linked to profits is twofold. The first purpose is to create a greater sense of identity of interest between the employee and the firm in which he works. It has been a constant refrain of Government policies ever since we took office—particularly through the steps that we have taken to encourage wider share ownership, in particular employee share ownership—to narrow the gap between "them" and "us" in British industry.

The second purpose of my Budget and subsequent proposals is to enable there to be a greater degree of flexibility in overall pay so that the strain of hardship and difficulties in any particular market for any particular company falls not only on the numbers of workers employed, but on the level of pay. I am pleased with the widespread welcome that the concept has received in principle, and of course I shall take fully into account points made by industry during the consultation process. A more detailed consultative paper will be published next month.

I say to those who have commented on the proposal so far that the quest for perfection is the bugbear of improvement, and anyone who fails to see that some improvement in the nature of wage bargaining is possible is living in an unreal world. Our proposal would lead to a much better position for companies, their work forces and, above all, for the unemployed.

Characteristically, the right hon. Gentleman has waded in, with all the delicacy and sensitivity of a hippopotamus, seeking to rubbish the concept. According to today's newspapers, he believes that it would imply employees shouldering too much financial risk. For heaven's sake, which world is the right hon. Gentleman living in? Does he imagine that there is no risk in the world? Is he aware that the fact that we are debating the motion is a reflection that people's livelihoods are at risk?

It is far better when a company is having a difficult time that some of the risk should be that of losing an element of the profit-related pay than a risk of losing jobs, with a corresponding benefit when the company is doing better. It is better, too, that companies should be encouraged to take on more people. To say that we are living in a world of no risk is a fantasy that only the right hon. Gentleman could perpetuate.

Mr. Hattersley: I notice that the Chancellor is on the last half page of his speech. Does he propose to deal with unemployment, or, having deceived the country three years ago, does he not have the courage to tell the truth this afternoon?

Mr. Lawson: My entire speech has been about the root causes of unemployment, instead of the bogus panacea of more public expenditure, more deficits and more inflation which the right hon. Gentleman believes will lead to more jobs. It is clear that the Opposition are as hostile to new thinking as they are envious of success, whether it is individual or national success. They cling to the policies of the 1970s as the drug addict clings to his addiction, and the remedy that they ultimately peddle is as illusory as the drug addict's, and every bit as dangerous.

5.12 pm

Mr. Richard Wainwright (Colne Valley): The drubbing that the Government received at Ryedale and West Derbyshire and in the local council polls has not only cut by half the Chancellor's usual eloquence, but has led to Ministers consoling themselves that the private sector is, mercifully for them, ignoring their repeated sermons against increasing unit labour costs. A substantial number of people are still in work with substantial pay packets. It was summed up for them by the Secretary of State for Employment when he said recently,

"The country has never had as good a time as it has today."

That remark blatantly ignored not only the fact that there are 1 million fewer jobs than there were in 1979 but the real—in many constituencies, obvious—concern and sense of deprivation even among those with substantial pay packets. Not only do they have in their families or in the same street people who are out of work or on a temporary scheme which will soon come to an end, but they are aware that being employed by a large, prestigious company is no guarantee against a redundancy notice coming out of the blue.

[Mr. Richard Wainwright]

In recent weeks, firms with the highest reputation and good management have declared substantial redundancies and the trend is far from exhausted. Those redundancies were not predicted. Many of them have taken the commentators as well as the workers by surprise and have struck terror into the hearts of many people who thought that they at least had secure jobs.

Worst of all for the fairly well-paid is the cruel paradox that they can now afford to take their children on a foreign family holiday, but are unable to secure for those youngsters the adequate schooling to which they attach infinitely more importance. Well-paid workers with aged parents who can provide the old lady with a stylish winter coat cannot get that old lady a hip replacement in a reasonable time to save her much pain and dangerous immobility. All this is happening under the eyes of frustrated people, who know that there are vast human resources made idle by the Government's policies. People who could ensure better public services are forbidden to do so. Often at the workplace, when a worker is considering a possible opening for his child who is approaching school or college leaving age, he sees a dearth of private sector investment, which is all set this year to record a very low rate of growth, and probably an even lower rate next year due to the hamfisted combination by the Chancellor of simultaneously abolishing all the investment allowances for new plant and equipment while real interest rates are so high as to be an additional discouragement to the private sector to invest.

The dismal story of public sector investment is all too well known. Not only since this Government came to office in 1979, but since 1970 under Governments of both parties, our rate of public capital investment has fallen sharply, nowhere more heavily than in construction.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): The hon. Gentleman's speech is interesting, but fairly repetitive. We have heard much of this before. What level of public spending and borrowing would he accept, how would he finance the public borrowing, and would he accept an increase in inflation? Having reached those conclusions, would he say whether he is supported in those views by the economic spokesman for the SDP, who is not present?

Mr. Wainwright: I regret that I gave way because the hon. Gentleman showed a notable lack of patience in realising that analysis must precede prescription. I shall come to that point.

In recent years, expenditure on construction work has been only about one third that of Japan, about one third that of West Germany, 37 per cent. of that of France and 51 per cent. that of Italy. The idea that we are worsted in competition with our trade rivals because we spend far too much on personal comforts and personal housing is a complete chimera. The opposite is the case. The Government show no sign of realising the need to step up construction for the purpose of taking people out of long-term unemployment and providing Britain with the public assets that it needs.

The hon. Member for Wirral, South (Mr. Porter) was correct to say that we have all heard the dismal story before. We must continue to talk about it until it is reversed. It calls for a combined national assault on unemployment under sincere national leadership involving the trade unions, the employers and central and local government in a willingness to accept the necessary disciplines—disciplines of which we heard nothing from the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), who opened for the Labour segment of the Opposition. It means that all these bodies will have to accept the disciplines necessary for expansion without inflation to which, indeed, the alliance parties are pledged. The various privileges in law and by custom that are enjoyed by the separate sectors will have to be moderated and controlled if we are to make a successful national assault on unemployment in order to have a substantial effect on the figures. To ask the present Government under the present Prime Minister to embark upon a huge enterprise of that kind is as realistic as asking a giraffe to swim the Channel. It is no good wasting breath in the House trying to get that sort of reversal.

With this Parliament only three years old, realism demands, unfortunately, that the Opposition have to look at much more modest proposals in the hope—and hope springs eternal in my breast—that Government Back Benchers of experience, and some of great seniority, will prevail on their colleagues in Government to introduce some proposals, with a modest start no doubt and with pilot schemes—there is quite a lot to be said for pilot schemes — to begin to have an effect on the unemployment figures.

In that connection, I wish briefly to refer to the proposals of the Select Committee on Employment published at the end of January, nem. con. at least among Committee members, with the Committee very properly, of course, having a majority of Conservative MPs. The Committee was dealing, in my view quite rightly, with the special problems of the growing number of long-term unemployed, especially those unemployed for more than 12 months. It took account of the fact that somebody made unemployed today has a 40 per cent. chance in the ensuing three months of getting another job. Somebody who has already been unemployed for 12 months has on past history a 22 per cent. chance only of getting another job. After two years' unemployment that probability has dropped to a mere 6 per cent.

Furthermore, the Committee, I think, was shrewd in selecting this distressing category of the unemployed because most of them in effect have been compelled by force of circumstance to withdraw from the labour market. Therefore, getting them re-employed runs very little risk of stoking up wage growth about which the Government take no action but continually show great anxiety. This is, therefore, a valuable sector of the unemployed on which to concentrate attention.

There are Committee proposals for a building improvement scheme to provide some 300,000 extra jobs for the long-term unemployed, the Committee's proposal for 100,000 long-term unemployed to be used in the social services and the National Health Service and, most valuable of all—and the alliance has been propounding this for the last four years — the introduction of a subsidy to private employers to take on long-term unemployed in addition to their present labour force to an overall total of 350,000 additional jobs.

What is the Government's response to these relatively modest but carefully argued proposals from an all-party Committee? The Government certainly did not have in mind the very appropriate words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few moments ago when, so rightly, he reminded the House:

"the quest for perfection is the bugbear of improvement". Quite so, but in trying to rebut—I think vainly trying to rebut —the Select Committee's proposals the Government were all the time making comparisons against a backdrop of perfection. They were pointing out detailed difficulties, but ignored the fact that the Committee agreed that there must be pilot schemes. The Government ignored the fact that in every Government scheme there are manifold difficulties and anomalies, and it would be absurd to expect anything else. The main thrust and purpose can come through satisfactorily.

The fact was also paraded—and it is not something that I want to denigrate—that the Government are now offering interviews and serious and, no doubt, valuable counselling to all long-term unemployed. How much more effective this intensive counselling and attempt to give advice to the long-term unemployed would be if the Manpower Services Commission, which is doing that work, could point to real opportunities of genuine jobs for very large numbers of the long-term unemployed.

The Government in my view are overlooking the fact that a person who receives a lot of intensive counselling in a difficult part of his or her life and finds weeks afterwards that nothing had come of it is likely to be in a worse state than before he or she was called to interview. If the Government scheme for interviewing the long-term unemployed and giving them intensive counselling could be married up with the Select Committee proposals, or some version of them, it would indeed have some effect. All that would be a useful precursor to a new Government's much more massive assault on long-term unemployment using the undoubted credit of the British Government to extend the public sector borrowing requirement to bring it a little nearer the general level prevailing in the industrialised world, but in no way approaching the extravagant, astronomical figures put before the country by the Labour party at the last election.

Also—and this is where I can join forces with the Labour Front Bench spokesman——

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): Do not bother.

Mr. Wainwright: The Labour party spokesman on employment may want to eat those words after the general election result.

Some of the resources that the Government unhappily still declare they want to use for cuts in income tax would be better used to get the long-term unemployed back to work.

Finally, there is the question of timing. The Government have the responsibility of presiding over our affairs in those few years when there may still be time to make a real attack on the problem because, when the moment comes when in addition to the falling world oil price there is the marked falling off of British production, we are, alas, likely to be faced with the old balance of payments problem that some Members of the House, myself included, remember all too well. That, I admit, would inhibit massive attempts to tackle unemployment. There is, therefore, all the more need to start now.

If we go on with the present policies, which God forbid, there will come a time when the Government will find themselves boxed in. They will be subject to severe balance of payment constraints and to keep up the pound and to maintain some control over inflation we shall have to go through the whole wretched business of panic expenditure cuts and a return to astronomical interest rates. Before we run unnecessarily into such a deplorable situation, the Government should start tackling unemployment and also bring about a selective and controlled reflation of the economy. Because the Labour Opposition on this occasion have been good enough to give us a simple, straightforward and direct motion of one sentence only, we shall be with them in the Lobby tonight.

5.29 pm

Mr. Ralph Howell (Norfolk, North): One wonders how the deputy Leader of the Opposition, the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), had the nerve to come to the House and trot out the same old rubbish that has failed the Opposition in the past and will fail them again. I am not over-pleased with what I have heard in the debate so far. We have heard from the Government, from the official Opposition and from one of the other two Socialist parties, but none of them has put forward any positive, original ideas for dealing with rising unemployment.

There is no conventional cure for unemployment. I beg the Government to take note of the proposals that I shall put forward yet again. For some years I have been trying to persuade the Government to substitute work-fare for welfare. It is a system that has been used in the United States for a number of years and will soon be universal in all states. By this method they are able to keep unemployment at a lower level than the level in this country.

The Opposition suggest more spending, the Liberal party suggests more spending, and so do some members of the Conservative party. That is unacceptable, bearing in mind the appalling taxation which bears more heavily on the low paid than on any other section of the community. There is no room for increased taxation. We must find a way of reducing unemployment and reducing taxation at the same time.

The scheme that I shall put forward could lead to a tax cut of £10 billion. I urge the Government to set up a pilot work-fare scheme. By work-fare, I mean that work should be offered to all people without a normal job at £2 or even £2·50 an hour, so that those who availed themselves of the scheme could earn £100 a week, or £5,000 a year. If all the unemployed turned up at work centres to do the work that was provided, as Beveridge intended, the cost would be £16·5 billion a year. It is said that currently we are spending £20 billion in support for the unemployed plus regional aid schemes, aid to industry and all the training and start-up schemes which are aimed at reducing unemployment.

If we were to offer work, I do not think that 3·3 million would turn up to do it. The schemes which the noble Lord the Secretary of State for Employment has introduced over the last few months have proved that. Many people are so busy in the black economy that they would not have time to turn up at work centres. So I would be surprised if more than 1 million took advantage of the scheme.

Let us assume, as a conservative estimate, that half of the unemployed actually took up this work. If 1·5 million came along, that would cost about £9 billion. That would mean that there could be a large tax cut to remove the weight of taxation from the lower paid. Every penny that was saved could be used to raise tax thresholds so that the taxation of the low paid and pensioners who are living on modest incomes of less than £100 a week would cease.

[Mr. Ralph Howell]

If such a scheme were put into operation, we would have established the right to work and no one need be afraid of being unemployed ever again. Of course, the scheme could not be successful in five minutes. The Government might start by offering work to those who had been unemployed for more than two years. When they had been absorbed into the work-fare system, work could be offered to those who had been unemployed for one and a half years. Gradually we would get to the point where anyone who had been unemployed for more than six months would automatically be offered work but no social security benefit. That is a crucial point.

I want to draw attention to three side effects of the proposal. The Prime Minister has recently visited Israel, where she was impressed by the cleanliness she saw there. As a result, Mr. Richard Branson is likely to put 5,000 people to work on clearing litter. Why not link that to a nationwide work-fare scheme? Within a year we could have a tidy Britain. Secondly, there is the question of the hippy convoy. Those people might not present a problem if there was a work-fare scheme.

The third side effect relates to foreign visitors who are told that all they have to do to get social security is to book into a hotel and then report to the local DHSS office, saying that they have no money to pay the bills. We are told that automatically the DHSS shells out about £78 a week to such visitors. That would stop because we would not be offering benefits, only work.

I urge the Chancellor of the Exchequer to persuade the Prime Minister to institute a pilot work-fare scheme. I should be happy to have such a scheme in my constituency. The result might be the same as with the nine pilot schemes set up by the Secretary of State for Employment when letters were sent to various people who had been unemployed for more than two years. We might find that the problem was not as big as we thought it was. If the work-fare scheme was successful, there could be a very large tax cut into the bargain.

5.37 pm

Mr. Jack Dormand (Easington): By any criteria the Chancellor's speech was deeply disappointing. As unemployment continues to rise, his speeches become more and more complacent. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was justified in intervening towards the end of his speech to ask when he intended to talk about unemployment. That was the great omission from the right hon. Gentleman's speech.

The question that the Government have consistently refused to answer is when we can expect unemployment to come down. In the early years of their period of office it was legitimate for the Government to ask us to give their policies a chance to work, but that is not legitimate after seven years of unrestrained power. The Government made much of Labour's record on unemployment when in office. They have referred constantly to the fact that when we left office 1·3 million people were out of work. Seven years on, the official total is 3·4 million, and the actual figure is nearer 4 million. It is particularly significant that there are now more long-term unemployed than the total unemployed when the Government took office.

The Government blame everyone but themselves for such a devastating situation. Of course, we are repeatedly told that the economy is getting stronger every day. I want to ask the Paymaster General how they come to that conclusion. All the evidence suggests otherwise. I shall give three written examples. The figures produced by the Central Statistical Office only two weeks ago show that in the first quarter of this year the economy recorded its slowest underlying growth rate for four years. An underlying growth rate of 1·6 per cent., which is what it is, means that there is no prospect of substantial cuts in unemployment in the near future or in the medium term.

The figures issued by the Department of Trade and Industry, again only two weeks ago, tell the same gloomy story. Industrial investment, which is critical to the unemployment position, showed a fall of 1·7 per cent. in the first quarter of this year compared with the first quarter of 1985.

In its quarterly report the Association of British Chambers of Commerce says:

"The prospects for employment remain dismal."

It says that a balance of only 11 per cent. of its companies, even fewer than at the end of 1985, are predicting an increase in their work forces. Therefore, where is the evidence for the Government's view? We certainly did not hear any from the Chancellor. Perhaps the Paymaster General will give some of the facts when he replies.

One thing is certain. Members of the Government do not have the faintest notion of what unemployment means to an individual. It means losing one's self-respect, a lack of confidence, deep worry for one's family, hopelessness, misery and, very often, sheer despair. On a personal note, I have been unemployed only once in my life, for the short time of four months. With that memory constantly in my mind, I think of the tragedy of those 4 million souls, some of whom have no prospect of being employed again.

The Prime Minister never ceases to tell us that the Government's policies are successful because of the reduction in the rate of inflation. Thousands of people, in the House and outside, have said that to get inflation down to 3 per cent. at a cost of 4 million unemployed is not only too big a price to pay but is a fundamental mistake of policy. I shall not argue the case concerning the fall in inflation, but, in spite of the Government's claim, it is clear that the present low level, particularly the recent fall, is largely a direct result of falling commodity prices helped by a pound which, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said, is stronger than is necessary.

In spite of what the Chancellor and some of his hon. Friends have said, nothing less than a fundamental change in policies is required if we are to stop the continuing rise in the number of people out of work. The Government's obsession with monetarism has done immense damage to the economy, not only by depressing demand but by making our industry uncompetitive. Their determination to keep the public sector borrowing requirement as low as possible has had the most dire consequences for output and employment.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): The Government are not altogether against job creation. This afternoon the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security announced 5,000 new jobs for local offices of the Department of Health and Social Security. About 800 of those jobs, some 16 per cent. of the total, are to come to Scotland. They are to deal with

the remorseless increase in the number of supplementary benefit claimants and those claiming unemployment benefit.

Mr. Dormand: That is an interesting point, and I hope that my hon. Friend catches your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in order to develop it.

The theory was — I hope that it is still not the position — that the private sector would take over the necessary economic action. It simply has not happened. There has been no sustained capital investment. The level of manufacturing investment is still 17 per cent. below what it was in 1979 when the Government came to office. I add my voice to the many who are advising caution on the Government who are presently placing so much importance on investment in the service industries. Certainly tourism and so on have a role to play, but to make the service industries our major sector would be dangerous and, in my view, a fundamental error of policy.

There must be a major increase in public sector investment if we are to have economic recovery and reduce the army of the unemployed. The Labour party has spelt it out many times, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sparkbrook said it today and we repeat with all the force at our command that there is a need for spending on schools, roads, hospitals and railways, to say nothing of the crisis in housing.

Last week I was re-reading the first book by my distinguished predecessor in the House, Manny Shinwell, to whom the nation paid justifiable and proper tribute recently. He was writing about unemployment, which he called "The scourge of idleness". He was speaking of Glasgow where he lived for so many years when he wrote:

> "Think of the whole absurd situation. Thousands of men normally engaged in the building trades are almost permanently unemployed, yet there is a crying demand for houses for the people, an obligation of human decency to clear our great industrial cities of acres upon acres of insufferable, rat-warren slums."

That was written in 1943. Here we are 43 years later with 400,000 building workers unemployed and the same crying and desperate need for houses and all of the other projects which I and others have mentioned.

The region which has been hardest hit by the Government's policies is my own, the north. Apart from Northern Ireland, we continue to have the country's highest percentage of unemployment. One person in five is out of work, making 240,000 people. The recent decisions on shipbuilding, engineering and pit closures will considerably add to the devastation. One third of manufacturing industry in the north has disappeared in the past seven years.

Those of us who have the honour to represent the northern region have known for some time that we have a branch factory economy. That is confirmed in Newcastle university's recent regional development study, in which it says:

> "The north has one of the weakest indigenous manufacturing sectors of any region in the United Kingdom."

That requires the most urgent attention by the Government. It is an aspect of the north's problems which the newly formed Northern Development Company will be looking at. I hope that the Government will give an assurance that they will be supporting the company. The Paymaster General probably knows that it was formed by the trade unions, the northern Confederation of British Industry, local authorities and some individual companies. Such co-operation shows how widespread is the concern in the north.

For many years I have called for a northern development agency. The development company is the nearest thing we are likely to get to such an agency in present circumstances, and I welcome the fact that the present Secretary of State for Trade and Industry recently met senior members of the company to discuss its role and its future. He and the Ministers present today should be under no illusion that if the chronic unemployment in the northern region is to be effectively tackled its resources ought to match those of the Scottish Development Agency and the Welsh Development Agency: nothing less than that will do the job. The help which the company is to receive will be a measure of the interest and support which the Government are likely to show for the north and its unemployment.

Draconian measures have been taken in the coal industry, on which the northern region has depended for many years. As an afterthought, in November, during the coal strike, the Government decided to establish NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. Its purpose is to create alternative employment in the mining areas now that the pits are being closed without any regard to the catastrophic social consequences. The impact of NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. on the north, particularly on my constituency, has been negligible. We are told that more money is available if and when necessary, but the conditions imposed on applying for that help constitute a straitjacket. I hope that the Paymaster General will pay attention to that because it is important. The scheme is being referred to as the "last stop" because an applicant must first have applied and been refused by every other agency empowered to help.

Another important factor is that loans only can be made. Grants cannot be made, and partnership with local authorities is not permitted, despite the fact that many councils are doing fine work in that area. Partnership or co-operation with the NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. would be a big step forward.

Those are just three examples of the difficulties that beset the scheme. No wonder that some applicants describe it as an obstacle race. Its inanity is matched only by the Government's proposal to abolish the three new town corporations in the north-east. In 1985 Peterlee, in my constituency, brought in no fewer than 1,050 new jobs, and during the past six years it has brought 8,000 jobs to the area. The corporations are the only job-finding agencies that we have, yet the Government propose to abolish them. The Tory chairman of the Peterlee development corporation, who has done an excellent job, has been driven to criticise the Government publicly for that proposed act of vandalism.

I beg the Government to reconsider the future of the new town corporations. Their record in finding new jobs speaks for itself. If the Government persist with this doctrinaire attitude and in not recognising the facts of life, they will deal a serious blow to employment in the areas which the corporations serve.

I do not say that there are any easy solutions to the problem of unemployment. During the debate the Labour party has been criticised, but we are merely saying that in government we will reduce the number of unemployed by 1 million in two years. No one can say that that is other than a modest objective. It is realistic and the British people will realise that. The Government should be honest

[Mr. Dormand]

with themselves and with the British people. They should say that their economic policies have failed, and recognise that the lives of millions of people have been ruined. Nothing less than a fundamental change in policy is necessary if the horror of mass unemployment is to be brought to an end.

5.52 pm

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): During the past seven years I have listened to a good many debates on this subject, and certainly the message from the Opposition does not change. They seem to be infected by amnesia about unemployment before 1979, including its existence. *[Interruption.]* They are long on lamentation, short on analysis and bereft of any constructive proposals other than the usual custard pie approach with the taxpayers' money. *[Interruption.]* I shall concentrate on one or two constructive points rather than bewail the position as the Opposition have again done.

There are understandable short-term political reasons for harping on the high number of unemployed, and 3·3 million is a large number. However, it seems extraordinary that we do not know who those people are and what they are doing. *[Interruption.]* If we want to help people we must find out exactly what they are doing. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has started work to find answers to some of those questions, and the job start programme which will carry that process forward. The Department of Employment says that just under 1 million of those people are not actively seeking work. If that is right, we should be sure of it and do more to direct and help people into work. It is not to the credit of either side of the House that we do not know the answers to some basic questions.

Observation of people in the south of England confirms an impression that some claimants are working the black economy—part of the best job start scheme there is. It is a sign of the civilised nature of our society that concern about the high level of unemployment is felt not only by people in the north where the problems are perhaps worse —*[Interruption.]*—but by people in areas which are least affected by unemployment. I have in mind the serious state of the tin mining industry in Cornwall. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends in government will realise that the international tin crisis——

Dr. Godman: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Baker: I am under such pressure of time that I am already cutting my speech short, and I do not wish to give way.

The international tin crisis will pass, and there will continue to be a market for Cornish tin in the years ahead. I hope that the Government will consider the problems of the Cornish tin industry in that light.

Unemployment has been branded evil and I have heard hon. Members describe it as obscene. Both the state of being unemployed and the threat of losing a job are dreadful, and are just as hard to bear for people in comfortable executive jobs as for those in manual work. But we should be wary of exaggerating the impact generally as we have the highest percentage of our work force in work compared with our European competitors.

What is so dangerous and socially explosive and corrosive is obvious to a visitor to our northern cities. It is not the grinding mass poverty that we once saw and can still see in too many other countries. We can and generally do prevent that through our benefit system. But it is the other much more serious evil of inactivity—of having nothing to do. If we cannot engage the minds and bodies of our people, especially our young, and give them the opportunity to develop their talents, we can expect social, personal and national decline with much worse to follow. As the natural condition of man is to be active, so man's proper condition is to be engaged in constructive activity.

It follows from that that certainly employment but also training, providing it is constructive and has a job or wealth-creating activity in view, and education, even if it is only for leisure, should all be objectives for those of us who are anxious to alleviate unemployment and who are concerned about people who would otherwise be inactive. In other words, proper training and further education are worthwhile objectives, and not something to be sneered at as mere palliatives for unemployment. It follows that £2·5 billion of taxpayers' money spent on training is substantial evidence of a determination that this nation's talent should not be wasted.

There is plenty of evidence that good training leads to jobs. I shall look at one small programme which is doing that now. The Genesis programme within the training workshop resource unit of the Manpower Services Commission is engaged in training YTS trainees into jobs and is achieving considerable success. It has attracted the interest and support of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment. Would that it had attracted a bit more attention from other hon. Members. It provides enterprise training for young people by developing appropriate skills and attitudes. They are learning to create and use opportunities and are acquiring wealth-creating skills. They have the self-confidence to use them, to rely on their initiative and to take advantage of changing economic circumstances. The schemes are particularly important because they are operating precisely in the areas that are worst hit by the departure of older manufacturing businesses and where young people have, perhaps, least confidence that they have the remedies in their hands.

The Genesis programme, under its director, Mr. Timothy Finn, has been in existence for 15 months, and 21 YTS schemes have been involved with 120 young people engaged. Forty-five products have been identified for development, of which 32 have completed live market trials, and 20 have now entered their market place. Schemes are under way in Bristol, East Lothian, Livingston, Solihull, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Liverpool and Durham. Products and services include computers, knitwear, wooden games, road traffic signs, biorhythm charts, trees, wrought iron and clocks. To date, they have produced a revenue of about £401,000. The average revenue per participant on revenue-earning projects is running at an annual rate of over £5,000.

It is a small programme, but already its success is striking. I congratulate its director and the small team involved. Young people are being trained in enterprise. They are being trained into jobs. I urge the MSC, which has been slow in the past, and the Government to give the programme all possible support, both in its present and —if that is the way forward—future independent state. I should like to see the Genesis programme expanded until it is country-wide.

My right hon. and learned Friend, in his enthusiasm for new jobs, will undoubtedly be looking to the expansion of the private sector and moving away from Government-created short-term jobs. In his enthusiasm, I hope that he will not allow the environment, which is an irreplaceable asset of this country, to be over-developed. An understandable reluctance to permit the growth of new businesses in villages and towns, especially in rural areas, must be overcome. I accept that, as people in the south of England must do.

The wholesale conversion of the green fields of southern England into large housing estates or unwanted development is neither necessary nor desirable. Let us, correspondingly, do all we can to encourage development in those city centres and parts of the country which desperately want more development. If the price to be paid is that the south of England will, as a result, be less prosperous in cash than it otherwise would be, while northern cities are more prosperous, that is a price that we should gladly pay.

6.2pm

Mr. Brian Sedgemore (Hackney, South and Shoreditch): The Prime Minister, Lord Young and the chairman of the Conservative party tell us constantly that it is business and industry which count. However, a number of recent takeover bids and the Government's merger policy suggest that the Government have anything but the interests of business and industry in mind. In a recent takeover bid, we witnessed power struggles which would make "Dallas" and "Dynasty" look like some form of social realism. Ministers, administrators and regulators have behaved badly as the business men themselves. We have seen activities that are an affront to popular capitalism, as perceived by Conservative Members, and an affront to the interests of consumers and workers, as perceived by Labour Members.

I shall examine one takeover bid, without taking sides, to show that a bizarre business culture is being created by the Conservative party. The takeover bid to which I shall refer—I have no interest in either side winning—is that of the purchase of the House of Fraser by the Al-Fayed brothers. For a long time, Lonrho was bidding for the firm. Its bid was held up by the Office of Fair Trading, the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and, eventually, the Department of Trade and Industry. In the space of 10 days, to 14 March 1985, that famous company, the House of Fraser, which runs Harrods and 110 distinguished stores in the country, was handed over, with Government help, to three Arab brothers, the Al-Fayeds. A total of 30,000 British shareholders were wiped out at a stroke. A total of 55,000 Lonrho shareholders were kicked in the teeth. Lonrho, as a company, was turned over by the Government.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): The hon. Gentleman should get his facts right.

Mr. Sedgemore: I can see that the cultural climate which the Government have created is causing a bit of aggravation.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): Is the hon. Gentleman acting for Tiny Rowland?

Mr. Sedgemore: The right hon. and learned Gentleman asks me whether I am acting for Tiny Rowland. If he casts his mind back 10 years, he will recall that there has been no bigger critic of Lonrho than myself. He will have witnessed an incident which involved Tiny Rowland and my wife. Let the hon. Gentleman not tell me that I am carrying a brief for Lonrho, but I am prepared to say that it has been turned over by the British Government. The story is quite fantastic. It involves an extraordinary business culture.

Over the past few weeks, Mr. Tiny Rowland has been sending four dozen yellow roses—an extraordinary act—to Mr. Hawkes, the chairman of Kleinwort, Benson, one of Britain's most distinguished merchant banks. He says that he has been sending the roses because Mr. Hawkes is a "yellow-belly". He says that Kleinwort, Benson has misled Sir Gordon Borrie, of the Office of Fair Trading, and the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is this relevant to the motion under discussion?

Mr. Speaker: It is a preamble. I should not imagine that it will continue for much longer.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am referring to the Government's merger policy, which comes well within the debate. There will be pertinent questions to Ministers and Labour Members at the end. I will not be put off, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The motion relates to the Government's economic policies and the level of unemployment. The hon. Gentleman should speak on that subject, and to the amendment.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am talking about merger policies and business culture, which is an affront to the unemployed. I am making a contrast. I do not have to go down a narrow track on the basis of some kind of filibuster from the Government.

Mr. Conal Gregory (York): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You have given clear guidance that the hon. Gentleman must address his remarks to the motion and the amendment. The hon. Member has said that he wants to talk on merger policy, which is not the subject before the House. Therefore, I invite you to rule accordingly.

Mr. Speaker: I have already done so. The hon. Member, who is an experienced Member, must stick to the motion and the amendment. That is not too difficult.

Mr. Sedgemore: I am not sticking to the motion and the amendment. I am asking how the Government's merger policy is helping the unemployed. It is setting an obscene example of the kind of business culture which the Government seek to create. I intend to talk about that. If you rule me out of order, Mr. Speaker, I shall sit down.

There is an astonishing tale in the incident. There has been inexplicable behaviour by the Office of Fair Trading and the Department of Trade and Industry. A leading Conservative Back-Bencher and ex-chairman of the 1922 Committee, the right hon. Member for Taunton (Sir E. du Cann), has been locked in a bitter struggle with the Prime Minister, the Bank of England and the stock exchange, as evidenced by letters dated 19 March, 2 April and 17 May. There have been allegations that the Prime Minister sought to prefer the bid of the Al-Fayed brothers in relation to some £5 billion which was allegedly deposited in this country during the financial crisis in early January last year. There have been allegations about the Prime

[Mr. Sedgemore]

Minister's son and there has been extraordinary conduct on the part of a journalist. I submit to you, Mr. Speaker —*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is difficult to relate to the motion what the hon. Gentleman has just said. His remarks are wide of the motion. I ask him to stick to it.

Mr. Sedgemore: I shall speak about the Government's merger policy. If I cannot talk in an economic debate because I would embarrass the Prime Minister and Conservative Members——

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not the point. The hon. Member knows that he must speak to the motion on the Order Paper. If he relates his remarks to unemployment — if he seeks to prove that mergers are helpful or unhelpful to unemployment—that is a different matter, but he must stick to the motion before the House.

Mr. Sedgemore: I wish to speak about the Government's merger policy and to make serious points which should be of interest to the House. I wish to talk about the business culture being created by the Government, which is damaging employment.

6.9 pm

Sir Peter Tapsell (East Lindsey): I was interested in the brief comments of the hon. Member for Hackney, South and Shoreditch (Mr. Sedgemore), but as I do not feel that either Mr. Tiny Rowland or the Fayed brothers are in any great danger of becoming unemployed, I hope that I shall be allowed to return to the very important subject under debate.

I strongly believe that the present high level of unemployment is the gravest problem facing this country. The Government should give overriding priority to grappling with the serious social and economic problems that arise from it. If they are left unsolved for many more years, they will lead to such great social bitterness that it will take a generation to cure it. I am sure that the great majority of my right hon. and hon. Friends share my view about the seriousness of unemployment and my wish to reduce it as much as possible. Put at its lowest, we are all politicians who hope to be re-elected in about two years' time. It is not in any Conservative Member's interest to fight a general election at a time of high unemployment. We must take it for granted, therefore, that every Conservative Member is as convinced as I am that we must try to reduce the level of unemployment.

But I am worried that in the sympathetic rhetoric of Treasury Ministers there is an underlying sense of hopelessness. They seem to have a feeling they they are in the grip of forces over which they have little control. I do not believe that that is so. I believe that during the next few years we could make a significant reduction in the number of those unemployed without taking the sort of foolish action that would have a catastrophic effect on the Government's capacity to borrow, or that would plunge us back into double digit inflation, or something approaching it. Thus, I shall briefly challenge some of the statements that are perpetually made not only by Ministers but by distinguished commentators.

It would seem to me—and I have been making this speech both inside and outside the House for seven years now — that two mistakes have been made. For some years there was an excessive belief in a Government's capacity to measure and control the money supply. Until only a short time ago, many distinguished people thought that, if the money supply could be controlled and reduced steadily year by year, many of our economic problems would be automatically solved. I always disputed that thesis, although I have always accepted that the money supply is an important factor in economic management. However, I always gave it much less emphasis than the Government did. When the medium-term financial strategy was published, it was quite unrealistic about the money supply.

The most comforting aspect of this debate is that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor made a long and interesting speech without once mentioning the money supply. That is an advance. The fact that the money supply has risen by 16 per cent. in the past year, and is way outside all targets at a time when inflation has been falling nicely, speaks for itself. Broad money is now largely discredited as an accurate measure of what is happening in the economy, and no Government now think that they can effectively measure or control it.

In view of the passionate commitment of some of my right hon. Friends to the money supply theory a few years ago, one might think that they would at least have an open mind and a little modesty about some of their other economic dogmas. After all, it is just possible that they might be as mistaken about the overriding importance of the public sector borrowing requirement as events proved them to be about the money supply. It is all a matter of relativity. I am not suggesting that the PSBR or the budgetary deficit is an unimportant factor in the calculations of any Chancellor of the Exchequer. But from the recent local government elections and by-elections, and from conversations with our constituents, we know that there is now a realisation that we badly need an increase in capital investment. One needs only to look at our schools, hospitals and roads. One does not even have to call in aid the litter on the way to the centre of town from London airport. It is obvious to all that we badly need an increase in capital investment.

The recent report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools pointed out that the state of our schools has deteriorated greatly since 1981, and that if it is allowed to deteriorate further the cost of putting those schools into effective order will be prohibitive. The longer we delay a capital investment programme for our schools, housing and so on, the more expensive it will prove to be. If we do not take action soon, this country will become a slum. We must do something about that.

It is argued that the Government could not raise the necessary capital because that would mean increasing the PSBR, which would mean that interest rates would soar, which would be inflationary and would also damp down investment by big business, and make it very difficult for the Government to raise money in the gilt-edged market. I dispute that. I have managed to scrape a living in the gilt-edged market for more than 30 years so I cannot always have been wrong about my hunches. At present, Britain's PSBR runs at about 1·5 per cent. in relation to the gross domestic product. Last year we significantly underspent. In the last financial year, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor budgeted for a PSBR of £7 billion, but about a fortnight ago we at last got the actual figure for that financial year, and discovered that the PSBR was only £5·9 billion.

Thus, although my right hon. Friend already had an extraordinarily low PSBR, he actually undershot it by over £1 billion. With a PSBR of 1·5 per cent, we are equivalent to West Germany. We have only one third the PSBR of the United States, which has created 10 million new jobs in the past few years, which has a lower inflation rate than us and which has significantly lower interest rates than us. Our PSBR is less than that of Japan and is lower than that of France.

Mr. Lawson: I do not wish to argue with my hon. Friend on any of his points, but it would be helpful to get the facts straight. He should be aware—I am sure that he is—that, of the three major economies in the world, only the United States has a higher borrowing requirement than we have, and it is anxiously trying, as it accepts that is necessary, to get its budget down. Both Japan and Germany have significantly lower borrowing requirements as a proportion of GDP than we have.

Sir Peter Tapsell: That is not correct, but we cannot argue the point now. It is extremely difficult to calculate the Japanese PSBR, as my right hon. Friend knows, but the best advice that I have, and I have an office in Tokyo, is that the Japanese PSBR is running at about 2 per cent. Like us, West Germany has a PSBR of 1·5 per cent., but because of the big expenditure of its länder — its provinces — because of it having a federal system, its PSBR figures are understated when they are set out only in federal terms. The United States, with a 4·5 per cent. PSBR, is doing extremely well by comparison with us. Its unemployment levels are half ours, it has a lower inflation rate, and it is on the way to solving its problems with its budgetary and trade deficits.

I shall tell the House what I should like to see the Government doing. The country could well afford to budget now for a PSBR of 2·5 per cent. rather than 1·5 per cent. If we did that, it would mean that we would be budgeting on a PSBR of about £10 billion to £10·5 billion instead of the present level of £5·9 billion, as it has turned out. That would be an extra £4 billion, with which one could begin to make a useful start in the re-equipment of our infrastructure and in particular housing, which would provide useful employment. There is no doubt that we need to spend money on housing. There are about 400,000 construction workers out of work and investment in housing would be a form of capital investment that would bring many people into work, and would not suck in imports.

Mr. Allen McKay (Barnsley, West and Penistone): If the Government would allow local authorities to release capital receipts for use, would that not be a start to developing the infrastructure?

Sir Peter Tapsell: I agree with the hon. Gentleman, and some of my right hon. and hon. Friends have voted in that way, as have I.

The technical gilt-edged point is often talked about when we are discussing the PSBR. It is sometimes suggested that, if my right hon. Friend the Chancellor were to allow the PSBR to go up instead of always going down, that would lead to a strike in the gilt markets, but I do not believe that that is true. My thinking on this is as follows. Of course, there is a certain schizophrenia in the gilt market because, other things being equal, dealers and potential investors in the market like the PSBR to be as low as possible because that means that there are fewer gilts to be sold. However, the market is now increasingly dominated by political considerations and will increasingly be so, not just by investors in this country, such as the pension funds, but by big holders of gilts and sterling throughout the world.

Increasingly, holders are thinking about what will happen in the next general election. If they think that the Labour party will come to power, they will start selling gilts and sterling and I can say that as a matter of absolute certainty. They are already beginning to be worried. If that happens, interest rates will rise. On the other hand, if the Government were to announce a moderate but sensible increase in capital investment programmes, far from being frightened, the market which knows that the Conservatives cannot win the next election without substantially increasing the capital investment programmes, will take heart. Ironically, my right hon. Friend the Chancellor will have a better chance of keeping interest rates down if he increases the PSBR and capital investment than if he does not.

Even within the existing levels of public expenditure, there has been an unsatisfactory move, ever since 1979, towards an increase in current expenditure at the cost of capital investment. Although the overall real figure of public expenditure has gone up since 1979, the proportion of capital investment within that public expenditure figure has fallen from 11·6 per cent. to 10 per cent. of the total. To put the proportion of capital investment back to the 1979 level of 11·6 per cent. of public expenditure would cost £4 billion. That is, just to get back to the ratio of capital investment within the general public expenditure of 1979 would not necessarily cost extra money but would require a shift in resources back from current expenditure to capital investment. Even in 1979, I was arguing that the proportion of capital investment within the overall public expenditure was inadequately low.

Putting all that into the international context, we now have in Mr. James Baker, the United States Secretary for the Treasury, the international economic statesman for which the world has been crying out for years. He has been trying to fulfil the role that I have urged on my right hon. Friends for some years. On interest rates, on exchange rates, on trading policies, on Third world debt and, above all, in urging the whole of the OECD to expand, Mr. Baker is saying, from a position of great power and influence, what some of us have been urging from the political wilderness for some years. I hope that my right hon. Friends will listen to what Mr. James Baker is saying and will act upon it.

6.27 pm

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): I am glad that the Paymaster General is here, because I want to put a couple of questions to him about constituency matters. Up to now, this has been an English debate, but Scotland has increasingly suffered through growing unemployment. Nowhere is that more evident than in my constituency. I put down a question to the Secretary of State for Scotland and received an answer from the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart), saying that, as of 10 April this year, 8,800 people are unemployed in my constituency.

There are one or two bright spots amidst this appalling gloom. For example, IBM employs 2,900 people at its plant in my constituency. Every day I say, "Thank God for

[Dr. Norman A. Godman]

that." However, there is a dreadful economic and social backcloth for the approximately 33,000 people in my constituency who are living on or below the supplementary benefit level. That is an appalling statistic.

A number of community groups in my constituency are anxious to create employment, admittedly for a small number of people. They have brought a number of allegations to meetings that they have had with me concerning the less than helpful attitude of the Manpower Services Commission officials when applications for grants and assistance for community businesses are made. I welcome the Paymaster General's assurances that these allegations will be investigated because these community groups — amidst all this gloom — are doing splendid work. I think that there is some truth in the allegations, and I want them to be investigated.

The traditional industries of shipbuilding and marine engineering, based on the lower Clyde, have suffered grievously. The Scottish Office could offer help by ensuring that the orders for two vessels to be announced by the Scottish Office — one for a fisheries protection vessel for the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (Scotland) and the other for a passenger ferry for Caledonian MacBrayne — should be given to the lower Clyde. That would give some help to the beleaguered economy of a constituency north of the border.

6.30 pm

Mr. John Prescott (Kingston upon Hull, East): This debate has demonstrated the wide range of thinking on the controversial issue of unemployment. I am bound to say that the one man who was totally consistent in his speech was the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I think that his speech was the most deplorable speech on unemployment that the House has ever heard. It confirmed what we believe and what the electorate suspect and are beginning to believe — that it is deliberate Government policy to maintain a high level of unemployment in this country.

Before the Chancellor can say "Rubbish", let me refer to some of the evidence from his own publications and the Department of Employment which will justify what I have said. The Chancellor made no reference in his speech to unemployment. Instead he pointed out that the levels of employment are increasing, and indeed that is mentioned in the Government amendment. We wish to take this opportunity of a debate on unemployment to set the record straight, yet again, but according to the Government's statistics.

A comparison has been made with the Labour Government, yet there were more people in work when Labour left office in 1979—nearly 500,000 more—than when we came to office in 1974. That cannot be claimed by the Government. The Government statistics refer to 1983, but the Conservative Government came to power before 1983. The reality is that there are now 1·8 million fewer people in work than when the Government came to office. My right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley) was far too generous when he suggested that the figure was about 1 million people. Although we cannot always rely on Government statistics, I have the answer to a private notice question from the Paymaster General which states how many people are in work at present. I will not bore the House with the details, but it boils down to the fact that there are now 1·8 million fewer people in work than in 1979.

A substantial number of people are out of work, and I suggest that more people are out of work in this country than in most of our competitors. If we consider the average unemployment levels for the OECD countries, Britain's unemployment level, under previous Tory and Labour Governments, was always equal to the average for OECD countries. Since 1979, unemployment in Britain has been 2 per cent. higher than the OECD average. I asked the Library to work out that percentage. It effectively means that there are about 1 million more unemployed in this country than in other countries which have seen unemployment rise due to varying world demand.

I accept that the effects of world demand will increase unemployment, but it has had a far greater effect in this country. If one considers the OECD analysis or the National Economic Development Council report on our economy, it is clear that the levels of public expenditure — a point powerfully made by the hon. Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) — have been reduced proportionately in this country in hospitals, education and especially housing, which are important to job creation. Other countries have maintained public expenditure in such areas, but in Britain, because of Government policy, such expenditure has been cut. Unemployment in Britain is higher than the average for Europe and flows directly from Government policy.

In the debate the Chancellor has argued that employment is increasing. We heard the black propagandist, the right hon. Member for Chingford (Mr. Tebbit), on the radio this morning saying that 1 million jobs have been created. One would expect that they were in full-time work, but the full-time equivalent of that 1 million jobs is made up largely of an estimate based on a 5 per cent. survey of the self-employed.

The figures have been continually fiddled over the past few years. The Minister's answer to me on 18 March confirms that. It stated that the number of self-employed had increased from 1·9 million to 2·5 million—500,000 of the jobs created. The judgments made by the Government and their statisticians are based on a "guesstimate". It has to be a "guesstimate" because it is based on a sample survey. The Paymaster General makes an estimate or judgment about the self-employed and then projects the figure of 1 million jobs created. That is another fiddle of the figures.

The Government have carried out 18 fiddles on the unemployment figures to get them to move downwards and now they are fiddling the employment figures upwards. The only policy we see from the Government is a policy for massaging the figures.

The record of the arch-propagandist, the right hon. Member for Chingford, is deplorable. He was the man who told us that trade union legislation would reduce the amount of working days lost. The Government's figures, again issued by the Paymaster General, show that more working days have been lost in disputes in six years under the Government compared with the previous period of Labour Government. That is the reality. The same man told us that we had to get training going in this country. The training and quality of our people is an important factor in the productivity and growth of our economy. Training has collapsed in this country. Employers spend less on training than do those of any of our competitors.

Mr. Lawson *indicated dissent.*

Mr. Prescott: The Chancellor does not have to shake his head at me. I think it was the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission who said that Britain was a load of "thickies". That is not a word I would have chosen, but what he was suggesting was that the quality of training is lower in this country than it is in any of our competitors. It is no coincidence that in this country we devote only one-fifteenth of 1 per cent. of turnover to training. Most of our competitors spend 2 or 3 per cent. of turnover on training.

If one wishes to improve productivity, one improves investment. I thought I heard the Chancellor say that investment in manufacturing had increased by 31 per cent. but, in fact, he said, investment productivity. He should have mentioned that investment in manufacturing is now lower than it was in 1979. The quality of investment is as important as the quantity, but in both areas the Government have failed. Despite an increase of £30 billion in company profits, that has not been put into investment or training. They are the two crucial areas to which the Chancellor should address his remarks when he discusses improving pay or relating profits to wages.

The arch-propagandist, the right hon. Member for Chingford, believes that the people's attitude to the Government is caused by the Timpson and Redhead programme on Radio Four. He argues that the inflation record would be worse if a Labour Government were elected. I shall refer to the Department of Employment figures—I hope we can trust them—on inflation. It is clear from the figures that from 1975 to 1979—the period of the Labour Government — inflation was halved. I shall give the figures if the Chancellor is in doubt, but I do not suppose that he spends much time studying these figures.

It is true that there has been a reduction in the inflation rate under the Government. If one is claiming that something specific has happened, a fair measure would be to take the inflation rate of Britain expressed as a proportion of the OECD average. The relationship of that proportion to the OECD average is no different from what it was when Labour were in office. There are many reasons why inflation has fallen in this period, but there is no specific evidence for the Government claim that their policies have played a significant part in reducing inflation.

There is one significant difference between Britain and the other OECD countries: none of them has experienced the high unemployment which has been maintained in this country. That is because the Government are completely indifferent to unemployment. If we want proof of that, we have only to recall the Chancellor of the Exchequer mithering on in his Budget statement about a 1p in the pound reduction in income tax. As Professor Galbraith said over the weekend, that would give the wealthy £1,000 million. If the Government want to bribe Tory voters who have high incomes, why do they not come out with that instead of masking their intentions by talking about public expenditure or the money supply? The realities are the Government's priorities.

The issue is how we use public expenditure and whether we can use it to create jobs, account having been taken of what the consequences might be. I do not think that the Government doubt that public expenditure can be used to create jobs. Presumably they would argue that the effects on inflation, the borrowing requirement and interest rates —these are important matters and I do not dismiss them —would be too great to risk the possibility of reducing unemployment. It is clear that there is a difference between us.

There are many references in debates in this place and on television, for example, to redundancies and whether a plateau has been reached. We have seen a massive increase in unemployment. Unemployment, in both proportionate and absolute terms, is higher than that of the 1930s and it has been sustained for a lot longer than in the 1930s. Unemployment increased each year for four years in the 1930s and it has increased every year since the Government came to power, even since the magical figures of 1983 were introduced. Against that background, one would think that the plateau had been reached, but I do not think that it has.

We know that the rate of redundancy is continuing to increase. I have a document which was sent to me mistakenly by the Department of Employment. It is a copy of a confidential document that was given to the Paymaster General to brief him. On some questions it advises him what to say "If asked." Against others it tells him what not to say. In other sections he is told what he can say if he is required to say anything.

The Department's document reveals that redundancies are increasing and that they have increased to 10,000 a month. Apparently there would have been a greater increase if account had not been taken of community programmes. There are various projections and it was forecast that March should see a substantial fall in the figures of unemployment. I think that it projected a fall of 50,000, but unemployment increased by 40,000. The statisticians got it wrong again. Even the confidential advice that the Paymaster General receives from his civil servants is not very good. We must bear that in mind when the right hon. and learned Gentleman replies.

Redundancy levels have been increasing tremendously. In 1978, there were 34,000 redundancies for every three months. They increased to 148,000 by 1981 for three months. They decreased to 50,000 in 1985, and they are now increasing again. If anyone doubts that there has been an increase of 20,000 a month, he should think about the shipbuilding industry where 4,000 redundancies have been announced. There have been 3,000 in the coal industry; and this afternoon we heard about redundancies in the tin mines. There have been redundancies in the airlines, the engineering section of British Rail and Kodak. There have been 9,000 redundancies in the bus industry.

With the exception of the tin mines, the redundancies are the direct result of Government policy, including deregulation and the removal of public subsidies that are maintained at different levels elsewhere in Europe. A significant part of Government policy is to deregulate or to privatise. In other words, there is a Government policy directly to create unemployment. It is clear that the Government are continuing the level of redundancies. I have that on good authority because it is part of the Department's advice.

When listening to some of the arguments about redundancies, I am reminded of the deplorable statement which was made by the Secretary of State for Employment, Lord Young, on a Sunday television programme at 8 am, during which he declared that we had never had it so good.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): He did not.

Mr. Prescott: Anyone who read the *Daily Mirror* the following day would know that Lord Young really meant that he had never had it so good. I am sick to death of wealthy Tory Ministers and millionaires telling the unemployed what they should be doing about getting a job. Lord Young has more responsibility for ruining training and MSC policies than anyone else, and he is now telling us that the way to create work is by removing the barriers to growth. He talks about business and not barriers. That means denying benefits to pregnant women and charging individuals £25 to go before an unfair dismissal tribunal.

What does Lord Young tell us about jobs? He argues that Socialist Governments in France and Italy——

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: And Australia.

Mr. Prescott: And Australia, yes. The hon. Lady should wait to hear what I have to say. Lord Young contends that Socialist Governments have not performed as well as Conservative or Right-wing Governments. I can tell the Paymaster General that the Department of Employment has provided the information for him. There are 18 countries in the OECD, and I have worked out the figures for the Labour Governments and the other Governments. The document that the Department provided tells us that Britain has the second highest level of unemployment in the OECD. Above that it gives this advice:

"(League Table) (Do not give)."

Of the countries with below-average levels of unemployment, five are Socialist and three are Tory or of the Right. Of those with above average levels of unemployment, only three are Socialist. If anyone wants to play the silly game of comparing countries in that way, the figures show that Socialist Governments, who believe in public expenditure on housing, education, health and infrastructure, have performed extremely well. The Labour party has said that it would use public expenditure in precisely that way at a cost of £6 billion, which the Government would accept would be the cost of our programme to get people back to work. We will get people back to work. The country believes that to be so, and the Government will surely pay the price by being put out of office. We know that we can return our people to work.

6.46 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I do not want to engage in an argument with the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East (Mr. Prescott) about statistics this evening. He and I usually get side-tracked into arguments of that sort. I am glad to see that he is making more generous use of Government statistics, both those he is supposed to have and those he is not. If he starts to place more reliance on our statisticians and the figures that we can provide him with, we shall have a better factual basis for our debates.

I think that the political basis of the debate is accepted on both sides of the House, but not by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East, who alone persists in the theory that somehow the Government are deliberately creating unemployment.

Mr. Prescott: They are.

Mr. Clarke: We all accept that the level of unemployment remains excessively high. A principal economic and social objective is to reduce it.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is unemployment too high?

Mr. Clarke: The increase in jobs that we have been seeing in the economy since early in 1983 — *[Interruption.]* In answer to the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans), of course unemployment is too high. The increase in jobs that we have been seeing since 1983 must be sustained and, if possible, improved upon. It is no good dismissing the increase in jobs by saying that they are all part-time jobs. Many of the unemployed who are looking for work are seeking part-time jobs. There is a growing amount of part-time work, and in all the other figures that the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East uses he includes part-time workers. The total number of net additional jobs, taking account of those that have been lost since the spring of 1983, is 1 million. There was a 269,000 increase in 1985 alone. We must sustain the recovery in the economy that has been taking place since 1983 and, if possible, improve upon it.

I accept that for no section of the population has the growth yet proved adequate to deal entirely with the problem. The most encouraging figures are those for youth unemployment, which causes justifiable concern in all sections of the population. Fortunately, the level of youth unemployment has been falling steadily. In the three years to January 1986 unemployment has fallen by 35,000, or over 15 per cent., for the under-18s, and by 63,000, or over 10 per cent., for the under 20-year-olds.

Ms. Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): It is not only the young who are unemployed.

Mr. Clarke: I agree with the hon. Lady that that is an improvement that we wish to see across all sections of the population if we are to sustain the recovery of the economy, which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I keep illustrating has undoubtedly taken place since early 1983. Further progress will depend, first, on maintaining the record of growth of the economy which we have been achieving for successive years, which is the best in western Europe.

It is, of course, possible to improve upon that record. We should all acknowledge that we must achieve greater success in keeping down unit wage costs and in linking payment more closely to performance. The Opposition should not dismiss that. They must realise that the majority of commentators have said that it is worrying that we are the only major developed country which does not have the general level of earnings increases falling with inflation to the extent achieved by most of our competitors.

On top of that sustained growth and greater success in keeping down our unit wage costs, we must continue to intervene and make improvements in the labour market. The improvements that we strive to achieve should further encourage small businesses, new businesses, self-employment and enterprise of all kinds. This is where the bulk of new jobs come from in this country and in the successful economies abroad.

My hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, North (Mr. Baker) gave a valuable example of the work of the Genesis group, which is being supported by the Government through the highly successful youth training scheme.

The hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow (Dr. Godman) raised the problems faced by community groups in his constituency in participating in Government programmes. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me with the details, I shall take up with the Manpower Services Commission the problems that he describes.

We must intervene in the labour market and improve our record on training, which is now very good compared with what it was for youth training. It must be improved for adult training, and industry's performance must also continue to improve. We must provide the long-term unemployed with work experience and job search skills.

That is a fair and reasonable analysis of the position. We must strive to maintain growth, we must improve the position on unit wage costs, and we must continue to improve our extremely rigid and inflexible labour market. That analysis is crucial for us to continue to tackle the problem.

Having listened to the debate initiated by the Opposition, I believe that it is clear that the Labour party continues to be extremely unreliable and positively dangerous in its views on all of the three areas that I have mentioned in my analysis. Our growth will undoubtedly be jeopardised by the kind of spending programmes envisaged by the Labour party. These will undoubtedly affect inflation.

I shall return in a moment to the speech by the right hon. Member for Birmingham, Sparkbrook (Mr. Hattersley), because he gave less detail today about his policies than he gave at the time of the Budget debate. The right hon. Gentleman tried to explain that he was proposing to spend only an extra £7 billion, but he has never adequately answered the Government's total of £24 billion. The right hon. Gentleman declined the opportunity to say which of the Labour party's policies will be postponed if he is to reach his spending target.

The Labour party is also completely unreliable about pay. The hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East said the most extraordinary things about pay levels. On 14 May, at Conway Hall, the hon. Gentleman said:

"Eight million people in Britain get poverty wages. Many more are paid less than the value of the jobs they do."

The hon. Gentleman is advocating substantial real wage increases for well over 8 million of the working population. He is advocating that at the expense of those who are currently unemployed, because he would damage the competitive position of the economy.

The Labour party remains completely unreliable about improving the working of the labour market. It is completely dominated by the trades union movement in its interest in so-called employment protection for those currently in work, which would impose rigidities and costs at the expense of those out of work. The Labour party's bill of rights, on which it is working, seems largely to comprise of the right to strike and the right to win union recognition.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

Mr. Clarke: I am sorry, but I shall not give way. No one has given way, as this is a short debate, and I apologise to my hon. Friend.

If the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East will not accept my analysis of the factors on which we must concentrate, I would ask him to look at the policy document that we are tabling for the European Council of Ministers on Thursday. A copy of that document should have reached the hon. Gentleman today. It has been compiled by the Minister of Labour for Italy, the Minister of Labour for Ireland and myself as a basis for discussion. The idea is to have a discussion in the EEC about unemployment prospects and to approve the agenda of the Council.

The analysis is the same in that document. It stresses agreement on the need for continued growth and the importance of getting wage costs under control. It specifically concentrates on a need for greater flexibility in the labour market, and especially on improving the climate for small businesses, self-employment, part-time working and short-term contracts. It concentrates on all the issues that were resisted by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East.

If the hon. Gentleman considers the three Ministers who have compiled the document, if he examines my collaborators, he will discover that they are the Socialist Minister for Labour in Italy and the Irish Minister for Labour, who is a member of the Irish Labour party. If the Labour party ever turned up at the Council of Ministers of the EEC, it would find itself surrounded by 11 other member states which would dismiss out of hand the remedies and approach put forward by the British Labour party in this House.

The document also considers training and concentrates on the worst social problem in this country and in the rest of western Europe, which is the growth in the number of long-term unemployed. We all argue about the figure of the long-term unemployed. Is it 3 million, less than 3 million or more than 3 million? Many of those unemployed people are flowing through the unemployment figures, as they are changing jobs. There are 30,000 leaving jobs and 30,000 entering jobs almost every day. Of those who become unemployed, 25 per cent. have jobs within six weeks, and half of them will get jobs within 12 weeks. The problem lies with the long-term unemployed, the 41 per cent. of all claimants—a little under 1·4 million—in April of this year.

The Government have concentrated on the restart programme, which is giving attention to the needs of almost 1·4 million people who are the long-term unemployed. When the Government embark upon an ambitious, expensive programme, mounted in order to bring help to the long-term unemployed, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, East describes that as tea and sympathy, and the right hon. Member for Sparkbrook describes it as a gimmick. The truth is that we have embarked on a major programme to bring help to 1·4 million people. So far, of those who have been interviewed in the nine cities where the scheme is being tried, 90 per cent. have been offered a positive opportunity to take up from the menu that we have offered. I remind the House that 1,296 people have been placed in work in those nine cities and that many more have gone into training or found jobs for themselves after attending restart courses or job clubs.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook still makes rude remarks about job clubs because, as in the previous debate that we had on these matters, he still does not know what these clubs are. There are now 44 job clubs, placing two thirds of those in the clubs in jobs within a reasonable time, and the job start allowance is going well.

The right hon. Member for Sparkbrook did not set out a solitary detail of Labour's policy today. He repeated his

[Mr. Clarke]

claim for 1 million new jobs, but it is still unclear, and I challenge the right hon. Gentleman to write to me about this, whether he is talking about 1 million new jobs over two years. If he is, that merely matches this Government's record over the past two years. Or is the right hon. Gentleman talking, as he did today, about 1 million off the unemployment total? He does not appreciate the demographic trends against him. In some speeches he uses one phrase, and in others he uses another. He has never given the slightest hint of the policies that will add up to 1 million off the unemployment figure. That is a tall order.

The details that the right hon. Gentleman gave during the debate on the Budget were scandalous in their scantiness. He has not added to them today. He had three proposals. He said that the Labour party would spend £1 billion on public sector capital programmes and a further £1 billion on public sector service employment. The reduction in national insurance contributions would cost another £1·5 billion. The right hon. Gentleman then seized on the Select Committee report, which he costed at £3·3 billion. He said that that would provide 750,000 of the jobs that he required. However, he does not realise that the Select Committee report contains two of the items that he has already listed. He has double counted them.

Professor Layard must be astonished, after helping the Select Committee to produce the report, to know that he was writing the entire policy of the Labour party, and apparently of the Liberal party, as the hon. Member for Colne Valley (Mr. Wainwright) adopted the report heavily today.

Most of the so-called temporary jobs in the Health Service and social services would not exist. The other remedies would be hugely expensive and would cost some £6 billion or £7 billion. Their main effect would be to displace people from other jobs.

My hon. Friend the Member for East Lindsey (Sir P. Tapsell) was the only hon. Member to tackle the argument about infrastructure spending. He held out the enticing prospect of a pre-election boom that would pay for itself by restoring confidence in the City. I hope he will accept that we have an excellent record on infrastructure spending, and there are serious doubts whether spending £4 billion on housing, which he recommended, would create the jobs that he described.

The Government's record is good. Most of the alternative remedies would threaten the growth, low inflation and creation of new jobs which the Government's policies are steadily producing.

Question put, That the original words stand part of the Question:—

The House divided: Ayes 200, Noes 323.

Division No. 195] **[7 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cohen, Harry
Concannon, Rt Hon J. D.
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Cyril *(Rochdale)*
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*

Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, Rt Hon J. E.
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian

van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Francis Maude.

Question accordingly negatived.

Question, That the proposed words be there added, *put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 33 (Questions on amendments)*:—

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 193.

Division No. 196] **[7.15 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Emery, Sir Peter
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fallon, Michael
Farr, Sir John
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jopling, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Normanton, Tom
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John

Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Tapsell, Sir Peter
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashdown, Paddy
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barnett, Guy
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Bell, Stuart
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cartwright, John
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Cunningham, Dr John
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Ellis, Raymond
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*
Freud, Clement
Garrett, W. E.
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Gould, Bryan
Gourlay, Harry
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hume, John
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kennedy, Charles
Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Kirkwood, Archy
Lambie, David
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Mallon, Seamus
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meacher, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Neilist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Sheerman, Barry
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
White, James
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Wilson, Gordon
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Speaker *forthwith declared the main Question, as amended, to be agreed to.*

Resolved,

That this House congratulates Her Majesty's Government on the success of its economic policies in securing the lowest rate of inflation for over 18 years and steadily rising employment.

Mr. Victor Paige

7.27 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am wondering whether the Secretary of State for Social Services has sought your permission to make a statement on the precipitate resignation this afternoon of Mr. Victor Paige, the chairman of the National Health Service management board, in the middle of his period of office. It seems to me to be so significant a matter that the Secretary of State ought to be here. When Mr. Paige was appointed in January 1985, the Secretary of State said that his appointment was——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have received no such request. We must get on.

Mr. Dobson *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I have received no request. The hon. Member knows that it is not a matter for me. If he deals with it through the usual channels, he may get some satisfaction.

Mr. Dobson: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Leader of the House is here. It was an important appointment that was announced by the Prime Minister and it was welcomed with a vast fanfare of trumpets. It was promised that Mr. Paige's appointment would bring about massive improvements in National Health Service efficiency. When he resigns, because he is sickened by what is happening, there is to be no statement in the House.

Mr. Speaker: Order. We do not know what will happen tomorrow.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Since Mr. Paige has resigned from a lucrative job, he is obviously very concerned about something that clearly is a matter for public debate. I wonder whether you will advise the House about how this matter can be brought urgently to the Floor of the House and the Secretary of State made to come here and explain what is going on in the Health Service that has forced Mr. Paige to resign from a very lucrative job.

Mr. Speaker: I cannot advise the hon. Gentleman on tactics of that sort. It is not a matter for me.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Will this be a helpful point of order?

Mr. Campbell-Savours: Yes, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that approximately four hours ago I raised a point of order. It is significant that this resignation was announced half an hour after I raised my point of order, which related to a letter that was written to the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee by Mr. Paige answering questions on the level of services being provided by four health districts in the south of England. It is important that a Minister comes to the Dispatch Box, because the House wishes to know whether there is a connection between my point of order and the breach of privilege which was reported to the House by me and Mr. Paige's resignation.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman has agreed to write to me about the alleged breach of privilege.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I shall try, as ever, to be helpful. This procedure has been adopted on several occasions when it has been necessary to ask for your guidance on how we can get a statement, and you have invited the Leader of the House to say something. Since he is present now, would you repeat that procedure?

Mr. Speaker: No. I do not invite the Leader of the House to do that. If he volunteers, that is another matter.

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen) *rose*——

Hon. Members: Hurrah!

Mr. Biffen: In response to such genuinely popular acclaim, I should say that these matters are ordinarily considered through the usual channels, and I imagine that they will be as effective on this occasion as they have been on others.

Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill

*Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question —[28 April]—*That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

7.32 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As you know, I represent Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley, in Scotland. I received a letter from the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) asking me to be present today to participate in the debate on the Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill. It appears that Scottish Tory Members are trying to organise Scottish Labour and other hon. Members at the behest, and perhaps other sorts of influence, of Lord Lauderdale—a Member of the other place. Is it right that such influence should be used by someone whom I understand has a material pecuniary interest in the matter?

Mr. Speaker: I do not know what pressures the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie) could bring to bear on the issue. We had better get on.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is an absolute disgrace that the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) should suggest such a thing. Had he seen the Order Papers of the past few months and been in attendance on Monday 28 April, he would have found a perfectly good reason why I and other colleagues wished to raise the matter tonight.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during the debate on the quorum for the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, the Chairman of Ways and Means gave an undertaking that an inquiry would be set up into the procedure on private Bills. That has not yet appeared on the Order Paper. It is unfortunate that the Chair gave assurances in February that there would be an inquiry into the procedure, but that we have made no progress.

Tonight's procedure is rather unusual. It is normal for the promoter of a private Bill to try his hand at getting it through on the nod at 2.30 pm. If he is unsuccessful, he tries to obtain a debate at seven o'clock. It is fairly normal on Second Reading to get one shot until 10 o'clock. If the promoter cannot secure a majority for the closure or for his measure, the Chairman of Ways and Means tends to let the matter rest until further negotiations have taken place between the promoters and the objectors to see whether a consensus can emerge.

It is rather odd that tonight two Bills are being offered a second helping of parliamentary time, although no negotiations have been successful on either Bill. We should set up the inquiry into procedure before we develop a new procedure that allows Bills to have a second shot. Could the Chairman of Ways and Means, or you, Mr. Speaker, throw any light on whether the new procedure has been set up?

Mr. Speaker: As I understand it, discussions are continuing. The hon. Gentleman is well aware of that. I am not responsible for putting down private Bills for debate. That is entirely a matter for the Chairman of Ways and Means, and he has correctly so done.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is wasting the time of the House.

Mr. Straw: If, as you have just said, discussions are continuing, what purpose will be served tonight by the House debating those matters when the House cannot know the outcome of the discussions?

Mr. Speaker: Because discussions take time.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is there any precedent for two private Bills which failed to reach a conclusion being taken in advance of many other private Bills that have been blocked? It must seem to many hon. Members that this is unfair to those other private Bills.

Mr. Speaker: The Chairman of Ways and Means has the power to put down such adjourned debates. It has been done frequently, and has been done tonight.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is an abuse of the procedures of the House to try to waste time in this way.

Mr. Pike: The point on which I wish to seek your advice, Mr. Speaker, relates to the British Railways (Stansted) Bill. In the Vote Office with the papers on the Bill is a statement issued on behalf of British Rail which I believe is grossly misleading. The final sentence of the statement says:

"The Bill was debated on 24th February and the debate was adjourned. Since then, the Board have made strenuous efforts to satisfy those Honourable Members who opposed the Bill. The promoters respectfully submit that they should be allowed to put forward to the Committee to whom the Bill may be referred their case for the proposals of, and clauses in, the Bill and that the Bill should accordingly now be given a Second Reading."

As one of those hon. Members who spoke against the Bill on Second Reading, I must inform the House that no attempts have been made to satisfy me on the subject and, as far as I am aware, no proposal to do so has ever been made.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman's point would be best raised when we reach that Bill.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McQuarrie: Further to the earlier point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I call Mr. McQuarrie.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot hear two points of order at once.

Mr. McQuarrie: The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley did not have the courtesy to advise me in advance that he would mention my name in the House. During his point of order, he said something about a pecuniary interest. I sincerely hope that the hon. Gentleman was not asserting that I or the hon. Members whose names appear on the Order Paper have a pecuniary

[Mr. McQuarrie]

interest in the matter. If he has done so, I must make it clear to you, Mr. Speaker, that I do not have a pecuniary interest in the matter. Nor, as far as I am aware, do any of my hon. Friends. If the hon. Gentleman made that assertion, he should withdraw it now and apologise.

Mr. Speaker: I am sure that he will.

Mr. Foulkes: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I make it clear that the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan speaks for himself? He says that he has no pecuniary interest. Had he listened carefully, he would have known that I did not suggest that he had a pecuniary interest. I said that the person who was pulling the strings and giving him the words to say—Lord Lauderdale—has a pecuniary interest.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not cast reflections upon the honour of a Member of the other House.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. I raised the question of how much progress had been made in the inquiry into private Bills. Since I observe that the Chairman of Ways and Means is now in the Chamber, would it be possible for him to make a statement telling us what progress has been made in setting up the procedure or, if it is not possible for him to make a statement now, whether he could make a statement to the House at an early opportunity because you will recall, Mr. Speaker, that he spoke from the Treasury Bench, albeit not at the Dispatch Box, when the House considered the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill. I think that we have been very patient on the Opposition Benches in waiting since February for the setting up of that inquiry.

Mr. Speaker: The Chairman of Ways and Means, who has come into the Chamber, has indicated that he will be very pleased to deal with the matter when he comes into the Chair in a short while.

7.42 pm

Mr. Nicholas Fairbairn (Perth and Kinross): When I was rudely interrupted by the hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) on 28 April, Mr. Speaker, you will recall that I said,

"That is why—"—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 751.]

and I did not get the opportunity to complete my sentence. I was always taught that it was a matter of good manners that one did not interrupt people in mid-sentence, but perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich has no good manners. I say that for this reason. This very morning when I was attempting to persuade him on the telephone to negotiate, he actually threatened me that he would make it difficult for me to retain my seat in Perthshire by making remarks, which the Labour party might take up, to the effect that I was anti-employment, so I was threatened by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich, and I propose to take that up with the Committee of Privileges. If my hon. Friend disputes that matter, let him stand up and say that he did not threaten me. I find that particularly offensive for this reason.

My opposition to the Bill is based on principle. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) need not giggle about principle. I doubt whether he has ever heard of principle. But one day he may actually stand on it, and it would be a good thing if he did.

Mr. Foulkes: I was laughing not at the question of principle but at associating principle with the hon. Gentleman who has just spoken.

Mr. Fairbairn: Exactly. Clearly the hon. Gentleman does not have principle.

I take the view that it is wrong that the House of Commons should grant a right to a company to develop an area, that that company should then spend 12 years and a great deal of money doing this—frustrated, I may say, by other Acts of Parliament and Government and Government Departments—and that then along should come an American company to take away that right without compensation.

Let me start from where I was last time. Hon. Members who heard the debate will remember that the principle I was making was that it was odd that there had been no attempt at negotiation by the company that is seeking the legislation, the American company that calls itself British Ferries but is an American company run by Mr. Sherwood, USA, who is not in this country often enough to sign the letters that he writes me—they are all signed in his absence. I understood that this House had recently freshened its anti-American stance and objected to the idea that an American company might take over British Leyland or parts of it or even Westland helicopters.

Let us be clear. This company, it was claimed in the debate by the hon. Member for Harwich—and I have *Hansard* here—was happy to negotiate. Strange it was indeed that that negotiation started only on the day that we last had our debate. It sent a letter that was despatched by hand apparently but never arrived. I am not surprised that it did not arrive because I was attempting this morning to come to a last moment negotiation with the hon. Member for Harwich, and he promised to let me know before this debate whether the matter was acceptable. I have not heard from him. Of course I have not heard from him because they do not keep their word.

That is the matter that we are debating. All Ministers, with the Government three-line Whip, have been told that they always vote for a closure so they will not know what they are voting for, they will not know about principle, they will not mind about the matter; all they will do is be pushed as propellants are into the muzzle of a cannon to come out having discharged their function, regardless of its effect. That is what will happen.

Therefore, I think that it is important that I should remind the House of exactly what was said on 28 April to give an indication that this was not a matter in which those seeking the legislation—this American company—and seeking employment were unwilling to negotiate.

Mr. Foulkes: I find it somewhat strange that the hon. and learned Member for South Tayside is so knowledgeable about an issue that is clearly a matter of concern to Harwich and the surrounding areas. Where does the hon. and learned Gentleman get all this information from? On what basis can he make such detailed statements about the negotiations that are taking place? Why should we as hon. Members take his word on this matter? Why has he, a Scottish Member of Parliament, any particular knowledge, expertise and understanding on this issue?

Mr. Fairbairn: First, I am happy to tell the House that, instead of allowing my constituency to bear a bogus name like South Tayside, I was able to retain the names of places in Scotland that actually exist like Perth and Kinross, so I am not the Member for South Tayside.

Secondly, as the hon. Member who failed in that project—and, therefore, we cannot remember the name of his constituency, except that it is somewhere in Ayrshire—seems to imagine that he has a special knowledge of places 8,000 miles away, I dare say that he is informed by penguins. When he goes to Argentina to be informed by the penguins he frequently gets egg on his face, as far as I can recall, so I do not think that he should ask me that sort of question.

If the hon. Gentleman wishes to ask that question, which is particularly naive and absurd, let me tell him this. Where do I get my information when I appear as counsel—who gives it to me? I get my information from solicitors, from witnesses and from policemen. I do not know whether the information is accurate or inaccurate, but I get it from the person who is concerned with the matter and whom I ask. Of course I do. That does not mean that the information is accurate or inaccurate. But I can say this to the hon. Gentleman: I can see a cheat a long way away, and this is a cheat. It is a cheat attempting to deprive a person, to use Parliament to avoid having to compensate. That is the matter to which I want to come.

I know that the hon. Gentleman is hot-blooded and light-headed. That is a matter that he has made available to the House by everything that he has ever indulged in, and I love him for it, but that is no reason why on this occasion he should not be hard-headed and cold-blooded and I would invite him to be so for a few minutes.

We have a Bill seeking powers to remove powers already granted by Parliament. Where is the justice in using private legislation to do that? One does not have to rely upon evidence from anybody; one does not have to have friends; one does not have to be bought or influenced. When one sees a wrong as wrong as that, one does not need to go further from that principle.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): The hon. and learned Gentleman has made insulting remarks—

Mr. Fairbairn: I will not give way because they were not insulting remarks.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. and learned Gentleman had given way, and he cannot withdraw that.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. and learned Gentleman was incorrect. There are precedents. The precedents for this were a common feature of the 1970 railway legislation. One example is Ryde pier.

Mr. Fairbairn: First, those precedents have nothing to do with this matter. Secondly, I did not say that there were no precedents. Thirdly, the insulting remarks that I am alleged to have made about my hon. Friend are the truth, because that is what he said to me. If he is willing to stand up in the House and go on record that he did not threaten me this morning in the way that I described, I am willing to let the matter rest. But he should remember that there are two telephones in my house and not one. In Scotland we need corroboration, so it is not a bad idea to have somebody else on the other end. Since he has not sought to withdraw those remarks, probably they were made.

To get back to where I started, in the debate on 28 April the hon. Member for Harwich—I took him in good faith as I do still——

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): He is the hon. and learned Gentleman's hon. Friend.

Mr. Fairbairn: He is my hon. Friend. If the hon. Gentleman does not understand the conventions of honourable friendship, he should do so. In court we call them learned friends; in this House we call them hon. Friends. The fact that we hate them or love them does not matter. It is a method of diffusing anger, and it is a good one.

On 28 April the hon. Member for Harwich said that he had in his hand a letter about the Bill from Sherwoods—that is the American company—dated 14 April. He quoted the letter as follows:

> "When we considered with you at the telephone today a possible date for the proposed meeting to discuss the issue raised in your client's petition against this Bill, it appeared that the three alternative dates offered by the promoters would not be convenient. We have since obtained further instructions and are now able to offer the afternoon of Tuesday the 29th April. Please let us know whether a meeting in our offices at, say, 2.30 on that date would be acceptable."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 745.]

That would have been the day after the debate on the Bill. This letter, which was said by the hon. Member for Harwich at the time of the debate to have been delivered, has not yet arrived.

So we come to the question of negotiations. In good faith I believe that it is wrong that the ordinary compensation for work done should not be paid by those who will benefit from it. I believe that to be a principle. I do not see why Parliament should be a party to allowing a civil claim to be extinguished when we are talking about a sum which is valued by actuaries at £7·4 million and which certainly could not be valued at less than one tenth of that.

I have been attempting to negotiate between the parties. Last week a sum of £200,000 was offered. I attempted to negotiate again this morning. I was informed that I would be told whether the negotiation that I had made was reasonable and acceptable. I would have attempted to get the company whose Bill is sought to be extinguished to accept that negotiation, but I have not even had the courtesy of a reply from the hon. Member for Harwich. That seems to me to indicate a certain lack of good faith. I am sure that I share with the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley the view that that lack of faith is not to be commended.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the hon. and learned Member saying that he was acting as a mediator between the two parties on the matter? He is now participating in the debate. Does he not recognise that there may be a conflict of interest in those two roles?

Mr. Fairbairn: I thought that, as ever, the hon. Gentleman would get it wrong. I wish that he would become hard-headed and not feather-headed. I attempted as a Member of the House to do my best to prevent the matter having to go on. If there was good faith, I was anxious to find and to implicate that good faith. I was not acting as a lawyer. One of the rules that I have always used as a lawyer is to say to my client, "Never litigate if you can settle." I was trying to get the matter settled. Not only

[Mr. Fairbairn]

has the matter not been settled, but my attempts have not even had the courtesy of an acknowledgement. That is why I find the matter continually offensive.

Mr. Alex Fletcher (Edinburgh, Central): I want to try to measure the reaction of the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) to what my hon. and learned Friend has just said. There might still be some doubt as to what my hon. and learned Friend is saying about his capacity in the matter. Am I correct in thinking that he is acting entirely as a Member of the House and not in any way in a professional capacity?

Mr. Fairbairn: That is absolutely so. I was trying to act in the best of good faith as an honest broker. If I may remind hon. Members who were not at the previous debate, I said then:

"It is not that I do not trust my hon. Friend."—

the hon. Member for Harwich—

"but given the history of non-negotiation and sudden negotiation it is clear that there is no real intent to negotiate by those who seek to extinguish the powers granted by Parliament to the Earlpar company."

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Fairbairn: I am not giving way because the last points that the hon. Member made were so futile, so perverse, so childish and so petty. I may in time have that Christian equity for which I am asking the House tonight, but just for the moment the hon. Gentleman will have to sit on his backside and think; he should use his brain for a moment and not his feet.

Mr. Foulkes *rose*——

Mr. Fairbairn: In the debate on 28 April I said:

"I am sorry to say that, notwithstanding all the generosity within my heart, I do not believe the good will of those on behalf of whom my hon. Friend speaks. However, I shall believe in the equity and honour of those on behalf of whom he speaks if tonight we decide that the Bill's Second Reading should be postponed for six months."

That would have given time to negotiate.

"I do not know the procedures that apply in the consideration of these matters . . . However, if we are successful and the Bill is not considered for a further six months, we may come to know . . . that by chance and coincidence rather than chastening the matter has been resolved."—[*Official Report*, 28 April 1986; Vol. 96, c. 749.]

It ought to have been resolved. The offer from the American company proposing the Bill came only on the night of that debate. It has never been received and it has never been fulfilled. When the company took the view that it would get away with it, it offered a derisory sum and said, "We will go on."

Mr. Foulkes: I am still not clear about the role of the hon. and learned Member for Perth and Kinross as a negotiator. As I understand it from having read his previous contributions and from what he has been saying tonight, he is clearly partisan. He is clearly arguing the case of Lord Lauderdale's company, the existing company. As one of the strongest advocates of one particular case, how did he imagine that he could possibly be accepted as some kind of honest broker or arbiter in this dispute? Is that not a naive and incredible assumption?

Mr. Fairbairn: It is a naive and incredible question. When I am acting for any client I am presumably the most prejudiced person there is. That does not alter the fact that I am the best person to achieve a settlement, whether it is a civil or criminal claim because I am in cognisance of the matters at stake and one can negotiate with the other side on that basis.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): In the hon. and learned Gentleman's view, would a period of six months enable the parties to reach a reasonable settlement? Several times the hon. and learned Gentleman has mentioned the unreasonable and derisory sum. What in his opinion would be a reasonable sum?

Mr. Fairbairn: I shall answer the first point of the hon. Member for Port Glasgow and Greenock (Dr. Godman).

Mr. Foulkes: Greenock and Port Glasgow.

Mr. Fairbairn: The constituencies used to be named with the area closest to London coming first. I do not know whether they still are and I am not sure whether Greenock or Port Glasgow is closer to London. However, I am fond of them both as I am of the hon. Gentleman.

I believe that the last debate was established with the sudden offer to negotiate. Then, when the matter was put back on the Order Paper, the refusal to negotiate, or a derisory offer, and the fact that my offers to mediate have been met with plain rudeness and neglect show that there is no willingness to negotiate. Therefore, whether it was a period of six months or sixty years, I do not think that time is a factor. If I thought that there was a genuine offer to negotiate, I would be more than happy and the hon. Member for Harwich knows that as well as I do. I see no chance of that and it is for that reason that I believe a wrong is being done in the name of the House.

Various matters have come to my attention. I received a photocopy of a letter from somebody whose name I cannot read on behalf of the chairman of the American company, Mr. J. B. Sherwood. It was dictated and signed in his absence. If it was dictated in his absence, I take it that it is not from him. The letter makes a number of points which are false and at no stage does it offer to negotiate. It does not offer to compensate for 12 years of work.

The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley has disappeared, but let me put the case on two sides. On one side it is suggested that the company which was granted the powers under the Bathside Bay Development Act 1972 did nothing. It did not have any money, did not do anything about it and should therefore have the right taken away. On the other side is the fact that the company did 12 years' work. It was consistently frustrated by requirements of section 9 permission and when that was granted it had made an arrangement with a company to develop the resources and provide exactly the same employment as the American company concerned. I must say, the American company has considerably reduced its employment figures. That is the bracket of the argument. The hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley does not feel that an advocate is capable of taking an impartial view when he knows the bracket of the dispute. That is the bracket of the dispute and I do not accept it.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Does the hon. and learned Gentleman accept that, although there may be a dispute between the promoters of the original Bill and the new Bill, there is also another argument which, unfortunately, we have not had much time to address. That argument is

whether this country needs extra port facilities and that if we developed any they would be at the expense of existing ports. That is a major argument that hon. Members should have some opportunity to deploy, as well as the argument between the two promoters of proposals for harbours at Harwich.

Mr. Fairbairn: I agree with that and that is why I do not think that I have to answer the charge made by the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley when he asked what a Scottish Member was doing about an English matter. We are members of the United Kingdom Parliament. The English vote on Scottish legislation and the Scots vote on English legislation. We are part of one country. I agree with the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that he should address the House on the matter of whether there are sufficient port facilities and what those port facilities should be. As I have said before, there are also ports on the east coast of Scotland. There are Dundee, Perth and Inverness and on the west coast of Scotland there are a number of important facilities on the Clyde, part of which the hon. Member for Greenock and Port Glasgow is in charge of. Therefore, the question of what ports are required and where they should be is an important matter. I look forward to the contribution of the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish if he catches Mr. Speaker's eye.

The letter, which was dictated and signed in the absence of the chairman of the American company, sets out a number of reasons why he believes that the scheme is not plausible. He is entitled to take that view. In my opinion, the reasons are all as irrelevant as the matter raised by the hon. Member for Harwich when he said that there is a precedent in early railway law. I know the cases of early railway law. When every monkey wanted to form a railway company and wanted to go from Harwich to Felixstowe, Inverness to Perth and Perth to Dundee, somebody had to say "Just a minute. We cannot have railways going from everywhere to everywhere in different companies". As the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish said, as we must regulate to ports so we must regulate the railways. They are nothing to do with one Bill attempting to extinguish the rights granted to one company by another Bill and funds expended.

It is alleged by those who propose the Bill that the company which obtained the Bathside Bay Development Act 1972 has done nothing. That is entirely false. A vast amount of work has been done and a vast amount of benefit has been achieved. That cannot be denied. I have had a great number of letters from people who live in Harwich, Felixstowe and the surrounding areas who are as concerned as I am about this proposal. If we vote for the Bill, what is the guarantee that the American company will not reduce its labour force? What is the guarantee that it will do anything? What is the guarantee that it will provide this employment? We have that guarantee from the company which currently has legislative permission to do what is asked. The hon. Member for Harwich, in his self-righteous concern, says that he wants to create employment — and all hon. Members want to create employment in their constituencies. That could be one reason. We would get more jobs in Perth if Perth harbour was not challenged by other harbours. Therefore, let us understand that there are conflicting interests.

Sir Bernard Braine (Castle Point): It is not a question of whether the scheme will provide employment merely for the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale), if the Bill is passed. Essex county is represented by about 14 hon. Members, and control of the council is shared by all three political parties. It is firmly in favour of the scheme because it believes that the scheme will provide considerable employment, not merely in Harwich, but throughout the county. Therefore, I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will not concentrate all his bile on my hon. Friend, but will recognise that the matter concerns a county of 1·25 million people.

Mr. Fairbairn: I appreciate that. The present company is able and willing, and has made exactly the same arrangements. All we are saying is that Earlpar will have its rights transferred to an American company. What will happen when the American recession occurs, when the dollar falls or when the company discovers that the scheme is not in its interests? It will first close the outposts. Let us be clear that we are substituting an American company for a British company, which has already made arrangements for the task.

Sir Bernard Braine: My hon. and learned Friend makes a perfectly valid point except that he has not explained at any stage in his lengthy speech on the previous occasion or in his lengthier speech tonight what the company which he advocates has done since the passage of the Bathside Bay Development Act 1972. What steps have been taken to advance this wholly desirable project? What moves have been undertaken to ensure that work can start? The only work that has been undertaken has been undertaken by Essex county council.

Mr. Fairbairn: That is untrue, and my hon. Friend should know that. Earlpar has a scheme to develop the matter.

Let us consider the American company's proposals, and what Mr. Sherwood, who dictates and signs letters in his absence, said on 8 July 1985. He spoke of sea containers for the proposed harbour development

"as user commitments become available."

If user commitments do not become available, he will do nothing. The House should be clear about that. Mr. Sherwood is not committed to doing anything. He seeks to obtain the huge benefit of drilling and information for nothing by putting an Act through Parliament.

Since January, Parkeston quay has lost to Felixstowe the services of two freightliners, carrying vehicle components to and from Europe. It is alleged that the previous company has never been able to get finance. I am not speaking on behalf of the previous company. I am saying that there is a parliamentary wrong in passing a Bill which enables another company, and at that a foreign company, to reap benefits without compensation. That seems to be an inevitable wrong.

Mr. McQuarrie: Is my hon. and learned Friend aware that there are considerable problems arising from Mr. Sherwood's involvement in the Dover harbour area, where he is causing grave difficulties about the passage of various items of equipment and for personnel? According to the Dover harbour board, its relationship with Mr. Sherwood is far from satisfactory. Is that not an indication of the problems that may arise for the Harwich Parkeston quay area and the county council if this measure is passed?

Mr. Fairbairn: I am aware of that, and of the extreme disturbance of the unions in Dover at the effect that the company has had there. This is a matter of considerable principle.

I know that other hon. Members wish to speak and I do not wish to delay the matter, but it is important for the House to understand what it is doing. In America this is called the steamrolling process: one looks for an asset and strips it, and if one must use a parliamentary process to obtain it, well and good.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): The hon. and learned Gentleman may know that the company in question controls 80 per cent. of the routes to the Isle of Wight. On several occasions I have criticised Sealink, but I cannot listen to the hon. and learned Gentleman's criticisms. Sealink has made a considerable investment in the Isle of Wight since it took control of the routes. The hon. and learned Gentleman's Government sold British Rail Sealink to what he calls an American company, although I think it is a British company which happens to have an American chairman. It is registered in either Bermuda or the Bahamas. Nevertheless, the investment has been substantial. Sealink is building a new 150-car ferry on the Humber, and it has just bought or built in Tasmania two new catamaran-type fast ferries, one of which is already in operation between Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. It is wholly wrong to portray Sealink as a badly administered company which can run away overnight. Obviously, it will not do that.

Mr. Fairbairn: I did not say that Sealink would run away overnight, and it may have helped the Isle of Wight substantially. Newspaper readers on the Isle of Wight will undoubtedly be delighted to read that intervention, which does not appear to have much to do with Harwich. Nevertheless, the hon. Gentleman is entitled to get his plug in, which is about as much as the Liberal party is ever likely to get.

Mr. Ross: The hon. and learned Gentleman's Government sold Sealink to the Americans.

Mr. Fairbairn: I do not mind that the company is American. I look forward to foreign investment in the United Kingdom. All I am saying is that some hon. Members have been saying that America has no place here. Why are they not present to say that on this occasion? It is not a question of investment, but of parliamentary theft. That is what I am objecting to on principle. I have no financial or political interest, but I have an ethical interest. Parliament should not be used to allow one company to remove the investment of another company and benefit from it. No wonder that the Isle of Wight is benefiting so much if this company can obtain £1 million or £4 million of benefit for nothing.

8.17 pm

Mr. David Amess (Basildon): My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) has represented his constituents with diligence and distinction for the past 32 years without interruption. He has been sustained by the electorate in both popular and unpopular times for the Conservative party. Surely no one would doubt that there is no hon. Member who knows more about the needs of Harwich than my hon. Friend. If my hon. Friend thinks a bid is good for Essex, Harwich, and the country, I certainly support it.

I should particularly like to draw to the attention of the House the amount of local support for the Bill. Essex county council is no longer controlled by the Conservative party. It is a hung council, and the chairman, Mr. Bill Dixon-Smith, has expressed the council's complete support for the Bill. As far as I am aware, every Essex Member of Parliament supports the Bill. I understand that it also has the support of the unions, especially the National Union of Railwaymen and the Transport Salaried Staffs Association.

The crucial matter that we should consider tonight is that of employment. If we give the Bill a Second Reading, how many jobs will be created? It is often said that the south of the country is cushioned from unemployment. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich does not have anywhere near enough jobs for his constituents. I wonder how many hon. Members realise that Harwich has an unemployment rate of 14·3 per cent. and that Clacton, in another part of the constituency, has an unemployment rate of 19·2 per cent.? Overall, my hon. Friend's constituency has an unemployment rate of 17·3 per cent., which is considerably above the national average, and is certainly higher than the rate in Basildon.

I hope that the House will take note of two letters that I have received. The first is from my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich. He says that when he agreed to support the Bill he was anxious to get employment for his constituents. For that reason, he helped to get Lord Lauderdale's Bill on to the statute book. My hon. Friend went on to say in his letter that he had tried very hard, with Lord Lauderdale, over the past 12 years to find a company which would come up with financial backing. He said:

"We had many feasibility studies done by many companies including Japanese companies but they found that the scheme was quite unworkable.

The original legislation was drafted"—

Mr. McQuarrie: If a feasibility study has been done by the Japanese, has that study been seen at any time by the Earlpar company, which owns the land on which the project was undertaken?

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Perhaps I can assist my hon. Friend. Nothing was shown to the Earlpar company, because the scheme was regarded by the Japanese friends whom I approached as an impossible scheme in which to invest.

Mr. Amess: I am grateful for that assistance. I hope that that answers the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (Mr. McQuarrie).

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich went on to say in his letter:

"The original legislation was drafted in such a way that it would have taken 15 years to get any financial return. The scheme was seen to be over ambitious."

My hon. Friend said that, to his great disappointment, "no investor could be attracted."

The net result was that the Bill was not worth the paper on which it was written. It was a bitter pill for the people of Harwich, who so desperately need employment opportunities. My hon. Friend expressed his great pleasure at the fact that, after 12 years of devastating frustration, Sealink, under new ownership, had said that it wanted to invest in Harwich.

My hon. Friend also drew my attention to the fact that the impression was given that a British company was, and

still is, willing to invest. The company had 12 years in which to do that, but it came up with absolutely nothing. Naturally, my hon. Friend asked for support.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Will my hon. Friend inform the House of his understanding of the impediment to development which resulted from section 9 of the Harbours Act 1964? He has been making some play of the fact that nothing has happened. Would he care to comment on that important aspect?

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend. That was not the position. The Harbours Act was not a barrier in any way. Essex county council had experience in negotiating with the company. The chairman of Essex county council wrote to me in the following terms:

"For your personal information, our experience over 10 years of negotiation with Earlpar and their Chairman, Lord Lauderdale, was that their scheme was overambitious and not practical in that it never received any financial backing. The Sea Containers scheme on the other hand was wholly different in that it sought to develop the Bay by incremental stages."

The Bill's opponents are introducing red herrings. I am sure that my hon. Friend will be able to substantiate that.

Mr. Amess: I am grateful for that comment. I hope that it answers the questions asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker).

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend, having listened carefully to the previous intervention, turn his mind to the fact that there is legislation on the statute book? There was an impediment, but that has been removed. Does my hon. Friend not think that that substantially changes the position about any fund raising that may be attempted?

Mr. Amess: I do not think that that changes the position substantially. That is a matter that we can develop later.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Perth and Kinross (Mr. Fairbairn) referred to Mr. Sherwood. He said that letters had been signed on his behalf and that he appeared not to be in the country. I can tell the House that Mr. Sherwood was in my constituency seven weeks ago to open the business and industry exhibition sponsored by Essex county council. The exhibition was held to promote Essex and to produce more employment opportunities. I hope that my hon. and learned Friend will accept that Mr. Sherwood is trying to create more employment opportunities in Essex.

I draw the attention of the House to another letter which we should consider. It is from the chairman of the Essex county council, Mr. Bill Dixon-Smith, who said:

"I cannot emphasise too strongly how important the proposed development at Bathside Bay is to the County Council as a whole and the economy of the County".

My right hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Sir B. Braine) mentioned that earlier.

"In co-operation with Sea Containers, as the new owners of Bathside Bay in 1984, the County Council carried out a reclamation scheme of the Bay which will enable us to construct the Dovercourt By-pass and, equally important, enable Sea Containers to proceed with their port development and expansion once they have obtained parliamentary powers."

Mr. Fairbairn: Was the letter written with the authority of the council? Does it appear in the council's minutes? If not, why is my hon. Friend referring to it?

Mr. Amess: The letter was not marked "private and confidential". It was sent to each of the 15 Essex Members of Parliament. I am sure that the chairman of the council would wish me to bring the matter to the attention of the House. We are discussing a matter of prime importance to Essex. All Essex Members support the Bill, because we wish to create further employment opportunities.

The chairman of the county council continued:

"over 10 years of negotiations with Earlpar, . . . their scheme was overambitious and not practical, in that it never received any financial backing. The Sea Containers scheme, on the other hand, was wholly different, in that it sought to develop the Bay by incremental stages. We would not, therefore, agree with the opponents to the Bill who are alleging that Sea Containers are seeking to adopt the expertise of the Earlpar scheme without proper acknowledgement."

Mr. McQuarrie: I must correct my hon. Friend about funding. It was said in the debate on 28 April that a substantial firm had offered to fund the Earlpar development and that the information had been made known to Sealink prior to that debate on 28 April.

Mr. Amess: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for pointing that out, and I hope that we can discuss it in Committee.

To the south of the port area there will be a substantial piece of land suitable for industrial and commercial use, which has already attracted the attention of major companies, which have expressed an interest in setting up factories on the site. Implementation, in association with the construction of stage two of the Dovercourt bypass, would ensure adequate road access.

As I mentioned earlier, all Essex Members——

Mr. McQuarrie *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (seated and covered): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I put it to you that it is a disgrace and an abuse of the House to accept the closure after less than three quarters of an hour's further debate, since the sponsors failed to get the closure last time? Clearly some hon. Members wish to raise points concerning, in particular, questions of procedure, which, indeed, I raised earlier on a point of order. It seems unfair that the closure should be accepted after such a short debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I remind the House that we have debated this Bill before, and that this is a resumed debate.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am sure you will accept that on that occasion the House decided that it did not want the closure and that it wanted further debate. To accept, after only three quarters of an hour——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed the hon. Gentleman to make his point, but this is a matter for the discretion of the Chair. The Chair has exercised its absolute discretion, and I do not think that any point of order can arise.

Will the Serjeant at Arms please check to see what is causing the delay in the Lobbies?

Will the Tellers please take their places before the Table?

The House having divided: Ayes 223, Noes 43.

Division No. 197] **[8.30 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Chapman, Sydney
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marek, Dr John
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rost, Peter
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Watson, John
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Alex Fletcher and
Mr. Bill Walker.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Conlan, Bernard
Corbett, Robin
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Dixon, Donald
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eastham, Ken
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Forrester, John
Gourlay, Harry
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Hoyle, Douglas
John, Brynmor
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Redmond, Martin
Skinner, Dennis
Soley, Clive
Straw, Jack
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Robert Litherland.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Before I put the main Question, I remind the House that the Chair deprecates any tactics designed to delay the procedures of the House, and that the delaying of a Division result is an offence for which Members can be named.

Question put accordingly, That the Bill be now read a Second time:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Pike *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We were forced to vote at an early stage of the previous debate, when many hon. Members

still wished to speak, having come into the Chamber for the debate. Two of my colleagues and I were still trying to raise the issue in the Lobby—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. This matter has already been raised and the Chair has ruled on it. These matters are within the discretion of the Chair and should not be challenged.

Mr. Pike *(seated and covered):* The House is covered by established precedents, and on a previous occasion a similar event occurred when—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not challenge my ruling. I have ruled, and that is the end of the matter.

The House having divided: Ayes 225, Noes 30.

Division No. 198] **[8.45 pm**

AYES

Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Body, Sir Richard
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Conlan, Bernard
Conway, Derek
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dalyell, Tam
Dewar, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Home Robertson, John
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lightbown, David
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McWilliam, John
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Marek, Dr John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patchett, Terry
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Speller, Tony
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stott, Roger
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Straw, Jack
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Weetch, Ken
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Sir Julian Ridsdale and
Mr. Robert Rhodes James.

NOES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Boyes, Roland
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clay, Robert
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Couchman, James
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dixon, Donald
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fairbairn, Nicholas
Fatchett, Derek
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Lawrence, Ivan
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McQuarrie, Albert
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Pollock, Alexander
Skinner, Dennis
Speed, Keith
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Alex Fletcher and
Mr. Bill Walker.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time and referred to the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills.

9 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. At the beginning of the debate on private business I raised with Mr. Speaker a question of procedure on that business. You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that during the debate on the quorum for the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill you gave an undertaking from the Treasury Bench that you would be setting up an inquiry into the private Bill procedure. It was clear that the House had been caused considerable concern and I am sure that you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the proceedings this evening will cause even more concern.

The normal procedure for a promoter of a private Bill is to start by trying to get the Bill through without opposition at 2.30 pm. If he fails in that aim, he tries to obtain a three-hour debate on a subsequent evening. Normally, there would be a closure motion and a majority would be gained for the Bill to proceed. It is a little unusual for an extra debate to be gained if there is a failure to secure the closure.

You have heard, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is some disappointment on the Opposition Benches that you accepted a closure motion after such a short debate on the previous business. I do not query that, but I suggest that this is a matter that should be considered during the inquiry that is held into the private Bill procedure. If the procedure is examined, some of the less desirable aspects of debates that have taken place in the recent past might be avoided. Now that you have had a chance to reflect on that request, Mr. Deputy Speaker, perhaps you will make a statement to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) for his assurance that, despite his reservations, he is not challenging my decision of this evening. I am grateful to him also for having given me notice that he intended to raise the matter. I am glad to tell him that since I informed the House on 12 February that I wished to initiate a review of private Bill procedures I have been engaged in active consultation with both the Chairman of Committees in another place, Lord Aberdare, and the Leader of the House. As a result of those consultations, I anticipate that an appropriate motion will shortly be tabled. As it will have to be a Government motion rather than a motion in my name, if the hon. Gentleman wishes to pursue any question on its contents and its timing he will have to address it to the Leader of the House.

British Railways (Stansted) Bill

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question — [24 February] — That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question again proposed.

9.2 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I wish, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to raise a principle that perhaps lies outside the debate. The House has a resumed debate before it, there have been significant developments and there is a clear desire on the part of Members on both sides of the House to contribute to the debate. Some of us have already contributed to it and on occasion it is the practice of the House to grant Members a second opportunity to speak, should the House feel so moved. Can you advise me and the rest of the House, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in what circumstances a second opportunity to speak is possible, given the great pace of developments and the importance of having a thorough debate this evening?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is entirely a matter for the House. If the hon. Gentleman seeks the leave of the House to speak again on the same matter and the House grants him leave, he will be given the opportunity to do so. If the House withholds its permission, the matter is out of my hands.

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I raised a point of order with Mr. Speaker at the start of private business and he advised me to raise it again at the start of the debate on the Bill as the point was specific to it.

In the Vote Office I was handed with the Bill a statement from British Rail on the British Railways (Stansted) Bill—a statement by the promoters—on why they believe the Bill should be given a Second Reading. I am raising a serious matter because I believe that the final paragraph of the statement misleads the House. It is an abuse of the House for the Bill to be proceeded with in this way. The statement refers to the debate on 24 February and states:

"Since then, the Board have made strenuous efforts to satisfy those hon. Members who opposed the Bill."

That is untrue and incorrect. That statement by British Rail will mislead hon. Members. It would be appropriate for the promoters to withdraw the Bill tonight to allow that statement to be corrected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: That is not a matter for me. It is for the House to take into account when it makes its decision on the Question that will be put before the House. It is a matter for debate.

Mr. Fred Silvester (Manchester, Withington): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As the point raised by the hon. Member for Burnley (Mr. Pike) is germane, and as the supposed attempts to satisfy the objectors to the Bill have not been made, the point made by the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) about being able to speak again in the debate clearly is important. You kindly said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that was a matter for the House. I take it that we should begin by making an appeal to you. Is that the case?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes, that is the case.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I thank you

for your statement. May I reiterate the point of order made by my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd)? My hon. Friend spoke about the ability of hon. Members to catch your eye for a second time. I am sure you are aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is likely to be new information introduced into the debate. I remind you that a considerable number of hon. Members were unable to catch your eye on the last occasion that the matter was debated. I hope that you will give fairly careful consideration to the possibility of a closure when it is obvious that new matters will be introduced. There is already a considerable list of hon. Members from the last debate on this matter who want to express their point of view, some who wish to raise constituency points and others who feel that because of the new information put forward they ought to be able again to express their points of view.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I can assure the hon. Gentleman and the House that of course the Chair, when considering who should be called to participate in the debate, will have regard to those who have not had the opportunity to address the House. It might be helpful if we could get on with the debate, otherwise very few hon. Members will have the chance to participate.

9.7 pm.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): I have been waiting patiently to continue my speech which was interrupted by the closure motion. The House will remember that only about 60 hon. Members voted for closure and 30 hon. Members were against. I know that many of my right hon. and hon. Friends wish to take part in the debate. I am sure that many Conservative Members also wish to take part, and I understand that the Minister wants to speak.

This is a very important debate and we should not rush into premature conclusions. Without wishing to question or contradict your decision in any way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rose at six or even seven minutes past 9 o'clock and the Clerk did not read the business until two minutes past 9 so at the most we will have 58 minutes for the debate if one takes the time from when the Clerk read the business or perhaps only 54 minutes to debate an important Bill.

This Bill will affect constituents in the north-west of England and my constituents in Wrexham in Wales as Wrexham is very close to Manchester. I understand why British Rail wishes to build the link to Stansted. Let me put my cards on the table. I am not against British Rail building a railway link to Stansted. That is very laudable. Unfortunately, I have to oppose the Bill because British Rail is building the link at the expense of building a link to Manchester, or building or repairing other railways or improving other lines to make them quicker and more efficient. British Rail could do that if the money was available, but if it spends money on the Stansted link there will be less money to improve services elsewhere.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell) *indicated dissent.*

Dr. Marek: I shall be interested to hear what the Minister has to say in due course.

My experience of British Rail's policies over the past five or six years is that there is always a lack of money, so much so that one line has been taken up between Wrexham and Chester, leaving a single track, because British Rail could do other things with the metal from that line. Incidentally, there is now a much worse service between Wrexham and Chester. If the Bill were not passed and the money were made available for something else, British Rail could undo some of the damage that it has done and restore the double track between Wrexham and Chester.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister seems to dissent from the view that British Rail has a measure of choice in its capital projects. The Minister and my hon. Friend know far more about the railway system than I do, but am I right in thinking that British Rail is governed by the external financing limit? If so, if this money were not spent on Stansted and the external financing limit remained the same, those moneys would be made available for the project that my hon. Friend is talking about.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes the case. That is the position as I understand it. If money was not spent on building the line to Stansted, that money would be available for spending elsewhere. I have not yet had a chance to talk about the merits of such a line or the number of passengers who will use it and the subsidies that Stansted receives.

British Rail could provide a link to Manchester airport, which is in a central position. In many ways London is not central. It is not central for me, nor for my hon. Friend. Manchester is far more central and far better placed to spend that money. Many people from the midlands who wish to go on holiday could easily go to Manchester from Birmingham. Trains could be provided from the midlands to Crewe and then to Wilmslow and if the Manchester link were built on the Styal line passengers from the midlands, north Wales, the north-west and the north of England could easily use Manchester airport instead of Stansted.

I would not be surprised if many hon. Members did not know exactly where Stansted was. I do not really know where it is. I know roughly within an area of five or 10 miles, but it is almost impossible to get to. I imagine that if most people from the midlands and the north could not use Manchester they would have to go by train to Euston, then make a difficult journey on the underground or take a taxi or bus to Liverpool street and then on to Stansted. That is not the best way of proceeding.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): My hon. Friend is talking about the potential traffic that could be generated from the midlands to Manchester airport. I am sure that he will be as aware as I am of British Rail's interest in developing the Castlefield curve and the Windsor link in Manchester. It would open up the north of England, east and west, direct by train through Manchester to a possible Manchester airport link. So we are not just talking about the amount of traffic that could be generated from the midlands. With British Rail's firm proposals on the Castlefield curve and the Windsor link, Yorkshire and the north of England are being opened up to Manchester airport.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend makes a vital point. The money that would be spent on Stansted could be spent on other areas which would benefit many more people and would make travel and transport much more convenient.

It is a pity that the Government have chosen their aviation policy and have decided that Stansted should become a sort of third charter airport. It will always be an ailing lame duck and will always have to receive subsidies

[Dr. Marek]

from Gatwick or Heathrow. The Government should look at this again and ask themselves what can be done to help the majority of our people, and what can be done to help the railway system at the same time. If they did that, they would certainly not decide to spend the money on this railway line, this little spur fom Stansted airport.

Mr. Don Dixon (Jarrow): It is not only Manchester on which money should be spent; money should also be spent on the important airport at Newcastle. If the Government were to make finance available to extend the Tyne and Wear metro to Newcastle airport, it would be money well invested and would be better than investing at Stansted.

Dr. Marek: My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon) makes a valid and pertinent point.

I hope that the Government and the promoters of the Bill and British Rail will take note of the disquiet on this side of the House. This is only the Second Reading and there are many more stages to go. Unless there is some movement by somebody somewhere about spending money on the things that we want for the benefit of our constituents, this measure will be fought to the bitter end. The Government are in the run-up to the next general election and all sorts of things have been known to happen during such a period. Discussion on Bills like this could go on and on. I am not accusing the Minister of being intransigent—not at this stage, anyway—and I shall listen with interest to what he says.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is it not remarkable that there is not one hon. Member whose constituents are in favour of the Stansted link? There does not appear to be anybody who wants it. The only people concerned about it are the hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) and me, and we are anxious about the link to Manchester airport.

Dr. Marek: I am grateful for the comments of the hon. Member for Stockport (Mr. Favell). They reinforce what I have been saying and show that there is a certain amount of cross-party feeling on this important issue.

Let me give one more example of what British Rail could spend the money on if it did not spend it on the Stansted link. It could spend the money on making automatic open level crossings a bit safer. There was a crash a few days ago between Wrexham and Chester in which one person was killed. I understand that there was another crash at an automatic open level crossing a few days ago in Ammanford. Thank goodnes nobody was killed in that crash, but it was still another accident. I have heard of a number of accidents on the automatic open level crossing outside Aberystwyth which carries the Aberystwyth to Devil's Bridge line across one of the A class roads. [AN HON. MEMBER: "That is a toy railway".] It is not quite a toy railway. The engine that ploughed into an articulted lorry the other day weighed 20 tons. It was fortunate that in that instance nobody was killed.

The regulations were recently relaxed a little by this Administration. I wonder whether they were relaxed too much or whether it was just coincidence and that there was no relationship between that relaxation and those accidents.

I do not want to stray from the debate, but it is important to say that there are things that British Rail could do. Without doubt, I could speak about those things for two or three hours and give the House examples of what should be done but is not being done. One thing British Rail should not do is build this line to Stansted. It is not needed. There are other airports such as those at Newcastle, Manchester and Teesside, indeed all over Britain, that are far more convenient for our people, yet an airport at Stansted is to be foisted on us. Nobody knows where it is. It will be an ailing duck, and will have all this extra capital expenditure out of sums badly needed by British Rail. It is a mistake, and I hope that the Bill does not get a Second Reading. I hope that, because of the lack of time, we will not be able to come to a decision about whether to give it a Second Reading. It might be found expedient to put it down for debate on another day to conclude the debate. We cannot conclude the debate now.

9.20 pm

Mr. Alfred Morris (Manchester, Wythenshawe): It disappoints me that, with other hon. Members on both sides of the House, I am forced to oppose a Bill that is promoted by British Rail. Oppose it we must, however, in the interests of what is by common consent one of the few major growth points outside the south-east of England. I refer, as the Minister of State knows, to Manchester airport.

The Minister has suggested that the Bill is of no relevance to Manchester airport, but that is not how we see it, and his suggestion is in fact wholly untenable. On 14 May the Minister met, at the Department of Transport, representatives of Manchester Airport plc, the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority and British Rail. The meeting was chaired by the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), then the Secretary of State for Transport, who made a similar suggestion. I must, therefore, relate to the House the reply that I made to the former Secretary of State at that meeting. Last year's White Paper on airports policy in paragraph 6.33 promised that the Government would consider the rail link to Manchester airport on the same terms as the rail link to Stansted airport. Until that undertaking has been honoured, and is seen to be honoured, the House should not allow this Bill to proceed.

In spite of repeated assurances, the last of which was given at the meeting on 14 May, British Rail has still not made publicly available the details of the investment bid for the Stansted link. The revenue forecasts, and the assumptions employed on traffic generation, are unknown to me and to the House. It is argued that this is commercially confidential information. Yet how can this be so when the main parties—British Rail and the British Airports Authority—are, for the time being at least, public corporations? Such an argument is clearly unacceptable.

Details of the work undertaken on the Manchester link are available for public scrutiny. It consists of a series of technical papers explaining the alignment, the construction and the operational costs of the proposed link. It shows that the estimated capital costs of construction are £15 million. The revenue forecasts range from £13·8 million at the low end—if only 4 per cent. of the airport's passengers used the rail link—to £26·3 million at the top end—that is if 7 per cent. of passengers used the link. At the low end, which all the parties agree is the worst possible case, the rail link would be unprofitable. At the top end it would more than pay its way.

There is also the question of funding. One has to look beyond the technical papers——

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: Will my right hon. Friend accept that British Rail's unspoken fear is that if it puts the link into Manchester airport that will take work away from other links? The north-west is pleased that British Rail has increased the number of through trains to Gatwick from the Manchester area. However, the problem is that British Rail is not taking into account the likelihood of attracting additional trade from the rest of the country to Manchester. It is taking into account only the possibility of losing trade on its rail links to London and the south.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend endorses the suspicion of many other people and raises an important point.

As to funding, one has to look beyond the technical papers for information and, in particular, to a covering letter addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport and signed by the chairmen of British Rail, Manchester Airport plc and the Greater Manchester PTA. The letter pointed out that the estimated construction costs of the link—£15 million—will not be fully borne by British Rail, which believes such an investment to be too risky. While British Rail has said that it will make a capital contribution towards the cost of the Manchester rail link, the figure suggested—£5 million—equates with the lowest point on the forecast revenues. Yet British Rail ought, in my view, to accept that the revenues derived will be a reflection of the efforts that it expends in marketing the facility. The better and more vigorous the marketing, the higher the usage and the revenues. This was put to the chairman of British Rail in my presence and that of the Minister of State at the recent meeting at the Department of Transport. I have no evidence yet that the chairman accepts what virtually everyone else associated with the proposed rail link to Manchester airport regards as self-evidently true.

Manchester Airport plc and the Greater Manchester PTA, while seeing the link as a commercial opportunity, are prepared to play their full part in achieving this important new facility for the north-west, but this cannot be done at the cost of prejudicing their own ordinary investment programmes. The board of Manchester Airport plc is not a railway company. It must devote is efforts to the future development of the airport. The PTA is in a desperate financial position. It is now having to grapple with the daunting task of trying to keep the basic public transport network together, within a ludicrously inadequate expenditure limit. The development of any part of the system, at a time when the PTA does not know how much money it will receive to spend on public transport next year, is plainly unrealistic. So it is clear that unless British Rail, which is manifestly so keen to proceed with the Stansted link, takes a less gloomy and more realistic attitude to Manchester's case, our rail link may be indefinitely delayed. That would be a tragedy, not only for Manchester airport, but for the region as a whole.

Mr. Robert Litherland (Manchester, Central): In last year's White Paper on airports policy the Government promised that they would consider the cases for developing the rail links to Stansted and Manchester airports on equal terms. This is not coming about. All that we are seeing is a lack of enthusiasm for Manchester.

Mr. Morris: My hon. Friend quotes the White Paper accurately. I entirely agree with him, as I shall explain when proceeding with my speech.

Manchester airport is the fastest growing airport in Europe, but its success has been hard won. Maintaining that success will demand even greater efforts than those already made by the people—thousands of them my constituents—who operate and manage the airport. It will be forced to compete with a subsidised Stansted. Nearly £300 million needs to be found to support the anticipated growth of Manchester airport over the next 10 years. The airport must become more accessible if that growth is to be realised. At the present time accessibility by road is one of the airport's main advantages, with a direct link to the M56 providing access to the national motorway network. The airport is not, however, well-served by public transport. Only local bus services connect the airport with neighbouring towns and suburbs. Passengers travelling by rail have to travel to Manchester city centre and make use of an express bus link to get to the airport. Although the airport lies adjacent to the rail network, there is no connection and the nearest station is some 2 miles from the terminal buildings. It is vital to the future development of the airport that a rail link is provided to coincide with the development of a second terminal by the early 1990s.

Such a link would clearly stimulate growth. It would also greatly relieve the otherwise inevitable pressure that will build on the road network and for car parking facilities. We have all seen the results of lack of action at Heathrow and the necessity for urgent and very expensive action to rectify its problems. The people of Greater Manchester do not want to see the same problems at their airport. It is an asset of the first importance in creating new employment opportunities in a part of the country where unemployment is unacceptably high and youth unemployment a total scandal, if that word still has any meaning in contemporary Britain.

I make a plea to the Minister: have a quiet and urgent word with the chairman of British Rail and end forthwith the costly delay that we face in respect of the Manchester rail link. The Government have a responsibility to see the Manchester link go ahead. It would fit in with the aviation objectives about which, as my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Central (Mr. Litherland) pointed out, they talk long and often enough. It would also coincide with their other stated objective to disperse tourist activities throughout the country. If British Rail becomes more enthusiastic and constructive, the link will happen. The message tonight from this House is that until British Rail demonstrates such an attitude, it ought not reasonably to expect the Stansted Bill to pass.

9.30 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): If I may have the leave of the House to speak again, I am grateful for the opportunity. Given the concern that has been expressed this evening about the board's investment proposal for a link to Stansted and about the case for a link to Manchester airport, it might assist the House if I describe briefly what developments there have been since the debate on the Bill on 24 February.

The board submitted its investment proposal for a Stansted rail link in November last year. The board believes that there is a robust financial case for a link.

[Mr. David Mitchell]

Following discussions at Rail house and with hon. Members, the board has said that it intends to make a small change in its proposal and to invest in new rolling stock for a fast airport service rather than use existing and refurbished stock for the link service. We shall need to examine the board's amended proposal according to our normal investment appraisal pattern. I hope to be in a position then to announce a decision on that investment proposal in relation to Stansted.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: The Minister has made a point about a change in the board's proposal. I understand that that may not be unrelated to the withdrawal of certain names from the blocking motion. However, it is up to individual hon. Members to sort out their views. Will the Minister confirm that British Rail promised, not once but several times, that it would make available to those concerned in Manchester the financial details of the Stansted link? Despite those assurances, we are still awaiting that information. Does he seriously expect us to accept the Bill in its present form without that information having been made available?

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail is a commercial organisation and, as such, its commercial information has a certain value. It has been given to Ministers in the preparation by British Rail of the case for the service to Stansted. We have not yet finished examining the viability of the case that British Rail has put to us. When we have done so, we shall certainly make an announcement. I share with the hon. Gentleman the view that the same criteria should apply to the Government's examination of any proposals in relation to Manchester as apply to proposals for Stansted.

Mr. Silvester: Will my hon. Friend note that a senior member of British Rail informed me that there was no difficulty in making available to us the calculations in regard to Stansted so that we could make the comparison with Manchester? We are still in the position that that information has not been given to us. In the current atmosphere of distrust it is impossible for us to make a rational decision about the Bill until that information is available. Why are we told one thing privately and another thing publicly?

Mr. Mitchell: Conversations that have taken place with members of the staff of British Rail are matters for British Rail and for the hon. Members who have had those discussions; they are not matters for me.

It may be helpful if I explain to the House some developments that have occurred since the House last discussed the matter in relation to Manchester. On 10 April British Rail, Greater Manchester passenger transport authority and the airport company wrote jointly to the Secretary of State, summarising the conclusions reached so far on the financial case for the Manchester rail link.

The parties requested a meeting to discuss the financing of the rail link and that took place on 14 May. My hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale (Sir F. Montgomery) and the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) were present. The parties have agreed to examine further the scope for contribution towards the cost of the scheme and to seek a further meeting with the Secretary of State when they have done so. I can assure the House that there will be careful and fair assessment at that further meeting of the case which may be put by those who are coming to see the Secretary of State and myself.

Mr. Tony Lloyd: For fear that he may inadvertently be in danger of misleading the House, will the Minister confirm that the agreement to come back to the Secretary of State was made not in the sense that an agreement was struck at that meeting or subsequently but simply because a total impasse had been reached and, in order to have any hope of progress, it was necessary to agree to a future meeting? Will the Minister confirm that that is an accurate picture?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman may put his own interpretation upon the reasons which led the parties at the meeting to agree to withdraw to consider further and to meet again. All I am saying is that that is the stage to which matters have now proceeded.

I anticipate that there will be a further meeting at which we shall of course want as full, frank and open a discussion as possible about the information which will then be available. The information may arise from further work by British Rail or from the views as to contributions by the various parties. The right hon. Member for Wythenshawe believes that there is a prospect of much higher usage of the Manchester link leading to a much better financial return than British Rail expects. If that is right, it may be that there will be those who will wish to participate in such enhanced profits and be prepared to put up the money to have the opportunity of sharing in such profits. I do not know. That is a matter for the parties to discuss.

It is quite phoney to link the schemes for Manchester and Stansted because a proposition has been made by British Rail for investment in Stansted. We are considering that. We shall appraise it and make a decision on its merits. We shall then consider the issue of Manchester and, again, we shall consider that and judge it on its merits. That must be the right and proper way in which to proceed.

Mr. Jack Straw (Blackburn): I have heard the Minister on many occasions, along with colleagues on the Treasury Bench, saying that there is a competition for resources. Is he now saying that there is no competition for resources and that there are no choices to be faced in terms of public expenditure? I do not understand his point.

Mr. Mitchell: I can assure the hon. Gentleman that competition for resources does not arise in this case. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek) was unusually ill-informed in suggesting that there was some competition between the resources for Stansted and the resources for double-lining the railway line, which is one of his hobby horses. The fact is that the expenditure on Stansted will be approved only if it shows a full commercial return. If the Manchester scheme shows a commercial return it, too, will be approved. I am asked whether the acceptance of a Stansted scheme, if the Government approve the submission from British Rail, removes the availability of resources for other investment. The answer is no, because it is fully commercially viable. It is not part of a subsidised network, but a fully commercial investment which will not eat into the availability of resources elsewhere.

Mr. Peter Thurnham (Bolton, North-East): Is my hon. Friend aware that one of the difficulties for the people

in the north-west is that they feel that if a decision is made separately and on its own merits for Stansted before a decision is made for Manchester it could draw traffic from Manchester and reduce the viability of the subsequent decision for Manchester?

Mr. Mitchell: I can reassure my hon. Friend that that is not so. The time scale is such that the people from the north-west who come to see the Secretary of State will return within a relatively short time to see how much further they have got with their discussions. That will be long before construction work can start on Stansted. Therefore, there is no question of Stansted being able to draw traffic from Manchester before there has been a proper assessment of the Manchester opportunity.

Mr. Favell: How will my hon. Friend deal with the point raised by the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) that British Rail will move heaven and earth to prevent the rail link at Manchester airport because it fears the competition from Manchester airport to London on the commuter services against its inter-city services, which are already under heavy strain because of competition from Manchester airport? British Rail has a vested interest in preventing that link. Stansted is a completely different matter because it will deal with charter flight traffic, not commuter traffic. Consequently, British Rail will move heaven and earth to prevent the Manchester airport link. How will my hon. Friend deal with that?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that Stansted is different. That is why it is right that we should examine the two different propositions separately. My hon. Friend suggested that British Rail would not wish to see a link to Manchester airport, but that is not my impression from talking to British Rail management. If there is a viable proposition, both I and, I understand, British Rail are as keen as possible to secure it.

Mr. Favell: May I remind my hon. Friend that last year 500,000 passengers flew from Stansted and 5 million from Manchester? Why on earth should it be commercially viable to serve 500,000 passengers but not 5 million?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend should know that part of the assessment of Stansted is the fact that it is directly linked to London. A huge proportion of passengers who will use Stansted will come from London, just as a huge proportion go to Heathrow and Gatwick. The catchment area for Manchester is far more diffuse. There is not an overwhelming proportion of passengers who will go direct from Manchester city to the airport. They will come from many different directions. That is part of the difference in the proportion of passengers who will be carried, and is a factor in the assessment. It is not for me to make the assessment, but for British Rail to exercise its commercial judgment. I shall welcome its proposition, providing it is viable.

British Rail has said that it is prepared to invest £5 million because it sees that as a commercial contribution. If others are prepared to invest the balance and put their money where their mouths are, I can see some prospect for progress.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Will the Minister at least agree that it is grossly pessimistic of British Rail to assume that as few as four in 100 of Manchester airport's passengers will use the rail link? It is all eagerness about Stansted and all hesitation about the proposed rail link to Manchester. That is what upsets hon. Members on both sides of the House.

Mr. Mitchell: I have some sympathy with the right hon. Gentleman. I agree that one needs to look searchingly at the figures. It is right and proper that the parties who will reconsider the question, following the meeting which was held with the previous Secretary of State for Transport, look closely at the figures and at the justification for them. When the group returns to meet me and my right hon. Friend the present Secretary of State for Transport, I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that we shall give as thorough an examination as possible of all the figures. Furthermore, I give him the positive assurance that, in any assessment of an investment proposition from British Rail, we shall apply identical criteria of financial return required for Manchester as for Stansted.

Mr. Silvester: I dashed out to get a copy of the letter which the Minister sent to me on 2 June about the meeting on 14 May. I should be grateful if he could clarify exactly what the position is. It seems to me that the letter says something different from what the Minister implied in his reply to the right hon. Gentleman. The Minister said in his letter:

"British Rail have said that £5 million is the most they could justify in investing in the rail link."

We understand that. The question is whether British Rail is required to re-investigate and move from that position, or is it just other people who are asked to do so? The letter continued:

"The Secretary of State invited the deputation, in the light of their individual assessments of the prospects of the scheme, to consider the financial contribution they were prepared to make."

Does that mean that British Rail is being asked to re-investigate its contribution? Why does the Minister keep saying that British Rail, in its commercial judgment, is prepared to put up £5 million and no more, and we must like it or lump it, and that the other two parties must go away and reconsider their position? That is the crux of the debate. I believe that British Rail has every commercial justification for putting up a minimum of £7·5 million. I cannot see how any rational judgment of the revenue of the line could counter that statement. There has been no movement from Sir Bob Reid. If the matter is to be taken seriously, we must have his assurance, and that of the Secretary of State, whom I am pleased to see is in the Chamber, that they are taking the matter to the chairman and will ask him to look at the figures realistically and make a proper assessment of what the line can produce.

Mr. Mitchell: I can give my hon. Friend some reassurance. All the parties are re-examining their contributions. I shall draw my hon. Friend's point to the attention of the chairman of British Rail, so that when the representatives of the north-west meet the Secretary of State there are on the table figures as full as is consistent with commercial confidence, which demonstrate the basis upon which British Rail has arrived at them.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett: The Government are considering whether the Stansted scheme is viable. They are asking British Rail to consider further the Manchester scheme. Would it not be a good idea to suggest to the promoters that they should defer further consideration of the Bill until decisions are reached? If we waited until decisions were reached, and if there was a clear

[Mr. Andrew F. Bennett]

undertaking to the House that Stansted and Manchester were to go ahead, a great deal of the House's time could be saved. It seems rather pointless to proceed with the Bill when there are so many ifs and buts.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not want this to become an endless dialogue. I have been allowed to trespass by having an opportunity to speak a second time. While I understand the hon. Gentleman's desire to try to use the British Railways (Stansted) Bill as a lever to secure benefits for Manchester and Manchester airport, the fact of the matter is that they are separate propositions. I have gone a long way to try to ensure that there is absolute fairness in the assessment of each proposition. But it would be quite wrong to pretend that one set of calculations can be in any way related to another.

Dr. Marek: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: I have given way quite a few times, so I hope that the hon. Gentleman will allow me to continue.

The House should make its decision about Stansted. We shall have the further meeting to which I have referred in order to look again in more detail at Manchester's case.

9.50 pm

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): I listened with great interest to the Minister's speech. However, his Government made two decisions that inexorably led British Rail to consider its position. The previous Secretary of State made both of those decisions. Incidentally, I am happy to welcome the new Secretary of State to the House. Those two decisions were to go ahead with the expansion of Stansted airport, and with a fixed link across the Channel. Both decisions meant that British Rail had to reappraise its investment plans.

Those decisions were made not by British Rail but by the Government. British Rail is responding to the decisions. It has promoted a private Bill to make a link between London and Stansted because the Government gave the go-ahead for Stansted. It is also precepting an enormous amount of its resources in order to provide the infrastructure required to comply with the decision to go ahead with the Channel tunnel. I believe that it will have to spend about £55 million on the Snowhill tunnel, and that is a direct consequence of the Government's decision to have a fixed link.

Those of us who represent constituencies in the north and areas in and around Manchester, which already has an international airport, believe that the Government's decisions on those two issues involving expenditure by British Rail will precept other expenditure elsewhere. I was interested in what the Minister said about reappraising the position. I hope that the position will be reappraised. Unless that happens, the cross-party support on this issue will give the debate on the Stansted link a very bumpy ride.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe (Mr. Morris) said that he had had a meeting with the previous Secretary of State on 14 May. That date is important. The chief executive of the metropolitan borough of Wigan received a letter dated the following day, 15 May, from one of the Minister's officials. It is signed by Mr.—I assume that it is Mr.—P. G. Hewett from the Department of Transport. It says:

"We understand that British Rail's view is that there is no evidence to support the PTA's and Airport Board's view that there is a commercial case for this project. It is not for the Government to interfere with British Rail's commercial judgment and it is certainly not for the Government to press British Rail to finance a project out of its own resources if they believe it to be inherently risky. British Rail are, we understand, prepared to put up a certain sum of money, amounting to about one third of the cost of the whole project, which they believe is the largest sum that is commercially justifiable for this investment, but it remains open to local authorities in the Manchester area to top up that sum to meet the whole cost of the project."

That letter was written the day after my right hon. Friend and other hon. Members had had a meeting with the former Secretary of State. I do not know whether the civil servant who wrote that letter was involved in that meeting, or whether he was aware of the shifting of the sands.

The Department's view is that it is up to British Rail. British Rail is saying to the Department that it is not commercially viable to have a link between Manchester and its airport. That is nonsense. As my hon. Friends representing constituencies in Manchester and the north-east have said, British Rail has not provided us with the statistical and financial information on which it bases that judgment. It has refused——

Mr. Tony Lloyd: I beg to move, That strangers do withdraw.

Notice being taken that strangers were present, MR. SPEAKER, *pursuant to Standing Order No. 136 (Withdrawal of strangers from the House), put forthwith the Question,* That strangers do withdraw:—

The House proceeded to a Division——

Mr. Tony Lloyd *(seated and covered):* On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I should like to bring to your attention the fact that the debate started a little after 9 o'clock, the Minister has taken some 20 minutes, and it was obvious that a closure motion would be moved while many Members were still anxious to speak. I felt it necessary, to protect their interests, that the Question on the motion, That strangers do withdraw be put to the House, although I regret doing it in principle. It is a great shame that we have to use such tactics at this stage. I should be grateful if you would say whether, as a result of the motion, it will be possible for a closure motion to be accepted after 10 o'clock.

Mr. Speaker: It is in order for me to put the closure motion after 10 o'clock if this motion goes through, and if the closure motion is moved.

The House having divided: Ayes 17, Noes 226.

Division No. 199] **[9.55 pm**

AYES

Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Martin, Michael
Caborn, Richard	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Patchett, Terry
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Redmond, Martin
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*	Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Clarke, Thomas	Welsh, Michael
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	
Deakins, Eric	Tellers for the Ayes:
Forrester, John	Mr. Fred Silvester and
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*	Mr. Tony Lloyd.
McKelvey, William	

NOES

Adley, Robert
Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blair, Anthony
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyes, Roland
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clay, Robert
Clegg, Sir Walter
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dover, Den
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Home Robertson, John
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marek, Dr John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Maynard, Miss Joan
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Raynsford, Nick
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Skinner, Dennis
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

It being after Ten o'clock, MR. SPEAKER *proceeded to interrupt the business.*

10.9 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest) *rose in his place and claimed to move,* That the Question be now put.

Question put, That the Question be now put:—

The House proceeded to a Division—

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett *(seated and covered):* Mr. Speaker, was it fair to move the closure at this stage when it is clear that on the Opposition side of the House there are a substantial number of hon. Members who wish to continue to debate the issue and when the House agreed in the previous debate not to grant a closure?

It is unfair to force a closure on the House at this stage, as many hon. Members wish to debate the matter. The closure will simply mean that hon. Members will have to return to the issue again on further proceedings on the Bill, whereas had no decision been reached tonight, and had the promoters and other parties concerned been able to reach agreement, we could have made speedy progress.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must take into account the fact that the Bill has previously had three hours of discussion and a further hour this evening. It is well within precedent for me to accept a closure motion at this time.

Mr. Straw *(seated and covered):* Mr. Speaker, may I respectfully ask you what precedent there is for accepting after 10 o'clock a closure on private business which has been scheduled to take place between 7 o'clock and 10 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker: I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to pages 453 and 454 of "Erskine May", which deal with closures at the projected moment of interruption. The hon. Gentleman will find the precedents set out there.

The House having divided: Ayes 217, Noes 106.

Division No. 200] **[10.10 pm**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Portillo, Michael
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson and
Mr. Michael Shersby.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blackburn, John
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Burt, Alistair
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clegg, Sir Walter
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'll)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dover, Den
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Anthony
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William

Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Whitfield, John
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Robert Litherland and
Mr. Terry Lewis.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Question put, That the Bill be now read a Second time:

The House divided: Ayes 209, Noes 93.

Division No. 201] **[10.22 pm**

AYES

Amess, David
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Bellingham, Henry
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Buck, Sir Antony
Butcher, John
Butterfill, John
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Critchley, Julian
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Emery, Sir Peter
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Gailey, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
George, Bruce
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S.
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leadbitter, Ted
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malone, Gerald
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moate, Roger
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Prescott, John
Price, Sir David
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertfordshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(Bheath)*
Trotter, Neville
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson and
Mr. Michael Shersby.

NOES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Blackburn, John
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr David *(S Shields)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clegg, Sir Walter
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Deakins, Eric
Dixon, Donald
Dover, Den
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Favell, Anthony
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Franks, Cecil
Gould, Bryan
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Haynes, Frank
Hayward, Robert
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*

Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Lawler, Geoffrey
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McWilliam, John
Marek, Dr John
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pike, Peter
Raynsford, Nick
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Silvester, Fred
Skinner, Dennis
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Sumberg, David
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Trippier, David
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Tony Lloyd and
Mr. Robert Litherland.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Motion relating to the Channel Tunnel Bill (Procedure) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. —*[Mr. Durant.]*

Channel Tunnel Bill (Procedure)

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Lord Privy Seal to move the motion, I should inform the House that I have not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper.

May I also remind the House that the motion is a procedural motion on whether the Standing Orders relating to private business should be dispensed with in the case of the Channel Tunnel Bill and on the earliest date for presenting petitions against the Bill? This is not an occasion to canvass the merits of the Bill, which can be fully debated during its Second Reading on Thursday.

10.34 pm

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): I beg to move,

That in the case of the Channel Tunnel Bill the Standing Orders relating to Private Business, so far as not complied with in the respect mentioned in the Report of the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills relating to that Bill [28th April], be dispensed with and the Bill be permitted to proceed;

That in the event of the Bill being read a second time, the earliest date which, in any motion for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee, may be specified as the date by which a Petition against the Bill must be presented in order to stand referred to the Committee shall be 17th June.

The motion before us tonight would provide for the progress of the Channel Tunnel Bill. As such, it deals with a narrow but highly significant procedural point which has come up rarely over the past 40 years or so.

In these unfamiliar circumstances, I hope that it will be helpful to the House if I begin by saying a few words about the nature of the Bill, and about the Standing Orders referred to in the motion. I then propose to explain briefly why the Bill was considered by the Standing Orders Committee. Lastly, I intend to address the reasons why the Government believe that the Standing Orders should be dispensed with in this instance.

As was the case with earlier legislation dealing with this subject, this Channel Tunnel Bill is hybrid. This means that while it is a public Bill, like any other Bill introduced by a Government, it may in certain respects affect private rights. There is nothing intrinsically unusual or controversial in a hybrid Bill. The House will recall that this Session we have already debated and passed without undue disruption or delay what is now the Museum of London Act 1986, which was hybrid.

What hybridity does mean, however, is that during the Bill's passage it must do more than go through all the stages of a public Bill both here and in another place. Additionally, it must meet certain of the requirements for consideration by Parliament of a Bill affecting private interests. These are set out in the Standing Orders relating to private business.

These Standing Orders are based on the annual cycle for presentation and deposit of private Bills. For this reason, they are set out within clearly defined time disciplines. These require that those seeking to promote a private Bill must present their petition to do so and deposit the Bill in the Private Bill Office on or before 27 November. They must also give notice to affected parties directly, and more generally by placing advertisements in newspapers for two successive weeks on or before 11 December. Those who seek to petition against a private Bill must present their petitions on or before 30 January, following the Bill's deposit some eight weeks before.

This structure for giving notice and for petitioning is designed to help potential petitioners and to ensure that they may have an opportunity of expressing their views effectively, but the structure is not immovable or rigid, and provided that petitioners' rights are protected, its requirements may, on occasion, be waived.

This may be done as follows. If a Bill has failed to comply with the relevant Standing Orders, the Clerks who act as Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills must report to the House any non-compliance, and the matter is then referred to the Standing Orders Committee. This Committee, under the Chairman of Ways and Means, may judge it appropriate to dispense with the Standing Orders which have not been met if this is found to be in the public interest and not unfair to potential petitioners.

I have been referring to private Bills, but the Standing Orders Committee may also have a role in relation to compliance with Standing Orders by a hybrid Bill, since it has a private element. Standing Order 224 relating to private business provides a procedure by which the Examiners decide whether a Bill is hybrid and Standing Orders 4 to 68 should therefore apply to it. These Standing Orders deal with the deposit of the Bill and the giving of notice. If their requirements have not been met, the Examiners must report any non-compliance with them. As when a private Bill has failed to comply with the Standing Orders, the matter then goes to the Standing Orders Committee.

Manifestly, the Channel Tunnel Bill has not been able to meet the date-related provisions of these Standing Orders. On 20 January my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Transport said that legislation would be introduced this Session as soon as possible. Again, the White Paper, which the House approved by 268 votes to 107 on 10 February, stated that it was the Government's aim to bring forward legislation in the spring of this year, as we have done.

It was clear that if we were to carry out our intention which had been approved by the House there would be no possibility of the Bill's being able to comply with Standing Orders as far as dates for deposit and giving notice were concerned. Instead, the Channel Tunnel Bill was given its First Reading on Thursday 17 April, and notice was given in newspapers the following day.

I should add that no difficulty has been made about the form in which the Bill was deposited, or about the form in which notice was given to interested parties and in the newspapers. It is only in respect of date that the Bill could not meet the requirements of Standing Orders.

In the light of this non-compliance, the Bill was duly considered by the Examiners and their report was referred to the Standing Orders Committee. The Committee felt that it should be for the House to determine whether Standing Orders should be set aside in this instance. Its report to the House, therefore, stated that the Committee declined to make a recommendation as to whether the Standing Orders ought to be dispensed with, and believed that the matter ought to be decided by the House.

Of course, we accept and respect the decision of the Committee. The Channel Tunnel Bill is an unusual, if not unique, piece of legislation, involving both a major measure of public policy and a range of private interests.

I suggested earlier that this was an unusual debate. Just how unusual is evidenced by the thin field of precedents in this area. To find a precedent for the Standing Orders Committee referring a Bill to the House for a decision one

[Mr. John Biffen]

has to go back to the London County Council Tramway and Improvement Bill in 1920. More generally, there are few recent precedents for the Standing Orders Committee considering hybrid Bills. None the less, I am sure the House will wish to take into account the precedents which exist.

In the period since 1953, four late Government hybrid Bills were considered by the Standing Orders Committee. The most recent of these was the Winfrith Heath Bill in 1957. All four Bills had failed to meet the date-related provisions of Standing Orders. In all four cases Standing Orders were dispensed with and the Bill was able to proceed. I should add that there is no record—at any rate in this century—of Standing Orders not being dispensed with in these circumstances in the case of a hybrid Bill.

Valuable though precedent is as a guide in this unfamiliar area, the House, I am sure, would not wish to proceed except on the basis of fair arrangements for those who might wish to oppose the Bill's effects on them. The Government believe that those whose interests may be affected by the Bill should have an opportunity to marshall their arguments effectively, as they would have if affected by a private Bill.

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): Will the Leader of the House confirm that the alternative timetable for petitions suggested in the amendment tabled by my right hon. and hon. Friends would still allow the Bill to complete its passage within the 12-month period from then during the next Session of Parliament, and that therefore there would be no constitutional or procedural reason for regarding that as an invalid alternative timetable to allow the Bill to proceed?

Mr. Biffen: I think that it would significantly impede the Bill. I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that that is precisely the matter that may come up on the committal procedure on Thursday. Therefore, I hope that the hon. Gentleman will excuse me if I do not pre-empt the debate that will take place then.

In the case of a private Bill, the period for petitioning would be from 4 December to 30 January—about eight weeks. In the case of this Bill, the period would have run from 18 April. The House will note that as part of this motion the Government propose that the latest date by which petitions against the Bill should be required should not be earlier than 17 June. This is to ensure that again there will have been a period of about eight weeks for the petitioners to prepare their case. I believe that this indicates that, far from seeking to stampede this Bill through the House, the Government are concerned that before the closing date the petitioners should have had a time broadly equivalent to that prescribed in Standing Orders.

Furthermore, there can be no likelihood that those who might be affected by the Bill can be unaware of what is planned. Those most concerned will have received direct notice. Those with a more general interest will have seen the advertisements in the newspapers. The general publicity which the plans and their proposed timescale have been accorded since the announcement of 20 January and even earlier has helped to ensure that these will not have been missed. In addition, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State has held a number of meetings with organisations concerned, and the Department of Transport has issued a leaflet explaining how to petition against the Bill's effects.

In conclusion, I seek support for this motion on the basis of precedent and of fair provision for petitioners. The arrangement proposed is necessary to allow both the Bill and petitions against it to proceed in an orderly fashion, in accordance with what the House has already approved.

10.45 pm

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): The House will be grateful to the Lord Privy Seal for his description and elucidation of hybrid Bill procedures. Despite an uncontroversial presentation of his case, the House should be reminded that we are discussing the Government's latest manoeuvre to push through the Channel Tunnel Bill and to curtail the time available to those who oppose it to present their manifold objections and to mobilise the growing concern outside and inside the House at what the project involves.

As the Lord Privy Seal has reminded us, following the publication of the Channel Tunnel Bill the examiners of private Bills were asked to examine the Bill and to ascertain whether it conformed to the standing orders relating to private business. On 28 April the examiners reported:

"that in the case of the above named Bill . . . certain Standing Orders relating to private business are applicable thereto and have not been complied with in respect of the time prescribed by the Standing Orders for the giving and publishing of notices and the making of deposits."

Since the examiners found that the Bill had not complied with standing orders, the issue was referred to the Standing Orders Committee under the chairmanship of the Chairman of Ways and Means. Its remit was to consider whether in this case the standing orders should be dispensed with, and the Bill allowed to proceed.

Having heard informal evidence from the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), the Committee received statements from the Government agents for the Bill and from agents acting for the Dover Harbour Board and Sealink Ltd., supporting a petition against dispensation of the standing orders. The agents presented their case with substantial verbal statements and were cross-examined by the Committee at its hearing on 20 May. At the end, as the House will know from the special report from the Committee, which was available yesterday, the Committee was evenly divided on the question put to it, and the Chairman declined to use his casting vote. Therefore, the Committee concluded:

"That, in the case of the Channel Tunnel Bill, the Committee declines to make a recommendation as to whether the Standing Orders ought to be dispensed with and believes that this matter ought to be decided by the House."

That is an extraordinary event because the last time a Standing Orders Committee failed to reach a decision on a request for the dispensation of standing orders was in 1920.

Having failed to obtain the Committee's consent to the dispensing of the standing orders, the Government have tabled this motion in which the Leader of the House seeks to enlist the support of the Government's whipped majority for dispensation. No one who has read the Committee's special report can fail to understand why that Committee was placed in such difficulties and why it refused its consent. Although the Committee, in its report to the House, does not explain the grounds for its

determination, "Erskine May" sets out the principles and general rules by which the Committee is guided. I quote from "Erskine May":

"broadly speaking the Committee takes into account three questions: first, whether it is in the public interest, apart from that of the promoters, that the Standing Orders should be dispensed with; secondly, whether the promoters have been negligent and, thirdly, to what extent the parties other than the promoters will be adversely affected. According to the general view which it may take of the whole of the circumstances, the Committee will report either that the Standing Orders ought not to be dispensed with or that they ought to be dispensed with and parties be permitted (subject or not subject to any conditions) to proceed with their Bill."

From the exchanges that took place in the meeting of the Standing Orders Committee on 20 May, it is reasonably clear that the main concern of the Committee and its members was the public interest and the adverse effects the issue would have on parties other then the promoters. That the Committee should have been faced with those difficulties in coming to a decision is, at root, the major criticism to be made of the Government's handling of the whole issue of the Channel tunnel.

The Channel tunnel is by far the biggest civil engineering work ever contemplated in this country or, we are told, anywhere in Europe. It will have profound effects on the environment, not just in the Cheriton area but in the whole of Kent. It will have major impact on the location of industry and services in the United Kingdom, with a strongly adverse tilt against Scotland, Wales and the northern regions. It will directly affect the Channel ports, the sea ferries and the merchant navy. Its construction raises major questions of safety, security and control.

Yet, in spite of these and other factors, there has been no public inquiry into the project. It is as though the planning legislation of the past 40 years never existed. All that we have had is a report of the Select Committee on Transport and two debates in the House of Commons. The major decisions, both to establish a fixed link across the Channel and to approve the rail link scheme of the Channel Tunnel Group have been taken solely by Ministers and officials in London and Paris.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): The right hon. Gentleman has made a powerful point in saying that Kent will be disadvantaged. As a Kent Member, I entirely agree. Kent will be disadvantaged for a period by the activity involved in building the tunnel. The right hon. Gentleman went on to say that Scotland will be disadvantaged by Britain being more closely linked to Europe. He said that because he is anti-Europe. He has fought against Europe throughout his parliamentary life. He should not bring that into this debate.

Mr. Shore: Whatever my personal and private views — indeed, my public views — are about Europe, the argument in this case is whether the contentions that have been put forward and the fears expressed should be subjected to an independent and impartial inquiry instead of being shoved down the throat of the British Parliament in the way that they have been so far.

Public inquiries are essential to democratic decision-making. That has been accepted by successive Governments since 1945. Public inquiry procedures, which were thought essential for terminal 4 at Heathrow, for Stansted last year, for the PWR reactor at Sizewell, and for hundreds of lesser projects, have been jettisoned for the one project which towers above all others in national significance. Instead of a public inquiry in which national and other interests could be fully tested and instead of a debate on a special development order in which the House could, with full information, give its considered vote, we have had a peremptory exercise of prerogative power — the treaty signed with the Government of France at Canterbury on 12 February. Now the Government are bent upon steamrolling the Bill through the House of Commons.

The motion before us, if passed, will dispense with the standing orders relating to private business, and the Second Reading will proceed on Thursday of this week. The motion goes on to say:

"That in the event of the Bill being read a second time, the earliest date which, in any motion for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee, may be specified as the date by which a Petition against the Bill must be presented in order to stand referred to the Committee shall be 17th June."

That is the earliest date. But surely that is misleading, for we have on the Order Paper a further motion in the name of the Secretary of State for Transport, which states:

"that there shall stand referred to the Select Committee any petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 17th June."

So 17 June turns out to be both the earliest and the latest date, which is a most remarkable piece of contradictory draftsmanship for two separate motions from two different Ministers.

But the important point is that 17 June lies just 14 days ahead. Just how rapidly the Government hope to push through the consideration of the Bill became plain in the discussion that took place before the Standing Orders Committee on 20 May on the note of the Government agent's timetable. The Government expect the Select Committee to take no more than six weeks to complete its report — before the end of July. They then expect to get it through Standing Committee in the overspill period, by the end of October. It will then of course go through a similar procedure in the House of Lords and, according to the Government agent, receive the Royal Assent in around April 1987.

In our view — and it was the view strongly argued before the Standing Orders Committee — this timetable is disgracefully short. While it is true that the Bill was published in April and Standing Orders relating to newspaper advertisements and notices to owners of land and the deposit of documents were adhered to, we believe that there should be at least six weeks for petitions to be prepared. That is why, next Thursday, we are proposing the amendment that the date should be 17 July and not 17 June.

But more important than that is the whole procedure for hearing petitions by the Select Committee in the case of a hybrid Bill. Under normal procedures — normal, that is, since 14 February 1949 — Erskine May says that

"unless the House has given any instruction or indication to the contrary, the Second Reading is considered to remove from the promoters the onus of proving the expediency of the Bill".

I stress the words:

"unless the House has given any instruction or indication to the contrary".

That is precisely why we have today tabled an amendment to the motion of the Secretary of State for Transport on Thursday, in the following words:

"and that in the proceedings before the Select Committee the obligations upon the promoters of the Bill of presentation and proof shall conform to the procedures followed in Private Bills".

[Mr. Shore]

In short, the onus of proof would, if our amendment was accepted, fall upon the promoters of the Bill and not on the petitioners against it.

Clearly that is a procedural option that the House could, and should insist upon. In support of that quote from the evidence given to the Standing Orders Committee by Mr. Durkin, the agent for the petitioners. It is important to stress, as he did, that he was speaking not only for Dover Harbour Board, and Sealink but also for European Ferries, the Council for the Protection of Rural England, the Transport and General Workers Union, the National Union of Seamen and the National Union of Marine, Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers. As Mr. Durkin said:

"this is a most exceptional, if not unique Hybrid Bill, as the Secretary of State for Transport put it on the 9th December 1985 and is reported in *Hansard* Column 642: 'the project is most unusual both in its scale and in that it will be financed wholly in the private sector'.

Sir this Bill is really more private than public. If it is enacted and put into effect, it will permit one set of private persons, including foreign bankers, to enrich themselves considerably at the expense of other private persons — such as the ferry operators and their employees and those who work at several ports such as Dover and Folkestone."

He concluded:

"in my submission the Bill should be treated, as nearly as possible, as a private Bill and those whose interests would be adversely affected by it should be given as ample an opportunity to object to it as they would in the case of a private Bill."

As the House knows, in the case of a private Bill, even when a Second Reading has been secured, the onus of proof remains upon the promotors to persuade the Select Committee that the proposals are in the public interest, and that damage would not be unnecessarily inflicted upon other private interests involved.

The amendment that we have proposed for Thursday would ensure at least a far more searching examination of the proposals for a fixed link than would otherwise be possible. But this is only a second best—a compromise. It would be far better if the House refused to give the Channel Tunnel Bill exemption from the requirements of standing orders. It could be introduced again properly in November. The intervening period could be used for further studies, debate and negotiations in relation to the most important project of this century. I therefore recommend the House to reject the motion before it tonight.

11.1 pm

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): In considering a matter of this kind, there are two dangers. On the one hand there is the danger of being bogged down in procedural niceties, or being lured into them, and on the other hand there is the danger of allowing one's prejudices or very strong views about the central nature of the project or the fundamental existence of the parliamentary procedure to affect one's view of what we are debating tonight.

The essential point that we ought to be debating is whether it is fair to dispense with the normal protection provided by Standing Orders in a matter of this kind. More broadly still, does the procedure as a whole that would flow from what we are being invited to do tonight enable those with anxieties about the problem, or who are opposed to it and wish to put their case, to put that case properly and have their case considered properly?

Generally, the case for proceeding in this matter by way of a hybrid Bill is persuasive and reasonable. I do not think that it is fair to castigate it as steamrolling the project through. It is wrong to say that the Government are not enabling the matter to be considered fairly by proceeding in this way. A procedure of this kind should and can provide ample opportunities for objections to be considered, and as full and ample opportunities as any other means of proceeding. That is so — it is an important and crucial proviso—where there is adequate time for objectors to prepare and put their case. Even the most enthusiastic supporters of the project must concede that many people are passionately opposed to the project, either as a whole or particular aspects of it, on environmental grounds and because of what they believe it will do to certain parts of Kent. Those who take that view must have the proper time to prepare their opposition and present it.

Many of those people live in Folkestone. Nobody has watched over their interests more keenly and been more concerned that Parliament should have a proper opportunity to hear what they have to say than my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). His position within the Government may have prevented him from speaking about these matters on the Floor of the House. As one who has been a member of the Government until comparatively recently, I can assure the House and my hon. and learned Friend's constituents that it has positively assisted him to make sure that what his constituents think and feel about the matter can be properly considered in Government and in Parliament. Indeed, my hon. and learned Friend has been extremely active in the constituency. On this coming Saturday he will be holding an all-day surgery at which he will advise his constituents who wish to put forward objections in a petition on how to do so.

Naturally, I have discussed this matter with my hon. and learned Friend on a number of occasions, and as a result I have come to the conclusion that, although generally the procedure that the Government have worked out is fair, it does not, as at present envisaged, give quite enough time for the individual petitioner to put in his petition. That is why with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) I have tabled the amendment that we shall be debating more fully on Thursday. I make no apology for referring to it tonight, because the principle in it is central to what we are considering today, which is whether it is fair to proceed as the Government are commending.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) has asked me to show his support for the amendment, as he unfortunately cannot be here today because he is on parliamentary business overseas, and others of my hon. Friends have also shown their support for the approach reflected in the amendment. It adds only a short period to the time for petitions, but I happen to believe, and the support given to me by a number of my hon. Friends who are personally concerned with this matter leads me to take the view that it is a reasonable belief, that that extra time is crucial for the individual petitioner.

There is no doubt that the corporate petitioners—the big boys—have had ample time to consider their case and will be able to put their petitions in the period envisaged by the Government. However, it is not

unreasonable to ask for the ordinary petitioner — the individual — that extra time represented by the change from 17 June to 27 June.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, when he winds up the debate, and although the substance of the matter will be debated on Thursday, will be able to show the Government's attitude to my amendment. I know that a number of hon. Members considering today's debate will watch with anxiety for any sign that my hon. Friend feels able to make. If he is able to smile on the amendment and show that the Government will consider it sympathetically, I know that the attitude of many of my hon. Friends towards the procedure that my hon. Friend is proposing will be materially and favourably affected.

I feel that the Government are proceeding in a way that gives an opportunity in principle for the objectors to put their case forward to be considered. However, the time envisaged is not sufficient, and I hope that it will be possible for the Government to agree that the suggested small amount of extra time will not prejudice the decision that they are seeking to make. If they do, that will be seen to be a reasonable concession to those who are asking for the right to come to Parliament to put their point of view as forcefully, as clearly and as effectively as they can.

11.8 pm

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), speaking on behalf of the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and others made a speech that smacked of contrivance. I do not say that critically, but it must be manifest to all those who looked at the Order Paper that between now and Thursday there are three options.

The first is the option suggested by the Leader of the House — that is the starting point of the negotiation — that the end of the period for receiving petitions should be a mere 12 working days from now, on 17 June.

There is the option outlined in the amendment in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself, which suggests that the appropriate date is 29 July, 54 days, or nearly eight weeks, from the date of Second Reading, if it is granted by this House on Thursday. There was not much time to table this amendment as the Government's motion went down in the last hours before Parliament rose for the late spring recess.

The third option, advocated by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks, suggests that the date should be shifted backwards from 17 June to 27 June. That would provide a period of 22 days from Second Reading, if it is granted on Thursday.

The issues of principle go beyond the issue of specific dates. It is right that we should separate our views about the substantive issue—to be debated on Thursday—and today's debate on the procedure. The Government attitude to consultation is demonstrated by the fact that they are willing to provide for debate on today's motion and, in the expectation that it is approved, two days later set down the motion that the Second Reading be debated. That suggests a somewhat sceptical view about the right of the House to reject the Government's motion today. I recall the Leader of the House's reply to me in business questions just before the House rose when he said that should the House defeat the motion tonight the Government would think again about the timetable for the Second Reading.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): The hon. Gentleman must be under no illusions. If the procedural motion is defeated tonight, the Second Reading will be discharged and cannot be considered again this Session.

Mr. Simon Hughes: The hon. Gentleman is right. I was implying that the Government were generous enough to make that concession only and no more. We would prefer a reasonable intervening period to separate this debate from the Second Reading. The Government accepted that the House has a right, if minded so to do, to reject the Government's motion tonight.

This issue is important procedurally because of the enormity of the substantive issue before the House. The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) was correct when he said that we are debating what is, in all probability, the biggest civil engineering project ever seen in Europe. The introduction of the Bill in April suggests that the Government are proceeding very hastily. To the people of Kent and many others, that smacks of the steamroller approach. It completely disregards the right of individuals to put their case. The Government rejected the call for a public inquiry. Therefore, the timetable should accommodate the fact that there is to be no public inquiry and to allow the maximum opportunity for those concerned, in accordance with precedents, to make their case.

It is most important that the timetable should allow sufficient time. Our views are clear, and our two amendments dealt with two matters — the timetable and the procedure. Our duty is great. The House is aware that the Standing Orders Committee made no recommendations to the House and was tied in its vote as to what should happen — whether the House should disregard the rules. The rules and precedent are clear. The precedent is cited in the special report of the Committee at page X, paragraph 9, which refers back to the Channel Bill introduced in the 1973-74 Session.

That Bill was read a Second time on 5 December 1973 and petitions against the Bill were ordered to be deposited by 15 January 1974. That was a period of almost six weeks, and the Select Committee which considered the Bill first met on 14 May 1974, which gave the petitioners more than five months in which to deposit their petitions.

If the Government are minded to make concessions, as they were invited so to do by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, we suggest that the appropriate period should be in accordance with precedent, and that from Second Reading people should have about eight weeks in which to exercise their rights to present petitions and for them to be considered. If the Government made that concession, and 29 July was the final date, it would provide a perfectly adequate period for consultation and negotiation in accordance with the normal rules and precedence in the House, and it would allow the Bill to be proceeded with — transferring it between one Session and another under the normal rules — debated in this House and the other place during next Session, and be completed in time for the matter to go on to the statute book without risk to the project, but with the great additional advantage that the people of Kent and those who have proper environmental and other anxieties would have had an opportunity to put their case.

This is a unique hybrid Bill, and it is all the more important that a proper timetable be allowed so that people can make their views clear.

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

The second matter that should concern hon. Members is the way in which the Bill proceeds from now on and the way in which people are allowed to assess the arguments. So far it has been accepted that the Government will present their case, but they have refused to accept that there should be any cross-examination on that case at the beginning. It is practically difficult to allow people to know how best to question, argue against and deal with the Government's view when that view has not been tested and the potential weaknesses in some of their arguments have not been discovered.

It would accord with normal private Bill procedure to provide an opportunity to cross-examine the Government at the beginning, so that not only can their case be heard, but it can be tested before the petitioners have the opportunity to give their evidence. That is especially important because, despite the fact that the Bill was read the First time in April and the newspaper advertisements were placed, there has been considerable delay in providing some information.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport will know that letters have been written by anxious people and organisations to his Department and to the Department of the Environment complaining, for example, that maps were ready for the first time only on 16 May and making it clear that the impact study on Kent will not be ready until a date as yet unspecified. In the 1970s, at least a similar document and the proper environmental assessments were available before the Committee stage on that Bill was due to proceed. Other essential background information is so far unavailable.

The Committee chaired by the Minister of State and including representatives of Kent county council and the district councils of Kent, which meets in private and excludes the press and the public, has been unable to establish its exact role and what effects the consultation process will have, if any, on the result, so people in Kent and beyond are being expected to work in a vacuum because of the speed with which the Government are proceeding with the Bill.

My colleagues and I hope that the Minister will not simply fall for the blandishments of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond and advocate the compromise solution of principle on behalf of his right hon. and hon. Friends. We hope that he will accept that the precedents should be followed and that the full period of eight weeks should elapse as suggested by my right hon. Friends and myself. At the end of that period there should follow the appropriate period for consultation and negotiation.

Mr. Crouch: I was interested in the hon. Gentleman's remarks about the period for consultation. Has he considered the exact number of days that can be given to the consideration of the private aspects of the Bill by the Select Committee? Is he aware that the Bill can be dealt with not just on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursday mornings and afternoons, but on Monday mornings and afternoons as well?

Mr. Hughes: I am aware that the scope for those considering the Bill, the nine people if the recommendation is accepted, is open ended and that they will have substantial opportunities on many days of the week and, as I understand it, if necessary, thoughout the recess—although there will practical difficulties about that—to take evidence and deal with the Bill.

The most important issue which I hope that the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) will accept, is that, because this is the most substantial Bill of its type, the balance that the House is striving to achieve between the public interest and the fairness to those with a private interest must be achieved. The best test and argument for that would be to follow the precedents and establish a period between now and the rising of the House for the summer recess to allow the matter to be completed in the next Session, as many hon. Members would wish.

I hope that the Government will realise that it is their haste and refusal to accept the anxieties of those who have valid and considerable concerns to present by way of petition to the Committee which is causing difficulty and disrespect. The Government could accommodate people's interests and proceed in accordance with precedent and thus chart a right course for the Bill. We hope that, rather than proceeding without taking into account the concerns that have been properly expressed, they will follow precedent and will accept our advice and permit the proper and maximum period of eight weeks from this week before they proceed to the Committee stage of this nationally important legislation.

11.22 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am opposed to this motion, as it seeks to short change the people of Kent and to deny them the fair play that they have been struggling to achieve ever since the Government launched on this rash and rushed adventure with the Channel tunnel.

The obscure argument tonight about the Standing Orders cloaks a real flesh and blood gut issue, and that is the need for simple justice. I argued the case for the people of Kent before the Standing Orders Committee last month, and I shall argue it again tonight. At that time the case was derided by the enthusiasts of the Channel tunnel as some form of time-wasting device. I hope that those who said that will reconsider and withdraw their remarks.

Obviously the case has serious merit. If it did not, the Standing Orders Committee would not have been deadlocked in a tied vote. In passing, I should like to pay tribute to the Standing Orders Committee for its scrupulous fairness and courtesy in giving me the opportunity to come before it. Incidentally, I make no criticism of the Chairman of Ways and Means for his decision not to use his casting vote. In the circumstances, that was probably the correct thing to do. As a result of that deadlock, the issue now returns to the House and leaves me the task of repeating my plea for justice, which I believe would best be upheld by a strict application of the Standing Orders of the House.

I shall not argue the issues of the Bill—there will be plenty of time for that on Thursday—but before I zero in on the technicalities of the argument about our Standing Orders I want to spend a few seconds on the human fears and anxieties which lie behind such issues as the petitioning dates and the violation of Standing Orders Nos. 4 to 59.

It is now well known that the Channel tunnel is the biggest civil engineering project ever seen in Europe, approximately the equivalent of building three or four London airports in a small and overcrowded corner of east Kent. Only a vague impression can be gained of the

enormity of this project from the cold print of 118 pages of the Bill, but the sweeping powers of compulsory purchase, the closure of some 50 footpaths and bridleways and the changing of some 70 roads, the destruction of woodlands and damage to sites of special scientific interest and the massive building programme of £3 billion worth of new railways, motorways, trunk roads, marshalling yards, terminals and tunnels can be seen there. Those schemes look grandiose enough on paper, but they take on the horrific form of a monster to the inhabitants of the small coastal towns and villages where they will hurt most.

Those communities will also be hurt by the permanent job losses that they will suffer. Estimates of the net loss of permanent jobs range from the Government's perhaps optimistic White Paper forecast of 3,000 permanent jobs lost in Dover and Folkestone alone, while at the pessimistic end of the scale the London stockbrokers Phillips and Drew report that some 30,000 to 40,000 jobs will be lost in what they call a bloodbath in the ferry towns; not just the Channel ports, but as far away as Hull, Immingham, Harwich, Felixstowe, Portsmouth and Plymouth.

Whatever the accuracy of those various forecasts, the one thing that is certain is that although there may be financial gains in the project for the big business promoters, many humble individuals and businesses stand to lose from it. There will be loss of jobs, property, business, environment, peace and quiet and quality of life. All the people who will be losers have rights. It is those rights and the fair protection of them by Parliament through our established procedures that are at the heart of the argument tonight about Standing Orders.

Why do so many people fear that their rights are being trampled on? Unfortunately, the Government have now consistently given the impression that they are in some sort of headlong rush to accelerate the Bill through Parliament on a wholly unrealistic and unfair timetable. That impression, despite many warnings, must have been reinforced by this week's parliamentary agenda. We have this late night motion now, followed by a breathtakingly presumptuous assumption of the House's decision this evening, because already the Second Reading debate has been tabled on Thursday, and then we have another late night sitting on the committal motion immediately after that. The Government are certainly in a hurry.

Also in a hurry are the promoters—the consortium. The other day I heard some remarks by the Channel Tunnel Group chairman, Lord Pennock, who, in the "World at One" on 8 May, said:

> "I have 32 banks around the world seeking to lend us £3·5 billion, and if Parliament goes on mucking around like this waiting and waiting it will be a year before the Bill receives the Royal Assent next March. I certainly wouldn't put money into it if I was a Japanese banker or an American banker or a banker in Brussels when I feel that all this mucking about is going on."

That attitude says something. It says that the rights of the ordinary citizen are in danger of being crushed by an unholy alliance between greedy foreign business men and impatient Government business managers.

That brings us back to Standing Orders, which, after all, are here fundamentally to preserve rights and which, among other things, set down a timetable to preserve rights; for example, a timetable of dates on which newspaper advertisements must be published in order to give proper notice of people's rights and ability to be able to petition.

To illustrate my point of what has gone wrong, let me ask hon. Members to imagine themselves in the position of a man who lives in my constituency, say in a village such as some of those around Canterbury——

Mr. Crouch: They are nowhere near my hon. Friend's constituency. He should stick to his constituency.

Mr. Aitken: I fear that the disease of irascibility has been passed on from Lord Pennock to my hon. Friend. There are villages such as Wingham and Preston in my constituency which are on the edge of Canterbury, and the point that I seek to make if my hon. Friend will contain himself is simply this: imagine somebody living in one of those villages who wishes to petition against the Bill. He fears that his job connected with the ferries in Dover or Ramsgate could be in jeopardy and wishes to petition for certain safeguards to preserve his livelihood. The first date on which an advertisement appeared in his local paper, the "Canterbury Times"——

Mr. Crouch: It is the *Kentish Gazette*.

Mr. Aitken: It was referred to in the Minister's reply to a question. The advertisement placed in the local Canterbury paper——

Mr. Crouch: It is the *Kentish Gazette*, which dates back to 1768.

Mr. Aitken: Just about as long ago as people started to argue about this tunnel.

The date on which the advertisement appeared was 28 April. If Standing Orders had been observed, the advertisement would have been placed in December. April 28 is a significant date, because that is the date on which the Examiners ruled that Standing Orders had been violated. That is the date on which I first wrote to the Chairman of Ways and Means complaining that unfair practices had been going on at breakneck speed which denied some of my constituents their rights. On the following day I sought and received a ruling from Mr. Speaker which confirmed that the Standing Orders of the House had been broken. I drew attention then to the Government's own draft timetable, which had been published for local authorities. That timetable said that 2 June was the closing date for petitions, that the Select Committee would begin its hearings on 17 June and would finish them on 24 July.

I ask the House to imagine the feelings of an ordinary person in one of those villages around Canterbury. The first day on which he learns in his local paper how to petition, he simultaneously learns that it will all be over by 25 July and that the House will have dealt with the whole matter. The publication of that timetable caused consternation and confusion in Kent. People were asking questions like: will the Government give us a fair hearing? Will we get adequate time for petitioning? Will the Government stand by the spirit and the letter of their assurances on petitions?

We need to look closely at the assurances given by the Government to the House. The assurances date back to the report of the Select Committee on Transport on the fixed link in, I think, November of last year. The Select Committee concluded that because of its scope and size the only realistic precedent among hybrid Bills for the present Bill was the Channel Tunnel Bill of 1973-74, and it urged the Government to follow the generous ground rules

[Mr. Aitken]

established under the hybrid Bill procedure by Mr. Anthony Crosland, the then Secretary of State for the Environment.

I should like to quote from paragraph 27 of the Select Committee's report. It says:

"At the beginning of the proceedings on the Channel Tunnel Bill 1974 Counsel for the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that the Secretary of State was 'most anxious that the Petitioners should have all reasonable opportunity to put forward the points which concern them, providing that such points can properly be taken in proceedings of this nature. That being so, the Secretary of State has decided . . . to take no formal objection to the locus of any of the Petitioners.' The Committee recommends that this precedent be followed, that the fullest possible latitude again be allowed to petitioners and that all those whose petitions conform to the basic requirement of relevancy be allowed to be heard."

The former Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), evidently studied both the Select Committee's report and the previous Channel Tunnel Bill example carefully, because he promised that he, too, would uphold the rights of those affected by his Bill by following the precedent of the previous Channel Tunnel Bill. My right hon. Friend said in the House on 9 December 1985:

"The Select Committee recommended that we should follow the precedent of the 1974 Channel Tunnel Bill. We shall."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 645.]

He then went on in a column of *Hansard* to amplify the point that it would be as fair and as generous as possible.

Any citizen reading the words set out in *Hansard*, and reading them again in the White Paper, where they are amplified still further, would draw three conclusions. First, he would conclude that the Government would lean over backwards to make sure that objectors and petitioners were given all the time and opportunity that a reasonable person would need to prepare and present his case; secondly, that no objection would be made against any bona fide reasonable petition on grounds of locus standi; and thirdly, that the Government would stick scrupulously to the precedents laid down by the previous Channel Tunnel Bill.

What, exactly, were those precedents? First, the previous Bill started its passage through the House at the very beginning of the 1973-74 Session, being introduced on 20 November 1973. All the preliminary matters, such as the arrangements with the tunnel building consortium, the treaty with France and parliamentary approval of the White Paper, had been dealt with in the 1972-73 Session of Parliament after extensive debates in both Houses. An HMSO report on the tunnel's economic and social impact on Kent, known as the Kent impact study, had also been published in April 1973—a document of great assistance to petitioners.

Secondly, the previous Bill kept meticulously to Standing Orders in terms of registration dates, the placing of advertisements, and so on. It was never out of time, nor did it in any way violate standing orders. Thirdly, the previous Bill allowed the public and the people of Kent six weeks of petitioning time between the date of Second Reading, 5 December, and the last date for petitions, 15 January.

The House should note the contrast between the six weeks' petitioning period set as a precedent by the previous Channel Tunnel Bill and the 12-day petitioning period offered by this Bill. In plain language, the previous Bill gave the public and petitioners fair play and a fair hearing. No one from Kent, as far as one can tell from the available records, complained that he was inadequately informed about his rights or that the petitioning period was unfairly short. Today, those general complaints are widespread.

In addition, there are four specific complaints which I think should be brought to the attention of the House tonight, not least because they are good examples of rights which the refusal of a dispensation from Standing Orders could protect.

The Council for the Protection of Rural England, which is concerned, as are many local ramblers associations, about the disappearance of footpaths under the provisions of the Bill, has argued, not only that the petitioning time is too short, but that the text of the Bill is meaningless without accompanying maps. It says that in order to petition against the Bill it must have prints of those maps. It made this point to the Department of Transport many weeks ago, and the Department agreed to supply such maps to petitioners. However, those maps were supplied only on 14 or 15 May, and the Council for the Protection of Rural England asks for adequate time to prepare and submit petitions relevant to those footpath maps, bearing in mind that its starting date for work on those petitions is 14 May.

Secondly, the Thanet district council complains that it cannot petition effectively against the Bill until the Kent impact study has been completed. The need for an impact study has been accepted by the Government, through the findings of the Mitchell committee, headed by the Minister of State. At the time of the previous Channel Tunnel Bill the Kent impact study was published as an HMSO report on 24 April 1973, 10 months before the closing date for petitions, but this time the Government have said that the Kent impact study cannot be ready, even as an initial or interim report, in time for the Select Committee's hearings. The Thanet district council says—and so do others, in my view justifiably—that this is unfair and that it breaks the precedent set by the 1974 Channel Tunnel Bill.

Thirdly, an organisation called ACTS — Against Channel Tunnel Schemes, a group of residents from all parts of east Kent, claiming 20,000 members — complains that it cannot petition effectively because the Mitchell committee and the Channel Tunnel Group keep changing the road routes and other matters from what has been set down in the Bill. To illustrate this point, I quote from the *East Kent Mercury* of 15 May:

"Mr. Mitchell agreed that the tunnel project details were changing and that it was not yet known exactly what it would involve. 'You can't complain when changes are made to the plan so that improvements can be made' he said. The road pattern at the Folkestone terminal site could be revised so the road out of the site is nearer to Folkestone. 'We don't know what the final plans will be but this could take the pressure off Newington.'"

What ACTS, the residents' group, says is that it cannot petition effectively against the road pattern of the Folkestone terminal and other routes if the Mitchell committee announces that those road routes are being changed from what is said in the Bill, but does not give chapter and verse of those changes.

Lastly, many individual petitioners from all over Kent and, for all I know, in other parts of the country, say that they have had difficulty in finding out how to petition. People are not familiar with this procedure. They say that

they have been confused—I understand that—by the publicity given to this dispute about Standing Orders and that they still have no clear idea whether the Bill is on, or off, or what the delays will be. These people need more than 12 days in which to get in their petitions. The limiting of petitions from a starting date of 5 June until an ending date of 17 June is an obvious piece of short changing and sharp practice, because it is designed to keep individual petitions down to the bare minimum.

Whether it is these detailed and specific complaints that I have been going on about, or whether it is a more generalised grievance about a headlong rush, my submission is that in order to give petitioners the fair play that Parliament should insist upon, the Channel Tunnel Bill of 1986 must follow exactly the same precedents as the Channel Tunnel Bill of 1973-74. That, after all, is no more and no less than what the former Secretary of State for Transport promised in his speech to the House on 9 December.

The only way to guarantee that those precedents are followed is for the House to refuse to grant the dispensation which the Government are requesting. The effect of that refusal would be to delay the private element in this hybrid Bill for about four months. There would be great benefit for the public and for the reputation of Parliament in such delay.

I have heard only one argument in favour of granting the dispensation — apart from the argument of expediency—which is that the Government could not have avoided breaking Standing Orders because they could not register or advertise the Bill until after signing the treaty with France and reaching agreement with the Channel Tunnel Group. My answer is that that problem could easily have been avoided. It is a problem of the Government's own making.

The Government should never have contemplated their present wholly unrealistic timetable, which has involved announcing the Channel fixed link go-ahead, seeking bidders, evaluating those bids in less than 35 working days, deciding the winner, publishing a White Paper, obtaining parliamentary approval for that White Paper nine days later, signing the treaty with France, introducing a Bill, getting a Second Reading for that Bill, inviting petitions, setting up a Select Committee, and then—if we are to believe the Government's published timetable in draft—completing the Select Committee's hearings, all in less than 12 months could never have been done, and it should not have been attempted. The Government could have followed the precendents of the previous Bill and achieved all the preliminaries in one Session of Parliament and begun the hybrid Bill in the next Session. That should have happened, and that will happen if the House refuses the dispensation.

At the end of the day, the argument about Standing Orders comes down to whether the House thinks the Government have been fair and have honoured the letter, or even the spirit, of their promises to follow the precedents. I am cynical enough to see it as almost inevitable that the unholy alliance of business men and business managers to which I referred should seek to juggle dates to accelerate the Bill for reasons of mercenary expediency or the convenience of the Whips' Office.

There is here a deeper issue of principle on which Parliament as a whole should take a view. Why expose Parliament to the charge of foul play when, for the sake of, say, 28 days of extra petitioning time nobody in Kent or anywhere else could resonably claim that anything untoward or unfair had been done? The petitioners are simply asking, "Please, may we have a little more time? After all, you promised that when you said you would stick to the previous Channel Tunnel Bill precedents. The Standing Orders require it, so please give the individual petitioners more time."

If the Government's majority is used to steamroller the petitioners and defeat their plea for justice, two consequences will flow. First, the petitioners and the people of Kent will be made more angry. About 500 people in the Thanet towns represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and I are now preparing their petitions. They are in an angry mood, and justifiably so. House of Commons Select Committee hearings will become more difficult if angry people complain about being short changed on petitioning or preparation time.

Secondly, if the rush continues, then, as frequently happens when individual rights are unfairly denied, the House of Lords will be invited to play its traditional role as a constitutional umpire. The Lords Select Committee proceedings will be more protracted so that the justice denied to Commons petitioners is given to those petitioners by the Lords, with a fairer petitioning and hearing process.

What the Government think they will gain on the Commons swings by a little sharp practice with the timetable will be lost on the Lords roundabouts as a result of fairer constitutional procedures being adopted in another place. I urge the Government to show some sense and sensitivity. I hope that when replying to the debate the Minister will at least bow to the sensible compromise proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). If not, I urge the House to reject the motion.

11.44 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): My right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has referred to the precedents for public inquiries on projects of major national importance such as the Heathrow terminal 4 and Stansted in the field of transport, or Sizewell in nuclear power. I submit that the case for a longer petitioning period and, indeed, the case for public inquiries concerning various aspects of the Bill is important to how we vote in relation to the issue before the Standing Orders Committee.

For example—and we shall be addressing ourselves to such issues on Second Reading, and I appreciate that that will be the pertinent point at which to raise substantive matters—part III, schedule 1, the Bill has a couple of pages and several paragraphs concerning the impact of this project on the environs of Waterloo station and the railway in that area, since the Government have opted for Waterloo as the single terminus for traffic in the London area. The House should seriously consider precisely what has happened in that local area in relation to other public inquiries where this Government, not simply previous Conservative Governments, have allowed public inquiries to take place. For example, in the immediate vicinity of Waterloo, a major struggle was fought by local groups which are having difficulties in knowing how to petition on this Bill and was won by them over property companies which wanted to develop major office complexes in the area.

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

It would have been open to a Secretary of State to seek to steam-roller—whether it was the Heron company or Greycoats Commercial Estates — the issue of giving approval and disallowing further public inquiries into this matter. In fact, the former Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), allowed yet a further public inquiry. The inspector was able to take evidence on a scale concerning the impact on the local environment that simply will not be possible under the petitioning process considered in the timetable for this Bill.

Even allowing for the integrity and the physical stamina of Members, no Standing Committee or Select Committee, whether it worked all night, all day or all week for all the time allotted it, could allow as effective an examination of each main item in the Bill as could public inquiries on the individual items of the Bill. Take, for example, the case that I have just cited of office development versus community housing. Finally, the inspector, having taken evidence at a length and in detail comparable to all the evidence that the Standing or Select Committee is likely to be able to take in relation to all aspects of this Bill, recommended to the Secretary of State that planning permission should be granted either for office development or for community housing. By this time, the arguments put in the public inquiry had registered, improbable though it may seem, on the property companies themselves.

I make a direct analogy with the reference that the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has made in relation to banks and financial interests asking themselves whether it is commercially viable for them to invest in a project such as the Channel tunnel. Despite the dismissal of the case by the property companies at the time of the argument that technical progress and automation in the office was reducing the relative demand for office space, dispersal of offices outside London meant that many companies were moving their headquarters and that there would not be a sufficient market for office development in the Waterloo area. By the time that the public inquiry had gone through, the final property company, Greycoats Commercial Estates, decided that the case argued by the community—equivalent in this case to petitioners—was valid, and decided to withdraw its application for the site, despite the fact that the Secretary of State had given planning permission for it to go ahead.

That shows that our democracy is not simply a parliamentary democracy in Parliament. We should be proud of our democracy as a plural democracy reflecting local government and increasingly, through the planning inquiry procedures to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney referred, allowing people in local communities to feel that their voices and their arguments can be heard. The public inquiry process is not simply a ritual of individuals giving evidence to people who will dismiss it. The public inquiry system has an excellent track record.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): The hon. Gentleman has said that the public inquiry system has an excellent track record. Would he comment on the failure of the public inquiry system in trying to solve the problems of the M3 and the Winchester bypass which have been going on now for 13 years?

Mr. Holland: No doubt the hon. Gentleman will agree that there is a difference between having an excellent track record in hearing the case that people put and seriously considering it, and suiting the aspirations of every individual applicant or group of applicants in each and every case. The point that I am making is that the range of issues raised in the Bill is so wide that the petitioning process cannot adequately meet them. With reference to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), I say that not as an opponent of co-operation with Europe because I am an advocate of such co-operation, nor as an opponent of the Channel fixed link, because I support such a rail link.

In opting for Waterloo as a single terminus — I appreciate that this is mainly a Second Reading issue— and then justifying ex post the case, the Government are steamrollering not only the local community but also fundamentally the viability of the project.

One of the issues that we shall want to address in the Second Reading debate is the dispersal of traffic rather than its going to just one terminus in London, so that if one cannot get on a train in Barcelona and go through to Blackpool, at least when one gets on a train in Brussels or in Paris, one can go to all parts north of London.

The petitioning process is not long enough in relation to the parliamentary questions which hon. Members have put in the House and to which they have not obtained adequate answers, and often no answers at all. For example, concerning the impact on the area of Waterloo as the sole terminus, I put down more than 30 parliamentary questions to the former Secretary of State for Transport. In the majority of his answers he simply referred me to British Rail. He refused to answer the points on the Floor of the House.

I have now referred myself to British Rail, and two so-called consultation meetings have taken place with British Rail this week and last week. I and others in the local community have been putting similar questions. What has happened is interesting. The Minister could not answer the questions and British Rail cannot answer them either. For example, a Mr. Malcolm Southgate, whom I in no way wish to malign because he is doing the best possible job granted that he has no answers to give to most of the questions, and who is the Southern region manager responsible for the Channel fixed link traffic in the whole of the south-east, said earlier this evening at a so-called public consultation that he does not believe that the relative pros and cons of the project and its impact have yet been weighed up as they will affect Waterloo.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. It is difficult to relate the hon. Gentleman's remarks to the procedural motion. They would be more appropriate to the Second Reading of the Bill on Thursday.

Mr. Holland: I submit that they are directly relevant, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because the very persons who were with me at the consultation are those who wish to petition on the Bill. I take directly the point made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South that they do not know as yet on what proposals they are petitioning in the first place.

Just as the hon. Member for Thanet, South has said that road systems in Kent are being changed during the process of the Bill so that protesters do not know whether they should be mobilising their protests against route A versus route B, similarly in the case of Waterloo and its so-called

consultation process we are getting changing answers from week to week from British Rail management, to whom the Minister referred me as the Member representing that area.

This relates substantively to petitioning, because where does responsibility lie? The project is changing. For example, last week, in the consultation process, we were told nothing about planned dispersal of traffic. This week we are told that the planned dispersal of traffic is to be great. One of my constituents said tonight that he does not know whether he should be petitioning against the use of Waterloo as the exclusive terminal or outlet for traffic. In one evening British Rail has simply declared that it will disperse a lot of traffic. It anticipates dispersing about 1 million passengers via Ashford and several million passengers to all parts north via other routes. It is not clear to my constituent, as a potential petitioner, how much traffic will pass through Waterloo in the first place. My constituents are in difficulty in addressing the issues because the Bill is a moving target. They have no faith in the current procedural process.

The Minister will not answer my questions but refers me to British Rail. On behalf of my constituents I put the issues to British Rail. Again the ill-fated Mr. Southgate from British Rail said tonight that he is sure that the House of Commons will ensure that all the relevant facts will be brought out fully, with a very full and thorough examination of the points made by those who want to raise them—in other words, petitioners.

Where does the responsibility lie? Can the House really be satisfied that the kind of issues which individuals or groups wish to raise — in fact it would be groups because individuals are likely to be ruled out of the petitioning process—will be adequately heard, far less met, by the petitioning procedure? If hon. Members are honest with themselves, they will be frank and say that the petitioning procedure is inadequate.

On Second Reading various amendments to the Bill will be tabled by my right hon. Friends and myself. However, petitioning is not a serious process of providing due remedy for grievances in the sense of enabling groups or individuals to put their case, and I hope that the House will consider that when it votes tonight.

11.58 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I should like to comment on two of the arguments presented tonight. The first, to which I shall return, is that of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), which has been consistent throughout the discussion. The second is the charade presented by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). Having been so well represented by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the electorate of Folkestone will not be taken in by the Liberal party's Johnny-come-lately attempt to jump on the bandwagon any more than the electorates of Dover or Thanet are likely to be beguiled by the machinations of a party, the Euro manifesto of which wedded itself firmly to the Channel tunnel project. That is the case unless the so-called alliance would now like to say that it is opposed to the Channel tunnel project in its entirety, as some Conservative Members are. I hope that that point will be taken by the House and by those who are genuinely and seriously affected in north-east and east Kent.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Gale: The hon. Gentleman has had a great deal of time to make his point and I should like to pursue my argument.

Mr. Hughes: There has never been any doubt that my colleagues have always been in favour of a Channel fixed link — a rail-only fixed link and a proper consultation process about how that should be achieved.

Mr. Gale: I am grateful for that clarification and I trust that the alliance's commitment to the Channel tunnel project will appear prominently in the Folkestone press. As there are no names from the other half of the so-called alliance to the amendments I assume that they are, as usual, reserving their position firmly on the fence.

Many of my constituents are passionately concerned about the effects of the project will have on their lives and livelihood. I live in a north-east Kent village and I can confirm that my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South accurately and admirably represented the views of the people living there. Those people and many of my constituents will wish to make their extremely strong views forcefully known through the procedures that this House is expected to afford them. They look to the House to protect their rights. Many of them have already been further angered unnecessarily by what they regard as gerrymandering of the proceedings and in the knowledge that a road network which they have sought to have improved for many years has been neglected while billions are to be spent elsewhere. Opposition Members refer to road systems being changed daily, and that is true. Unhappily, the one road system in north-east Kent that needs to be changed to a dual carriageway is being entirely neglected to such an extent that Kent county council approved a single carriageway footbridge over it.

I do not intend to rehearse the arguments that we shall raise at great length on Thursday night, but my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South have tabled for Thursday night an amendment seeking to give the people of north-east Kent a proper opportunity to use procedures in which they are in no way well versed, which will take them time and for which they must be granted time.

It has already been said that the time granted appears to be not 12 days but one day because the earliest date on which petitions may be deposited is also the latest date, given that the motion before the House states that the earliest date on which motions may be deposited is 17 June and the motion to be tabled on Thursday indicates that that is the last day on which motions may be deposited. Whether or not that is the case, it is clear that my constituents and those of my hon. Friend must have proper time in which to prepare and lodge their cases.

As this is a private Bill we look to the Leader of the House to protect not only the interests of the Back Benches but of ordinary petitioners. I do not believe that Thursday is sufficiently early for that commitment to be given. It must be given to the House tonight.

12.5 am

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): I have been accused by my dear colleague my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) of being irascible. The whole question of linking Britain to Europe is so profound and has been considered for so many years that one can get a

[Mr. David Crouch]

little irascible when hon. Members, members of the public and even one's constituents, dig in their feet against Britain linking itself to Europe and trying to go forward to another century. That is what makes me irascible.

I do not want to trespass on the speech which I shall make not at some length, but at great length, on Thursday night. However, I am concerned at the impossibility of British citizens and people such as parliamentarians, politicians, Ministers and Back Benchers being able to make up their minds about anything. I am also concerned at how hon. Members can make up their minds and how, in a parliamentary democracy, people can be heard. I have listened to the speeches that have been made tonight. All hon. Members referred to the need for people to be heard and for sufficient time to be given so that they can be heard. I respect everything that hon. Members have said.

The reason for my irascibility against the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who led for the Opposition, is that I do not believe his motivation. His motivation is anti-Europe. I respect the right hon. Gentleman. I have listened to him in the past say, passionately, that we should have nothing to do with Europe. I happen to like the right hon. Gentleman, but he is passionately against Europe. All hon. Members differ in their views from time to time, but we know that the right hon. Gentleman is passionately against Britain being linked to Europe. I believe that, because of his passion that Britain should not be linked to Europe, he is seeking to trip up the Government. That does not apply to other hon. Members. It certainly does not apply to the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes).

I could not help feeling, as the hon. Member spoke frequently about defending the interests of the people of Kent, that quite a few hon. Members from Kent could have done just as well. In a way, he was himself tripped up by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who said that he appeared to be deserting his party a little by suggesting that he would want to trip up the Government tonight. His party is wholeheartedly in favour of the tunnel and the fixed link, and wholeheartedly supports my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) who, occasionally, must represent his constituents with a silent voice.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I remind the hon. Gentleman of the debate we had on the White Paper. At one stage the Liberals argued vigorously in favour of a public inquiry and, at the same time, the leader of the Liberal party said, in Kent, that he did not believe that a public inquiry was feasible.

Mr. Crouch: In some respects, everything that is said about the Liberal party is so liberal these days that I do not think anyone can understand just where it stands on some issues. It is digging up paving stones, and is trying to make more pavement policies out of them. That was how the speech tonight by the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney struck me.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South was right when he spoke of Lord Pennock, who is now the chairman of Euro-Tunnel, who complained of the prospect of Parliament mucking about with the Bill by wasting time listening to complaints. He had to get on with getting the finance arranged and satisfying the engineers, the planners, the draughtsmen, and so on. He felt that if we debated the matter we might delay all that activity and might even frustrate it by preventing him getting the money. He was entirely wrong to suggest that Parliament mucks about when it considers problems and tries to represent the interests of its Members' constituents. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and I agree absolutely on that. We are not mucking about tonight, and we shall not be mucking about when we consider the Bill in Committee as a hybrid Bill, and look at both the private and public aspects of it.

I am one of those who believe it necessary to have a fixed link, but that is not our concern tonight. Our concern is that there should be fair play, and that the voices of individuals and corporate bodies should be heard if they feel that their interests are jeopardised by this major project. After all, it is agreed that it is the greatest engineering project of the century. In many ways it is comparable to the great development of the railways that took place during the last century. Brunel, for example, spent 14 days in Committee arguing his case for building a railway to Bristol.

In those days the Private Bill Office was a vast series of offices, because there was so much private legislation initiating those great achievements of the 19th century. We shall now do a great thing this century, but we must also do something to protect individuals who feel disadvantaged. Many of my constituents feel that I have let them down because I am in favour of Europe. Perhaps in the short term I have let them down. After all, I will bring bulldozers to Kent to develop the road, dig the tunnel and carry away the soil. As we know from when the M25 was connected to the M4, that is not a pleasant sight. It took several years to make that connection, and it was just the connection of two motorways. The Channel tunnel is a much bigger project.

Of course people will be disadvantaged financially, environmentally, socially and even economically. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) argued persuasively and offered the Government a very reasonable compromise. As one who has supported the Government through thick and thin on this issue, and who does not have the support of his colleagues from Kent, I must say that my right hon. and learned Friend's compromise would be much fairer to those who want to be heard. Only a little more time is involved. My right hon. and learned Friend has not tried to trip up the Government tonight. In a way, who could blame him if he had tried. However, he has been very reasonable and fair, and has asked for just a little more time.

Back Benchers have a duty not just to their constituents but to Parliament and to the public. We should ask the Government to take into account the history not only of great engineering projects but of Parliament in defence of people's rights. They should listen to us when we say that we want more time, and that they are rushing the Bill a bit. Even if they do not think that they are rushing it, the people of Kent think that they are. Consequently, they must provide a little more time. If they do so, they may win the hearts or even the minds of those in Kent who are so strongly opposed to the idea. I do not believe that the Government would then jeopardise their intention to go ahead with the project.

12.13 am

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): I agreed with just about everything that my hon. Friend the Member for

Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) said. This issue goes to the heart of the sensitivities of people in Kent, around Waterloo, and in other parts of the country. Whatever our views may be about the link—and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has never disguised his wholehearted opposition to it—we are determined that individuals, and, say, small parish councils, who fear that their property or livelihood may be affected, should be all important at this sensitive stage.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South made a powerful speech, part of which I agreed with and part of which I did not. He prayed in aid the procedures that we went through about 13 years ago on the previous Channel Tunnel Bill. Modesty forbids me from saying that I was the Minister at that time and introduced the Bill on Second Reading. However, I must remind my hon. Friend that his analogy with the present Government is not fair.

A key part of that scheme, which would have gone down like a lead balloon if it had been included in these proposals, was the high-speed rail link. It was not part of that Bill. The issue was not even addressed on Second Reading, as I remember very well because I moved the Second Reading. I do not consider that we are comparing like with like.

Having said that, I should declare an interest as a director of the Folkestone water company, which would be affected by the link. The company is likely to be petitioning on the Bill. That brings me to the heart of my brief remarks. I do not think I am revealing any secrets by saying that a board meeting last week prepared the company to petition and to instruct parliamentary counsel. The company will be going ahead, as a successful small to medium-sized company can do.

Frankly, I am not too bothered about the Sealinks, the Dover Harbour boards, the Folkestone water companies and corporations of that kind. I am very concerned about individuals, not all of whom are from Thanet, with the greatest respect. They are in Folkestone, Ashford and Canterbury, Sevenoaks and other parts of Kent, and in London too, around Waterloo station, and no doubt in other parts as well. I am concerned about the people for whom even the thought of these legal terms and the question of petitioning is not clear.

I had a telephone call from a constituent only a few days ago and he and I were at cross purposes because he was thinking in terms of the petition that is presented to Parliament in the normal way. I had to explain to him that we were not talking about that. These are complicated matters. This underlines the importance of being not just generous but over-generous in the time that we give individuals for petitioning when the Bill receives its Second Reading on Thursday, as no doubt it will.

Certainly my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) gave an excellent and clear exposition of the real and personal issues that face us in this debate. His amendment, which I understand will be called two days hence, goes to the heart of the matter. The amendment stands in his name and in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. I have added my name today.

I would go a little bit further than 27 June. It would be a sign of the Government's sensitivity and good intentions if the Minister could assure the House tonight that they would certainly go at least as far as that date, and that their approach to petitioners, especially parish councils, individuals and those whom I call the small people, in the best sense of that word, would be, so far as it is in their power—clearly some of the power will rest with the Select Committees—sensitive and generous in relation to time, powers or information. We owe our constituents no less than that. I think that the Government would emerge with considerable credit if they were to approach the matter in that light.

12.19 am

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I endorse and welcome all that has been said about giving petitioners more time, but my objection to the motion before us tonight is much more fundamental than that. "Erskine May" tells us, under the heading of "Petitions for Bills deposited after time" at page 937 that

"petitions should accordingly be confined to matters of urgency"

I understand that a Channel tunnel project was debated first in about 1750 and that projects of one sort and another have been attempted for at least a century.

I cannot understand why suddenly, in June 1986, this has become such a matter of urgency that the House should be asked to set aside Standing Orders, unless there are perhaps matters of which we are not aware—that the finances are so precarious and the political situation so delicate that it is vital that we introduce the Bill at this stage.

Mr. Bernard Conlan (Gateshead, East): The hon. Gentleman must recognise that a treaty was signed between the French and the British—that is the urgency.

Mr. Moate: I shall come to those matters soon. However, in terms of the procedures of the House, setting aside Standing Orders is a step that no one would take lightly—I am sure that the House will not—or without due consideration.

Some feel passionately in favour of the Channel tunnel project. For example, my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) put it much more as a matter of ideology than as a matter of transport communications. I respect his position, but I hope that he and every other proponent of this measure will recognise that all those people who are directly affected by the measure, particularly those in Kent who face the harsh reality of the construction works, as opposed to those elsewhere in the United Kingdom who see this as a political ideal, must be afforded every opportunity to petition and to present their case. What are a few weeks or months weighed against one's home, livelihood or farm land?

I hope that we shall all be generous, whatever our view—we are all a little schizophrenic on such a project—and that we shall allow ample time for debates, inquiries and cross-examination. I also hope that, in debating procedures as we are tonight, we recognise that, whatever the merits of the proposition, in setting aside the Standing Orders, we are discussing something of fundamental importance in our constitution.

My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House clearly distinguished between the private and public elements of the hybrid Bill. The fact that Standing Orders lay down that private Bills should be introduced by 27 November is not just some quirk of some bureaucrat who drew up the rules. They are there for a purpose. The privilege of introducing a private Bill should be conceded carefully by the House. The position in the queue is of great importance. We should not lightly accord any individual or private corporation privileges, especially the privileges

[Mr. Moate]

of private legislation, nor lightly allow them to dispense with Standing Orders and gain those privileges much later in the Session.

As regards the private element in the Bill, we are now proposing to do that. By the nature of the legislation we are conferring on private individuals and corporations the right to substantial profits, and they will make those profits — rightly or wrongly — at the expense of individuals whose lands might be compulsorily purchased. We have to consider carefully how we set aside private legislation procedures. They are there for a purpose.

One of the great privileges of private legislation is that it can overturn one of the fundamental defences of opposition, as it can in practice, be carried over to the next Session. That is at the heart of the matter here, because that is one thing that cannot be done with a public Bill. In this respect, we have here a major act of public policy. Thus, as well as being a major private Bill, it is a major public Bill, introduced by the Government. By using the hybrid procedure, the Government are doing something that the House would not normally allow them to do. A major Government Bill introduced so late in the Session would not normally have a chance of getting through in the time available.

If the House passes the resolution, which I suspect that it will, it will be saying to the Government, "We shall allow you to suspend the rule and carrying over the legislation into the next Session." That is denying the House one of the fundamental weapons of opposition. It is a virtually open-ended procedure which allows the Government to get their legislation through regardless of the weapon of time which is usually available to the House. The Government are using a private hybrid Bill to achieve their public ends. This is a fundamental issue. I am not saying that it is wrong. It has been done before, but it is a serious matter.

Why is it so important that we should set aside procedures in June because the Government wish to do it? The hon. Member for Gateshead, East (Mr. Conlan) said that it is because we have signed a treaty with France. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South that the Government created that predicament. I believe that it is more important that the investigative procedure and the public inquiry procedure should be upheld than that an act of the Executive should be taken for granted by the Legislature. I do not believe that the treaty is of paramount importance.

My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury automatically assumes that anyone who opposed joining the Common Market is against links with Europe, and I wish to put that in perspective. This is not an ideological matter but a matter concerning transport links. There are hundreds of links with Europe, maritime links and they are very efficient.

Mr. Crouch: No.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend may say no, but I think that he will find that there are efficient and substantial maritime links.

It is proposed that we should engage upon a major building project which will have a dramatic effect upon Kent and other parts of the United Kingdom. Normally there would be extensive public inquiry procedures which would allow individuals to put their cases. That inquiry procedure has been set aside. I can fully understand why. I can well imagine the supporters of the project saying that it would not see the light of day if a long public inquiry was initiated. That does not make it right but I can understand the reasons.

The fact that we have the hybrid Bill procedure and the Select Committee procedure is not due to the generosity of the Government—they had no choice. It is not up to the Government to lay down the timetable, as they have sought to do, for the Select Committee. The House should be concerned that the Government are trying to suggest how the Select Committee should conduct its affairs. Once that Select Committee has been appointed I trust that, as worthy Members of the House, they will not be dictated to by the Government.

The idea that the matter can be dealt with in a few weeks is unacceptable. I do not know how the Chairman will be selected and it will not be an enviable task. I can recall a Committee which I chaired which dealt with a crematorium. That issue alone took 23 sittings, over a period of some months. If an issue of that nature can take that long, I suspect that more than a few weeks will be spent on the Channel tunnel.

Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith (Wealden): It is ludicrous.

Mr. Moate: I suspect that that view was shared by some of the members of that Committee.

Given the size of this project and the rules of the House, I hope that the Select Commitee appointed will be jealous of its rights. I hope that it makes sure that all the petitioners are given an adequate hearing. The matter should not be rushed. It will be discussed in the next Session and beyond, and frankly, the promoters of the scheme must accept that. There are many people in Kent and elsewhere who wish to petition and they must be given that right. I would prefer this motion to be withdrawn and the legislation introduced at the beginning of the next Session. Thus the legislation could be taken in a proper way. The Government are attaching an urgency to the matter that could deny many potential petitioners the right to be heard. One cannot tell whether the project will go through; the track record is not encouraging for the Bill's supporters. I suspect, judging from experience, that we shall not see a Channel tunnel in our lifetime — [HON. MEMBERS: "Oh!"] I suspect that that is so. One need only consider the precedents. They have all failed so far, and I suspect that this one will, too.

What is more important is that the Government should be seen to respect the rights of the people who are affected by the project. That should have priority, and I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State will at least concede the point about providing more time for petitions. However, I should much prefer the motion to be defeated tonight or withdrawn.

12.30 am

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): The hour is late and I shall not detain the House for long. The common theme addressed to Ministers in the debate so far, whether by those who prophesy doom and gloom for the project, those who wish the procedures of the House to delay the Bill for some time or those of us who support the fixed link, is, "More time, gentlemen, please." We want more time on behalf of our constituents who may not have the clout to

deal with the big battalions of Government at the pace that Ministers have, unfortunately, given the impression they wish to follow.

I support the urgency with which the Government have tackled the development of the fixed link, and I said that in welcoming the statement made in the House on the day when the treaty was signed. Britain can no longer go through the extraordinarily tortuous and long-drawn-out proceedings of public inquiries on such international projects, but we must consult those who will be most directly affected by the building of the fixed link, and possibly affected negatively by it, for all the positive benefits that it will bring to the nation. People in Kent will be adversely affected in many cases, although there will be benefits, too. Their position can be safeguarded by ensuring that full time and opportunity are given, especially to the small man, to gather together his forces, to get hold of the difficult process of handling parliamentary procedure and to bring those petitions to Parliament, which, as many hon. Members have said, is the guardian of people's right to be heard.

My support for the Channel tunnel fixed link will continue to depend on my being assured by Ministers—I hope that the assurance will be repeated tonight—that adequate time will be given. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State with responsibility for the Channel Tunnel Bill, who has already become closely involved with councillors in Kent, will assure us that he will be responsive to the pleas made by hon. Members on both sides of the House.

12.34 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): Some of the speeches tonight have added to the confusion that has already been spread by many newspapers about the complexity of the procedures through which our petitioners must go. With many hon. Members, I have made some inquiries, and, like my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate), I believe that it is important to remember the following points.

The first is that no Hybrid Bill Committee has ever been instructed by the Government or by any one else as to when to complete its consideration. It would be improper for that to be attempted. Secondly, it is for the Committee to determine whom to hear, when to hear them and where to hear them. I understand that the Committee will choose, for example, whether it will be for its convenience and that of its petitioners to go to Kent to meet groups of petitioners. The third matter about which it is most important to reassure my constituents and others is that the Committee can allow petitioners to state the heads under which they will present the petition, but will give them time to address the details under those heads. That will set at rest some of the anxieties that have been engendered by the information that the Government from time to time change the routes of roads. It appears to be enough for the petitioners to say that they intend to raise the matter of a route, and if that route is changed between the entry of the petition and the hearing of the petition, it will be for the Committee to decide whether to allow them to address themselves to that route.

All these points make it clear that the Government cannot and should not have control over the timetable. I must tell my hon. Friend the Minister of State that I join many of my hon. Friends tonight in stating that in presentation and in practice it is unnecessarily clumsy to have shortened to this extent the time in which petitions may be entertained when we have a procedure stretching ahead of us the end of which we cannot foresee. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will tonight give the reassurance that many of us have sought.

12.37 am

Mr. Bernard Conlan (Gateshead, East): We are not discussing the priciples of the Bill. That will come later in the week. We are now discussing whether the procedures of the House shall be so determined as to enable the petitioners to have sufficient time to petition against the Bill.

I support the construction of the fixed Channel link. However, I am not too sure that sufficient time is being given to ordinary people to petition against the Bill. Sealink and others will have briefed their counsel and they will have sufficient resources. They will know precisely what they ought to do to petition against the Bill to protect their vested interests. I am not too sure that the ordinary people, whose houses and environment will be vitally affected by the Bill are able sufficiently to understand the procedures under which they should advance their interests. I believe that a strong case has been fully presented by the hon. Members who represent Kent constituencies. The petitioners should have more time than is envisaged by the Government.

As I understand it, the time for petitioning will be very restricted indeed. That is unfair and unjust. As I argued in the Standing Orders Committee only a couple of weeks ago, there should be an extended period in which the petitioners can argue against the principles of the Bill, which they think affects their vital interests.

It might be too late to argue this, but I would ask the Minister tonight to say, as the Members representing Kent have been arguing, that petitioners must have an extended period in which to petition against the principles of the Bill.

12.40 am

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): Like almost every hon. Member who has spoken tonight, it is not my intention to delay the House for long. We have had from almost hon. Member who has spoken tonight, except, I think, the first three, the promise that speeches on Thursday night after 10 o'clock will be somewhat longer. That is a taste of what is to come. I am not sure whether they were threats or the casting of a fly delicately in the water in the hope that the Minister would take it and concede some of the amendments to the committal motion.

The argument has to some extent hinged round whether the date for petitions to be submitted is sufficient to allow people to put their petitions and to be ready for them, and so on. However, I want to address myself to one or two other points. First, "Erskine May" is clear that if this procedural motion is not carried tonight, under the Standing Orders the hybrid Bill is automatically discharged and cannot be resubmitted in this Session. It would then have to be resubmitted with or without changes at the beginning of the next Session. That is the case unless the Government are so determined to push the Bill through quickly that they interfere with those basic Standing Orders. Parliament, having a will of its own, is perfectly entitled to set aside the Standing Orders if it so desires. I do not think that the Government would go to such extraordinary lengths, but that is a possibility.

[Mr. Robert Hughes]

If the Government had taken our advice in December last year and had a public inquiry, the genuine, passionate and articulately expressed concerns of those hon. Members from Kent, who have mainly spoken tonight from the Conservative Benches, would have been met in full. There would have been plenty of time for everyone to put their case, without unnecessarily protracting matters, to make sure that people had a clear idea of where they were going. The wishes and desires of hon. Members from Kent would have been properly accommodated had a public inquiry been granted.

The Government are suffering from what I call the 140 syndrome. They genuinely believe that because they have a majority of 140 they do not have to think through their policy or its consequences or take any account of the procedures of the House of Commons. It is a pity that the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley) has gone on to other things. I was going to use the word "decamped", but having been transferred by the Prime Minister is perhaps not decamping. However, the right hon. Gentleman is responsible for the difficulty in which we now find ourselves. If he was not negligent, he must have known right from the beginning that the Standing Orders could not be complied with. We have had two full debates on this matter. As the report of the Standing Orders Committee makes clear, Mr. Gamon for the promoters pointed out that on several occasions in the debate on the White Paper the Secretary of State stated his intention to bring forward a hybrid Bill early in the year. I sat through the whole of these two debates and read the White Paper carefully, and at no time did the then Secretary of State ever say, "Of course, in order for this procedure to be carried out, we, the Government, draw attention to the fact that we cannot meet standing orders and will have to ask the Standing Orders Committee to give this concession." It would have been far better for that to be done in an open way rather than leaving it to the examiners to certify that the Bill was out of time and then to send the matter to the Standing Orders Committee.

There was some surprise and even irritation that the Standing Orders Committee was finding it difficult to come to a decision. The Committee was put in an extremely invidious position. I agree with the Leader of the House that this is almost a unique Bill. It is certainly a Bill of great importance and will have a much wider impact on the public and on our economy than probably any other private or perhaps even public Bill introduced this century. The Government are taking a momentous decision and they ought to play the game properly in terms of the time scale and the standing orders.

It is not just the dates on which some mechanical processes have to take place according to standing orders that are important. The amount of time people have to understand what is proposed for their areas is also important. A number of hon. Members from Kent and my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxall (Mr. Holland) made the point about how difficult it is to get information, even now after the hybrid Bill has been published. The matter is about a period of discussion, consultation and of knowing what is before us. I remind the House that it was only on 20 January this year that the successful promoter was named. We seem to have forgotten it was a competition among promoters. We have known only since January exactly what scheme was chosen. I shall not repeat at any length the doubts expressed in the debate that the assessment of each of the bids was carried out in an extremely short time. Everyone concerned has had this timetable compressed and I do not know why such a timetable has been brought forward for the commencement of the work.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) spoke about the tetchiness of Lord Pennock. I do not propose to go into that or to go into the principle of the matter. We should remember that we are speaking not of a project that is expected to return its capital cost in a short time, but about one that is expected to draw its revenue, its capital return and its profit over the period of 50 years. I find it inconceivable that a period of six months can really affect the viability of a project involving some 32 banks worldwide. That argument does not stand up.

The Government have got themselves into this mess and, whether they like it or not, they are being portrayed as riding roughshod over people's opinions and driving an important matter through at short notice. How did the Government get themselves in this mess? We can all speculate on that question, but I simply wonder whether the Prime Minister in her discussions with President Mitterrand got carried away or was seduced by his Gallic charm, and that is why we got this timetable of completion within 12 months. The Government have made a virtue out of this being private venture capital. I shall return to that later because to some extent this debate is paling into the committal motion, and I do not want to expose all the shots in my locker. I am sure no other hon. Members wants to do that either.

The Government ought to have given a reasonable period for discussions. There was no need for them to suspend standing orders. They could quite properly have allowed decent planning and consultation and could have brought in the Bill next November. There would have been widespread if not total approval at that later stage for trying to set fairly tight mechanical deadlines. I hope the House will not approve this motion.

12.50 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My right hon. Friend the Lord Privy Seal, in opening this debate, set out, with his customary clarity, the parliamentary practice on the application to hybrid Bills of Standing Orders on private business. The precedents of this House on the matter are clear enough. No hybrid Bill has been refused dispensation on the ground of being late, while many have been granted dispensation in these circumstances. But the key question before the House tonight is whether the introduction of this Bill late in the Session has put petitioners at any significant disadvantage.

I ask the House to compare the normal pattern for a Bill announced in November with the Channel Tunnel Bill on this occasion. If we take the normal pattern, as in Standing Orders, promoters file for their petition by 27 November. That means that they have then announced what they are about. They deposit the Bill by 4 December, which is one week later. Promoters notify the affected parties directly in newspaper advertisements by 11 December. That is one week later. Petitioners must present their petitions by 30 January, which is eight weeks after 4 December.

In this case we announced the Bill on 20 January. We published the White Paper on 4 February and in it we stated the intention to legislate this spring. We deposited

the Bill on 18 April, just over 12 weeks later, and the promoters, our parliamentary agents, notified the affected parties within days—all complete under a week—with newspaper advertisements by 27 April.

If we compare the situation under the normal procedure — from an announcement to the close of a petition period, nine weeks, and from the notification of advertisements a period of eight weeks — in this case there were 21 weeks from the announcement to the time of petitions closing, and 8½ weeks instead of eight weeks for the period after the advertisements had been placed. Therefore, I believe that the House, looking at it dispassionately, will see that no petitioner has been disadvantaged by the proposed proceedings, and the big petitioners certainly have had ample time, since they knew from the end of last year that they should start to get ready with their major petitions.

A number of hon. Members, in particular the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), referred to the 1973-74 precedent. They are correct in saying that the House decided on that occasion that the closing date for petitions should be six weeks from Second Reading. That allowed petitioners eight weeks from the date of introduction of the Bill in which to lodge their petitions — rather less time than the minimum period specified in the motion that has been debated tonight.

The fact that the Select Committee did not meet until May on that occasion was due to an intervening general election. I am sure that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South would not want that to be taken into account on this occasion.

Companies that have petitioned against dispensations of course would prefer there to be delay. If possible, they would like the delay to be irreparable. But it will not be lost on the House that the two companies that have petitioned for delay in this case are commercial competitors of any fixed link. But what about the others? What about the landowners in the area who would like the uncertainty to be cleared up? What about the unemployed who would like the orders to go to engineering industries — indeed, to Thanet? Some of the large number of unemployed people in that area would like these jobs to go to that area.

I shall write to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) about the earliest and latest dates, but I am able to reassure him that the position is not as he believes it to be. As for the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South about maps, detailed plans showing all relevant features, including, for example, footpath closures, were available for public inspection at the offices of the county council, the district councils and certain parish councils on 18 April, one day after the introduction of the Bill. I hope that that is thought to be reasonable.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey wants the Government to state their case to the Select Committee before the hearings begin. We shall be stating our case in the Second Reading debate on Thursday. That will be the occasion for the major presentation of the case, and it will be the major opportunity for the highest tribunal in the land to consider the principle of the Bill. In addition, a statement will be made at the commencement of the Select Committee's proceedings.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South complained about difficulties for petitions. It must be almost unique for a Government to produce a leaflet telling people how to make their voices heard and how to mount a campaign against the Government's proposals. Those leaflets have been circulated widely throughout the relevant parts of Kent.

Some of my hon. Friends complained about changes in the layout of the terminal. If, having heard the views of local people, the promoters and the Government did nothing, there would of course, be complaints. Having made the changes that have been sought, there can hardly be complaints on that score.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) spoke of little people and several others, including my hon. Friends the Members for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) and for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson), expressed interest in the amendment down for Thursday's business in the names of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. That has been attributed to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry — and I have never known a Member to be more effective in representing his constituents without actually speaking in the Chamber. I cannot anticipate Mr. Speaker's selection of amendments for Thursday, but I have sympathy with my hon. Friends' views and I see the merit of their approach. I hope that, with that assurance, the House will approve the motion.

Question put:—

The House divided: Ayes 283, Noes 87?

Division No. 202] **[1 am**

AYES

Adley, Robert	Burt, Alistair
Amess, David	Butcher, John
Ancram, Michael	Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Arnold, Tom	Butterfill, John
Ashby, David	Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Aspinwall, Jack	Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Cash, William
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*	Chope, Christopher
Baldry, Tony	Churchill, W. S.
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Batiste, Spencer	Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Colvin, Michael
Bellingham, Henry	Conway, Derek
Bendall, Vivian	Coombs, Simon
Benyon, William	Cope, John
Best, Keith	Couchman, James
Bevan, David Gilroy	Cranborne, Viscount
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Critchley, Julian
Biggs-Davison, Sir John	Crouch, David
Blackburn, John	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter	Dickens, Geoffrey
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas	Dorrell, Stephen
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*	Dover, Den
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Dunn, Robert
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Durant, Tony
Bright, Graham	Dykes, Hugh
Brinton, Tim	Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Eggar, Tim
Brooke, Hon Peter	Emery, Sir Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Evennett, David
Browne, John	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Bruinvels, Peter	Fallon, Michael
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.	Favell, Anthony
Buck, Sir Antony	Fletcher, Alexander
Bulmer, Esmond	Fookes, Miss Janet

Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Rt Hon D. *(G'ldford)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Mawhinney, Dr Brian
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rost, Peter
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Trotter, Neville
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wiggin, Jerry
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Robert Boscawen and
Mr. Carol Mather.

NOES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Blair, Anthony
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Crowther, Stan
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Forrester, John
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Leadbitter, Ted
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Lofthouse, Geoffrey
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Maxton, John
Michie, William
Nellist, David
O'Brien, William
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Rowlands, Ted
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Wareing, Robert
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Don Dixon.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That in the case of the Channel Tunnel Bill the Standing Orders relating to Private Business, so far as not complied with

in the respect mentioned in the Report of the Examiners of Petitions for Private Bills relating to that Bill [28th April], be dispensed with and the Bill be permitted to proceed;

That in the event of the Bill being read a second time, the earliest date which, in any motion for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee, may be specified as the date by which a Petition against the Bill must be presented in order to stand referred to the Committee shall be 17th June.

Mr. Keith Mulcahy

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

1.9 am

Mr. Roy Galley (Halifax): The treatment of my constituent, Mr. Keith Mulcahy, in Her Majesty's prison, Frankland, gives cause for concern on a number of issues. It is a long saga, and I shall seek to be concise.

In December 1983 Mr. Mulcahy was sentenced to five years imprisonment for offences of burglary and handling stolen goods. After periods in prisons in Leeds and Liverpool, he was transferred to Hull prison. There, in April 1984, he asked to be segregated for his own protection under rule 43 since he had been threatened by other inmates who were aware that he had given certain information about criminal activities to the police.

As Mr. Mulcahy was not prepared to return to normal location arrangements at Hull, he was transferred to Frankland prison in May. Again he applied for rule 43 protection, since he was allegedly intimidated by other inmates who had heard that he had passed information to the police. He was again segregated. At this stage he caused some difficulties for the prison authorities because he wished for the added protection afforded by rule 43 but did not wish to associate with sex offenders and violent criminals who were held under that rule. He also found that the constraints of rule 43 confinement were irksome. In effect, he sought to be placed on normal location, while retaining the protection of rule 43. Of course, it was impossible to provide such arrangements for inmates with the limited accommodation and facilities available to the prison. Therefore, it can be seen that Keith Mulcahy was not an easy prisoner to manage. There were apparently other incidences where he had been unco-operative, and no doubt prison staff regarded him as a nuisance.

On 21 January 1985 Mr. Mulcahy was taken to the hospital wing of Frankland prison, complaining of chest pain. On 22 January he sought to return to normal location, but the prison doctor insisted that he remain in hospital for observation, which Mulcahy did against his wishes. Precisely what occurred as the period of observation was coming to its end on 23 January is somewhat lost in the mists of confusion. Prison officers claim that while in the hospital wing Keith Mulcahy was threatening to smash up his cell. Mr. Mulcahy denies that. There appears to have been some dispute about access to his record player. What certainly did occur was that a decision was taken to move him into a stripped cell. He went willingly to that cell, and there an incident occurred. Mulcahy claims that he was attacked by an officer. The officer and his colleague maintain that Mulcahy attacked one of them and had to be restrained. That was the subject of a board of visitors' inquiry later in the year. Keith Mulcahy was found guilty and punished with loss of remission.

Although I remain suspicious about those events, I do not wish to dwell upon them and must accept the board of visitors' conclusion on this aspect of the case. I am primarily concerned with what happened after the violence. Without giving his consent, Keith Mulcahy was forcibly injected with the drug paraldehyde, which is a strong sedative, and injections of the drug are considered to be painful. The maximum recommended dosage set out in the British National Formulary is 5 to 10 ml, no more than 5 ml at any one site. Keith Mulcahy was given 20 ml.

[Mr. Roy Galley]

He claims that he was injected in two different places, but according to the doctor there was one injection of 20 ml. It is also claimed that later on 23 January another injection, perhaps of another drug, was administered.

The role of the prison doctor is subject to disputed evidence, but there do appear to be some irregularities. Mulcahy was not examined immediately prior to the injection. The doctor's adjudication of fitness for punishment appears, at best, to have been haphazard. In evidence to the board of visitors the prison doctor admitted that he had given instructions while Mulcahy was in the hospital wing that he could be removed to a stripped cell if he became angry or truculent. It appears that hospital officers were given a relatively free hand by the doctor. It was stated that there was no need to refer to the doctor before a decision was made to remove him to a stripped cell.

The doctor claims that he visited Mulcahy in the stripped cell at 14.30 on 23 January, at about the time the injection was given. The prison officers all stated that the doctor was not present, and at the board of visitors' inquiry the doctor accused the hospital officers of telling lies.

There are a number of central questions in this case. Keith Mulcahy claims that he did not give his consent to the injection and, manifestly, he would not have done so. The usual ethical rules that are applicable in the prison medical service are that treatment without consent is not given unless a person is a danger to himself or others. There has never been any suggestion that excessive violence emanating from Keith Mulcahy occurred on 23 January, and there are no well-founded grounds for giving an injection without consent in this case. The prison doctor said at the board of visitors' inquiry that administering a drug such as paraldehyde without consent would be "tantamount to assault." Why, then, was the injection administered without consent?

The second question is whether the rules relating to the adjudication of fitness for punishment were adhered to. It cannot be acceptable for a prison doctor to give carte blanche approval to removal to a stripped cell without carrying out a prior examination immediate to that removal, purely on the ground that the prisoner could become angry or truculent.

Why is it that paraldehyde was administered when its use has been voluntarily restricted by doctors in the National Health Service in recent years and it has not been used in institutions such as Broadmoor for almost 20 years? Why was the dosage administered in one place at least four times the recommended maximum dosage? Under what circumstances are behaviour controlling drugs administered?

During its current inquiry into the prison medical service the Social Services Select Committee has consistently been told that such drugs are rarely, if ever, used for behaviour controlling purposes. These are the essential points of concern, but there are other issues. However, this evening I shall not seek to enter into too much detail on them.

Keith Mulcahy was bruised after the incident on 23 January. Why was no full investigation of that bruising carried out, but only a cursory observation by the prison doctor? On his subsequent transfer to Durham prison on 24 January, why was there no medical examination, as is normally the case on the reception of a new prisoner? In July 1985, while in Durham prison, Keith Mulcahy undertook a hunger strike. On the fourth day of it he was again transferred to a stripped cell.

If half of what he tells me about the conditions in which he was held in that stripped cell are true, those circumstances are appalling. Prisoners are rightly deprived of their liberty, and one would not wish them to live in a holiday camp atmosphere, but there is no need to treat them as brute beasts. In November 1985 I received a petition signed by more than 70 prisoners at Frankland complaining about the treatment of prisoners at the prison and suggesting that there had been at least one other incidence of forcible injection of drugs.

All that seems to merit the fullest, most thorough, independent inquiry into the case of Keith Mulcahy and the circumstances at Frankland. There is still a great deal of conflicting evidence and many points of dispute. I hope that I have been careful to make no direct allegations unless there is substantial evidence. However, I complain unreservedly about the delay by the Home Office in this case. After corresponding over the months on several points of detail, I wrote to my noble Friend Lord Glenarthur on 31 July 1985 asking for a full inquiry. Repeated requests over the next few months for information about progress produced little result. Eventually, on 19 February, my noble Friend wrote to say that a formal investigation was in hand and that by that time all concerned had been interviewed and a report was being drawn up. That was three and a half months ago.

I hope that my hon. Friend can understand my impatience in the matter. It is more than 10 months since I first asked for an inquiry. It is more than three months since the inquiry was substantially completed. One would not wish, in such cases, to sacrifice thoroughness for speed — one understands the pressures and problems of the Prison Department — but there has to come a point when, if there is no action, tolerance turns to suspicion. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to answer completely the points that I have raised.

1.21 am

The Minister of State, Home Office (Mr. Giles Shaw): There can be no doubt that my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Mr. Galley) has raised a serious matter in relation to his constituent and to the petitions which he has already placed before the House. He raised the matter in the form of the allegations about actions of the staff of Frankland prison. I assure my hon. Friend, on behalf of my noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, that he and the Department understand the extreme gravity of the matters disclosed regarding the prisoner Mr. Mulcahy.

It is right for me to go into the background detail of the affairs of 21 and 22 January regarding Mr. Mulcahy, who has been in Frankland prison since May 1984. On the evening of 21 January 1985, Mr. Mulcahy was admitted to the prison hospital, complaining of pains in his chest. When he saw the medical officer, Dr. Bhattacharya, on the morning of 22 January, Mr. Mulcahy asked whether he could return to ordinary location, but Dr. Bhattacharya felt that he should remain in the hospital under observation for a further 24 hours as the cause of his chest pain was still unclear. Mr. Mulcahy was unhappy at being kept in the hospital and threatened to cause trouble. Dr. Bhattacharya therefore made a note that, if Mr. Mulcahy caused trouble,

he should be placed in a stripped cell, which is a room in the hospital adapted to remove or modify features capable of being used by a patient to harm himself.

On 23 January, at around 12.30 pm, Mr. Mulcahy rang the bell in his cell and asked the hospital officer who attended for a record player. When this was refused, Mr. Mulcahy became abusive and demanded to see the governor. Staff agreed to arrange this in the normal way when the governor took applications the next morning. But at about 2.15 pm, Mr. Mulcahy again rang his bell and demanded to see the governor at once. He said that he was not prepared to wait until the morning and threatened to smash up his cell.

Staff therefore moved Mr. Mulcahy to a stripped room in accordance with the medical officer's instructions. Once in the stripped room, Mr. Mulcahy was asked to remove his clothes in accordance with the normal practice. At that point, he suddenly attacked one of the hospital officers, punching him in the face, and had to be restrained by the other officers present.

Mr. Mulcahy was later charged with a disciplinary offence, as my hon. Friend has related as a result of that assault. I shall return to that aspect of the case in a minute. While Mr. Mulcahy was being restrained, a hospital officer went to see Dr. Bhattacharya and explained the situation to him. He authorised the injection of 20 millilitres of paraldehyde, a tranquilliser. Mr. Mulcahy was held down by staff while this injection was administered in the buttocks. This was at about 2.30 pm. Mr. Mulcahy was then placed on special watch; that is, staff were required to observe him at intervals of not more than 15 minutes. He was observed to quieten down during the afternoon and evening. He was seen by the chief officer at 6.30 pm and by a member of the board of visitors at 6.45 pm. Dr. Bhattacharya saw him again at 7.30 pm and noted that he had some slight abrasions and bumps, consistent with the account given of the incident by staff.

At about 9.20 pm, Mr. Mulcahy began banging on his cell door and shouting. He told the hospital officer who came to see him that he had vomited blood and that he wanted to see a doctor. The hospital officer telephoned the duty doctor—a part-time medical officer with a practice outside the prison—at his home. The part-time medical officer authorised an injection of 100 milligrammes of pheno-thiazine, which is also a tranquilliser, and said that he would come into the prison if his condition worsened. When the hospital officer attempted to administer the injection, Mr. Mulcahy tried to knock the syringe from his hand, and had to be restrained by three other officers who had been summoned to assist him. After the injection was given, the 15-minute watch was maintained and Mr. Mulcahy calmed down.

This bare description of events obviously raises a series of questions. Indeed, my hon. Friend rightly highlighted them in his speech. I want to deal with them in order and explain what action we have taken. But my hon. Friend will recognise that some of the action that we have taken has sought to answer the questions that he posed. I refer, of course, to the inquiry, whose conclusions he is patiently awaiting.

I will deal first with the violent incident in the stripped cell immediately before the first injection was given. As I have said, Mr. Mulcahy was charged with a disciplinary offence. The governor remitted the charge to the board of visitors. Mr. Mulcahy requested, and was granted, representation at the hearing, which took place on 25 June. Mr. Mulcahy's defence was that he had been the victim of a concerted and unprovoked attack by staff; and he denied that he had assaulted the hospital officer first. The other four officers present during the incident gave evidence. All made statements confirming that Mr. Mulcahy had attacked the officer first and that no more force than necessary was used to subdue him. There was a very lengthy hearing and all the relevant evidence was considered by the board, which found Mr. Mulcahy guilty as charged and awarded him 60 days' forfeiture of remission.

The first of Mr. Mulcahy's petitions about this incident was received on 12 July. He complained both that he had been the victim of an unprovoked attack by the officers in the stripped cell and that he had been improperly medicated without his consent. In the following weeks we received letters about the case from my hon. Friend and from the hon. Members for City of Durham (Mr. Hughes) and for Newcastle upon Tyne, North (Mr. Brown) and also Lord Avebury. Mr. Mulcahy's solicitors also wrote about the case, asking for a copy of the transcript of the adjudication which we sent them on 25 September. Meanwhile, we had called for reports from the governor and medical officer on the issues raised by Mr. Mulcahy and the hon. Members concerned, including my hon. Friend.

During the course of these inquiries, we reached the conclusion that the adjudication on Mr. Mulcahy had been properly carried out, that Mr. Mulcahy's allegation that he had been the victim of an assault by staff was fully and correctly aired at the hearing and that all the relevant evidence had been put before the board. We therefore saw no reason to interfere with the award. However, we also reached the conclusion that, on the facts as they were known at that stage, a formal investigation into the allegation of forcible medication was required, and on 4 November the director of the prison medical service and regional director jointly ordered such an inquiry to be carried out by senior members of their staff — the regional principal medical officer and the deputy regional director. They then interviewed Mr. Mulcahy and the staff concerned at some length. My noble Friend wrote to my hon. Friend and other hon. Members on 19 February to explain that this inquiry was under way, that in the meantime he could not comment on the allegations, but that he took them very seriously and would write to them as soon as possible. The report and the accompanying statements were presented to the director of the prison medical service and the regional director in April this year. Of course, he would have preferred this report to have been completed earlier, both in the interest of Mr. Mulcahy and the staff concerned. However, it is only fair to say that the report is a substantial one and that the officers carrying out the investigation had to do so in addition to their normal duties. My hon. Friend very generously referred to that.

The director of the prison medical service and the regional director are now considering what action should be taken in the light of the report. In doing so, they will have regard to the advice issued by the director of the prison medical service to all medical officers on 27 January 1984 concerning the circumstances in which medication may be given without consent. That advice recognises that there is no statutory authority for medical treatment to be given in prison without the consent of the prisoner concerned. In this respect, prison medical officers

[Mr. Giles Shaw]

are in the same position as doctors in the community. In the absence of any statutory guidelines, the director of the prison medical service has commended to medical officers guidelines derived from the report of the Butler committee on mentally abnormal offenders, which subsequently formed the basis for section 62 of the Mental Health Act 1983, which of course applies to the treatment of patients detained in hospital under that Act. These guidelines advise that treatment should be given without the prisoner's consent only where, without that treatment, the prisoner's life would be endangered or there would be a likelihood of serious harm to the prisoner or others, or there would be an irreversible deterioration in the prisoner's condition.

My hon. Friend has asked pertinent questions tonight about the medication carried out in this case. The inquiry has been set up to elicit those facts and will seek to answer those questions fully.

I know that my hon. Friend, and indeed other hon. Members who are interested in the case, will be anxious to know the decision as soon as possible. I am not in a position to announce the outcome of the inquiry tonight. I can say, however, to my hon. Friend that we expect to reach conclusions within the next two weeks, or sooner. My noble Friend will then write fully to him and to the other hon. Members concerned. I know that my noble Friend will also be willing to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax to discuss the case fully. I imagine that my hon. Friend will wish that to happen.

However, I cannot conclude without expressing both personally and on behalf of my noble Friend, our apologies to my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax for the inordinate time that it has taken to resolve this most serious, but complicated, matter. I wish to place on record the admiration that I have for the great patience as well as pertinacity of my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax in maintaining his commitment and interest in the case.

I have to tell my hon. Friend—and I know that he will understand—that the allegations are very serious, and they are being treated very seriously indeed. I must sympathise with my hon. Friend that I am not able to provide him with the answers that he seeks tonight, but I have given him the assurance that in a very short time he will be in possession of the answers to his questions.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at twenty-eight minutes to Two o'clock.

House of Commons

Wednesday 4 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SCOTLAND

Economic Trends

1. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will next meet the general secretary and general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss economic trends in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Malcolm Rifkind): I am to meet a delegation from the General Council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress on 20 June 1986.

Mr. Hamilton: When the Secretary of State meets the general council, will he concede that, from the evidence of the local election results and the results of the System 3 opinion poll that have been made available to us today, the people of Scotland want no part of this Government's policies? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman align himself with members of the Cabinet and some of the senior Conservative Back Benchers who are asking for a change in policy? Is he aware that in Motherwell there is 22 per cent. unemployment? Will he show some compassion for the unemployed in Scotland, and in Motherwell in particular?

Mr. Rifkind: I doubt whether the STUC will wish to discuss local elections or the System 3 opinion polls. As to unemployment, since the Conservative Government came into office the regional seletive assistance provided by the Government has helped to create 2,977 new jobs in Motherwell, and the Motherwell project, to which the Government-funded Scottish Development Agency contributes, has helped to create a further 2,000 new jobs. The hon. Gentleman will be fair enough to acknowledge that the Government, both directly and indirectly, have made an important contribution towards job creation in his constituency.

Mr. Pollock: In his discussions with the STUC, will my right hon. and learned Friend bear in mind the problems facing the oil rig construction yards in Scotland? In particular, will he do what he can to ensure an even and fair distribution of work among the yards in Scotland at this anxious time?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the concern that we feel about the possible implications for oil rig construction of the oil companies' plans. I use every opportunity to press on them the fact that any investment made now will be for a return over the next 10 to 15 years, and so they should base their plans on what is likely to happen to oil prices over that time and not indulge in a panic reaction to current short-term fluctuations in the price of oil.

Mr. Kennedy: Further to the question from the hon. Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock), when the Secretary of State meets the STUC, will he, thinking of my constituency interest and that of the hon. Member's, pay attention to the responsible and constructive efforts that the STUC has been making? Will he ensure that whichever yard, be it Ardersier of Nigg, wins the Shell Eider contract, the Government will do everything humanly possible to ensure that as much as possible of the sub-contracted work associated with the contract goes to the unsuccessful yard? Is he aware that the social impact for the yard that loses will be devastating, given the levels of unemployment in our respective constituencies?

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern to ensure the maximum work for both yards, and the whole House would wish to see that. There are major constraints on any Government in terms of directing individual items of work to a particular yard, but one hopes that the end result will involve a suitable work load for both yards.

Mr. Henderson: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the most significant economic trends is that Scotland has moved from being one of the lowest paid to one of the wealthiest areas in the United Kingdom, during which period the United Kingdom has enjoyed five years of continuous economic growth?

Mr. Rifkind: My hon. Friend is correct. Outside the south-east of England and East Anglia, Scotland has a higher income and gross domestic product per capita than almost any other part of the United Kingdom, and that is not a claim that could have been made in 1979.

Mr. Eadie: When the right hon. and learned Gentleman meets the STUC, the general council will be able to tell him that coal production at some Scottish pits will cease. Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman tell us when his Department authorised the South of Scotland Electricity Board to place the Scottish mining industry in this peril?

Mr. Rifkind: At no time. The South of Scotland Electricity Board acts under statutory powers and determines what is appropriate in the interests of the consumers whom it is designed to serve. At no time does it either seek or require authorisation from the Scottish Office for any such decisions.

Mr. Bill Walker: When my right hon. and learned Friend next meets the STUC, will he draw to its attention the fact that inflation is now at its lowest level for many decades and that with inflation standing at 3 per cent. wage increases and demands in excess of that are likely to put more jobs at risk and in peril if we are to remain competitive? Will my right hon. and learned Friend also draw its attention to how popular he personally is in north Tayside and to the fact that we are looking forward to his visit on 21 June and that his popularity was probably reflected in the good results that we had in the regional elections?

Mr. Rifkind: I am certainly looking forward to my visit to my hon. Friend's constituency on 21 June. I can

think of no better way of spending my birthday than in my hon. Friend's constituency. With regard to my forthcoming meeting with the STUC, one of the points that I shall certainly be mentioning to them, in addition to the comments made by my hon. Friend, is that over 50,000 more people are in employment in Scotland today than there were in 1983 at the time of the last general election.

Mr. Martin: If the Minister is so confident about employment, what does he intend to do about Springburn? The railway works have suffered a terrible blow during the last week. To add insult to injury, there is an apprentice training school on those premises which has machinery and equipment to cater for 110 apprentices. Not one apprentice has been trained there during the past 18 months. The padlock has been put on the door. That is a ridiculous situation in the engineering capital of Scotland. The west of Scotland should be training young engineers if the economy is to take a turn for the better.

Mr. Rifkind: I share the hon. Gentleman's concern about the implications for the Springburn employees. He will be aware that that arises out of decisions that affected a number of similar establishments in various parts of the United Kingdom. With regard to his particular question about the training of the young, he will be aware of the enormous resources that the Government are pouring into youth training. Over £1 billion is being spent on youth training. This is helping to provide very appropriate training, which is enabling more than 60 per cent. of the youngsters who get this training to go immediately into full-time employment at the end of their training period. That is something which no previous Government have done.

Mr. Wilson: Will the Secretary of State say what prospects for long-term economic advance can be expected in Scotland when Scottish universities are faced with closure and redundancies? What action does he intend to take with his right hon. Friend and the English controlled University Grants Commission——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does this question relate to the general council of the Scottish Trades Union Congress?

Mr. Wilson: It relates to the economic aspects and to the need for improved technology. Will the Minister answer that question?

Mr. Rifkind: On the wider economic aspects, I can assure the hon. Gentleman that there is no question of any university facing closure. My right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State for Education and Science made it clear that the Government were prepared to consider further resources for the university sector. That is a matter that the universities will wish to take into account.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: When my right hon. and learned Friend meets the STUC, will he take the opportunity to ask it to condemn the unilateral action taken by the new Socialist administration on the Lothian regional council in reducing dramatically expenditure on Scottish infrastructure by cancelling the Lothian relief road and thus destroying jobs in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly of interest that the first significant decision of the new controlling group on the Lothian regional council was to announce a major cut in public expenditure, which therefore removed the prospect of many jobs being created.

Mr. Dewar: If the Secretary of State is so concerned about levels of public spending, is he in a position to give the STUC a guarantee that the Scottish Office budget will not be affected by the rather primitive and much advertised approach to housing finance of the new Secretary of State for the Environment? Will he also recognise that, despite the somewhat comic opera loyalty of those on the Benches behind him, there is a growing fear in Scotland about the level of unemployment and that the Scottish economy has reached a point of no return? Will he recall that he has had an approach from the Strathclyde regional council, and I think also from the STUC, which supports the initiative, arguing the case for an economic summit where all parts of Scottish life—academic, industrial, and, no doubt, political—can discuss the need for a change of direction to recover the situation? May we have a positive response to that appeal and, if so, when will it come?

Mr. Rifkind: I frankly doubt whether proposals for a summit are likely to prove a sensible way forward, but I am always interested to hear any constructive suggestions either from the regional council or the STUC, which will be coming to see me on 20 June, or any other bodies. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the allocation of resources to the Scottish Office stems directly from a formula system. Indeed, if I recall correctly, that formula system was introduced under the previous Labour Government.

New Town Development Corporations

2. **Mr. Norman Hogg** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next expects to meet the chairmen of the new town development corporations; and what subject he hopes to discuss.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. Michael Ancram): My right hon. and learned Friend plans to meet the chairmen on 14 July this year, when he would hope to discuss a range of matters of interest or concern to the new towns.

Mr. Hogg: Does the Minister agree that the most important thing that the Secretary of State could discuss with the chairmen of the new towns is employment, particularly the protection of employment, and job creation in new towns? Does he also agree that the urgency for that is underlined by recent events in my constituency where the largest departmental store, Woolco, is now to close with a loss of 181 jobs? What new initiatives will the Secretary of State announce to the chairmen of the new towns to create jobs in future?

Mr. Ancram: Obviously the provision of jobs is an important matter, and my right hon. and learned Friend will be discussing that issue. However, the hon. Gentleman is less than fair in suggesting that the new towns have done badly. Between May 1979 and April 1986, £110 million has been invested in the new towns, leading to 23,747 new jobs. In Cumbernauld in the hon. Gentleman's constituency over the past year 43 new companies have come about, 19 local firms have expanded and there are 800 new jobs there, with a promise of 800 more to come. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

Mr. Forth: Is my hon. Friend prepared to follow the excellent example given in England, where there has been a process of winding up the development corporations and

returning towns to democratic control? Is he prepared to take that bold step in order to ensure that towns will develop in their own natural way rather than being force fed with public money?

Mr. Ancram: I understand what my hon. Friend says. The present policy envisages new towns in Scotland being wound up when their populations reach a certain figure, but no corporation will begin to wind up before 1 April, 1990 and the position will be reviewed in 1989. Our current policy is that the new towns' remaining housing stock should on wind up be transferred to district councils, but if the new towns come forward with proposals for disposing of that in other ways, we would give those consideration.

Mr. Hugh Brown: When the Secretary of State meets the chairmen of the corporations, will he consider including on the agenda the disastrous results of housing policies which mean that many of my poor constituents' elderly relatives are unable to join their families?

Mr. Ancram: I am not sure to what precise policies the hon. Gentleman is referring, but if he will write to me on that issue I shall reply.

Chapelcross Power Station

3. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has in relation to the design of Chapelcross power station as it relates to the potential danger from earth tremors; what representations he has received on this matter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy, the hon. Member for Eddisbury (Mr. Goodlad), to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 18 March 1986, which dealt with this issue in detail. My right hon. and learned Friend has had no representations about this matter.

Mr. Foulkes: Is the Under-Secretary aware that in 1983 a report from structural engineers to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. said that Chapelcross, one of the oldest power stations in the United Kingdom, was vulnerable to relatively minor earth tremors and should be closed down? Will he confirm that the reason why nothing was done about that was that Chapelcross produced tritium for British, and, perhaps, American warheads and bombs? If the hon. Gentleman believes what his colleagues say, that Britain is far more open and honest on this issue than the Soviet Union, will he agree to publish all the documents relating to safety at Chapelcross?

Mr. Ancram: Once again the hon. Gentleman is trying to create scares with no foundation. I remind him of what my hon. Friend said in the answer to which I referred. He explained that he was

"advised by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate that the seismic structural assessments carried out by the BNFL for the Calder Hall and Chapelcross reactor demonstrate that the reactor could be safely shut down and maintained in a safe condition following an earthquake with a peak field horizontal acceleration of 0·11g although some damage to non-essential service buildings would occur".—[*Official Report*, 18 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. *124*.]

The NII has required the operators of Magnox stations to carry out a long-term safety review at about 20 years' operating life to confirm that they are safe for continued operation, to identify any factors which may limit the safe operation of the plant and to assess safety standards to determine whether any improvements are appropriate. The conclusion of these reviews will in future be published.

Irvine New Town

4. **Mr. Lambie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make an official visit to Irvine new town.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend has at present no plans to do so.

Mr. Lambie: That answer will be a disappointment to my constituents, who had hoped that the Secretary of State would visit Irvine to look into the affairs of Co-Star Ltd., a computer company which has three directors, one Scot and two Americans, one of whom, according to a Sunday newspaper, is on the run from the FBI in the United States.

Is the Minister aware that Co-Star Ltd. disappeared after receiving a financial package to set up in Irvine, and that two of the directors formed a new company called Muir-Anderson Associates Ltd., which received help from a local enterprise trust, Asset, to set up another company in Stevenson? Is the Minister further aware that these two directors have now formed a new company which has moved to Cumnock, where they are receiving a further financial package prepared by the local enterprise trust, Cadet, NCB (Enterprises) Ltd. and the Scottish Development Agency under the new name of Comerbeams? When will the Minister——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Briefly.

Mr. Lambie: When will the Minister investigate the affairs of this company and ensure that the grants are withdrawn and that those responsible are prosecuted?

Mr. Ancram: I appreciate that the people of Irvine will be disappointed that my right hon. and learned Friend is not to visit them, as are communites in other parts of Scotland which my right hon. and learned Friend has not yet been able to visit. As for the hon. Gentleman's supplementary question, I can say that grant was paid and that first steps have already been taken towards recovering the full amount of grant from Co-Star. In view of what has happened, the new company will be subject to particularly careful scrutiny.

Electricity Generation

5. **Mr. Home Robertson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the total capacity of the generation stations of the two Scottish electricity boards; and what is the maximum recorded demand for electricity in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: I am advised by the Scottish electricity boards that, excluding oil-fired capacity held in reserve, the maximum available sent-out capacity of the Scottish generation system is 8,839 MW. The maximum simultaneous demand ever recorded was 6,341 MW during the severe winter of 1981-82.

Mr. Home Robertson: As we now have such massive excess generating capacity in Scotland, and as serious concern is being expressed about the Chernobyl disaster, why are the Government in such haste to commission a further 1,400 MW of nuclear generating capacity at Torness ahead of schedule? Will the Secretary of State halt the fuelling of the reactors at Torness, at least until such

time as the environmental, safety and economic consequences of the commissioning of that power station can be considered properly?

Mr. Rifkind: The Government are in no haste to do anything — *[Interruption.]* A well-known phrase or saying is "act in haste and repent at leisure", which I am happy to confirm. The hon. Gentleman should realise that the British nuclear industry has a superb safety record. He should appreciate that in the past 30 years there has not been one significant incident anywhere in the United Kingdom involving danger to the health or life of the public. If I remember correctly, the hon. Gentleman advocated the construction of the Torness nuclear power station when he first sought to represent his constituency in this place. It is somewhat odd that he is now trying to pretend that he has different views.

Mr. Fletcher: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that Scotland has a great deal of knowledge and practical experience of nuclear energy — indeed, as much as anyone—and that it has been put to very good use by the South of Scotland Electricity Board in the construction of the station at Torness, not least with regard to public safety? However, will my right hon. and learned Friend take steps to counter the current unease about nuclear power, following the disaster in Russia, by tapping that knowledge and experience in Scotland, not just in the SSEB, but among industrialists and academics, so that they may better inform the public and put aside some of the fears that people feel at this time?

Mr. Rifkind: Of course, my hon. Friend is absolutely correct. Understandable concern has arisen out of the Chernobyl incident. I believe that the correct policy to pursue, which the Scottish Office and the Government as a whole pursue, is the maximum disclosure of all information and the maximum utilisation of any new information that is available, which will enhance even further the extremely high safety standards that we already have. That is an ongoing process. It is right and proper that everything possible should be done to ensure that the public are aware that the maximum safety standards are available, and that all information which is relevant is always disclosed, so that the public can come to a considered judgment on those matters.

Mr. Strang: Does the Secretary of State accept that Chernobyl has changed matters and that there is an overwhelming view in Scotland that we should reduce our dependence on civil nuclear power? If the Government are not prepared to do that, will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that the Government will not prevent the next Government from doing so, by closing down coal production capacity? Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give an assurance that there will be no reduction in coal production in Scotland over the next few years?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that the level of coal production will depend on several factors, including demand. The SSEB may have a requirement for increased coal consumption over the years to come, irrespective of what happens to the existing nuclear power stations. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues often press upon the Government the need to help industry. He must be aware that if we ceased to use civil nuclear power in Scotland, the electricity tariffs for industry in Scotland, as well as for consumers, would go up dramatically. It has been suggested that increases of between 25 and 30 per cent. in the electricity tariffs would be required if we ceased to use all civil nuclear power in Scotland.

Mr. Donald Stewart: Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that that gross overcapacity of electricity in Scotland, arising partly from nuclear power, might cause further embarrassment shortly if the French dump cheap electricity in England, which would do away with 1,000 MW currently being exported from Scotland to England? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept the consequences for Scottish mining, where demand has been cut almost to one quarter in recent years? Does he further accept the view of most people in Scotland that there is not the slightest rational ground for going ahead with Torness?

Mr. Rifkind: If the right hon. Gentleman is concerned about the capacity of the French to export their electricity on a competitive basis, he might like to reflect that France has a higher level of civil nuclear power than almost any other European country. That emphasises the point that I made earlier, that if we are interested in cheap power for the benefit of the public as a whole and of industry, it is essential to use those resources when they are available.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Will my right hon. and learned Friend make every effort to make it clear to the people of Scotland that the Opposition's policies on nuclear power would result in higher electricity bills for consumers, making it more difficult for pensioners to heat their homes? Are there not double standards, through the Opposition exaggerating the dangers of nuclear power and imposing higher costs on the elderly to suit their own political ideology?

Mr. Rifkind: Not only are there double standards, but there appears to be a deep gulf between the representations that have been made today and the reported comments of the leader of the Labour party, who indicated an assumption that Torness would go ahead, and that it would be unwise or unreasonable to assume anything to the contrary. I suggest that Opposition Members and their Leader ought to get their act together.

Mr. Dewar: Like the Minister, I accept that the first and overriding priority in this matter must be public safety. Does the Secretary of State recognise that there are fears about the implications of the expansion of nuclear power in Scotland? That point has been made by a number of his own Back Benchers during Question Time. Will he consider making available a document setting out the Government's best estimate of the impact on other forms of energy and on the industries that produce them, especially the impact on coal and the SSEB coal burn? Will he also consider whether he should at rather more length deploy the arguments which support the figure of an increase of 25 or 30 per cent. in electricity costs if we were to reduce our dependency on nuclear power, which some of us think is a surprisingly high figure? In such a paper, will he deal with the arguments that many people will take from the figures that he gave at the beginning of this exchange about capacity, the peak of demand last winter and the apparent sufficiency of the present levels of nuclear generating capacity in Scotland?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman will appreciate that responsibility for energy policy rests with my right hon.

Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. The Government are willing that all the relevant information should be available to the general public so that people can come to their own considered judgment about a sensible policy to pursue. I note that the hon. Gentleman has not associated himself with the views of some of his more enthusiastic colleagues who are calling either for Torness not to be commissioned or for civil nuclear power not to be utilised. We wait with interest to hear the hon. Gentleman's views on these matters. So far he has been silent about them.

Mr. Henderson: Will my right hon. and learned Friend tell the House something about the figures for the comparative prices of generating electricity by nuclear and by coal-fired methods and the amount of pollution that each method produces? Does he agree that there has been no significant change about whether or not Torness should have been built since the time when the Labour Government were in office and authorised it, except that the Government have changed and some Opposition Members are being opportunistic?

Mr. Rifkind: I think that there is a degree of opportunism here. However, I accept that, inevitably, many members of the public who do not choose to have access to scientific information may be uncertain as to whether there is some association between the events at Chernobyl and their relevance for the United Kingdom. I hope that hon. Members who take an interest in these matters will be objective rather than scare-mongering in their public comments and accept that the factors which led to the disaster in Chernobyl are not relevant to any nuclear power station in the United Kingdom.

School Buildings

6. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what study he is making of the essential maintenance needs of school buildings in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: There are two studies under way at present: a national accommodation survey by my Department in conjunction with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and a research commission which will sample the maintenance characteristics of schools in one education authority area.

Mr. Dalyell: What is the time scale for these studies? Has the old adage that a stitch in time saves nine ever been more applicable than to the crumbling state of many of our schools?

Mr. Rifkind: The results of the surveys will be made known as soon as they are available. The hon. Gentleman knows perfectly well that one of the difficulties especially relevant in the Lothian region about the maintenance of certain buildings is that the local authorities have insisted on retaining far more surplus school capacity than is justified by the number of pupils. If local authorities insist on maintaining half empty school buildings, not only does that mean that resources have to be diverted to the heating and maintenance of these half empty buildings, but it denies proper educational opportunities to pupils in some of these schools. Such opportunities cannot be made available in a school that is only half full. Local authorities throughout Scotland have to bear in mind that resources are much better utilised on school books and on facilities of that kind than on the maintenance of more buildings than they need.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that one of the major problems is that in recent times authorities have not conducted policies that work for the benefit of the children by maintaining buildings in a fit state in which the children can be properly and adequately educated, but have been more inclined towards politically oriented activities for the sake of publicity? We require a fundamental review—part of which my right hon. and learned Friend will agree is under way at the moment regarding teachers' pay and conditions—of how we practise education in all its different ways in Scotland in order to get rid of the genuine anxiety that is felt by many people. In areas like mine, where schools are being closed——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a bit wide of school buildings.

Mr. Bill Walker: Schools are being closed in my area, but my constituents accept this because it is sensible for the better utilisation of resources.

Mr. Rifkind: It is certainly correct to approach the various issues that are relevant to education in that way. The inquiry which the Government have announced will have wide terms of reference and will enable us to approach the matter in that way.

Mr. Maxton: In view of the answer that the Secretary of State gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), perhaps he would care to list the schools that he would like Lothian region to close. I am sure that the right hon. and learned Gentleman's constituents would like to know the answer to that question. Does he accept that the real cause of the decline in the fabric of school buildings is the massive cuts that the Government have imposed on local government? Does he further accept that in the recent elections the people of Scotland clearly stated what they think about the Government's education policies?

Mr. Rifkind: That was a rather predictable question. The hon. Gentleman might like to reflect on the figures produced by Strathclyde regional council, which estimated in the early 1980s that by 1991 a fall in school rolls would result in a surplus of no fewer than 230,000 school places. The hon. Gentleman is intelligent enough to be aware that if there is a surplus of 230,000 places—*[Interruption.]* This is arithmetic, which I am sure the hon. Gentleman will appreciate. If there is a surplus of 230,000 places and the number of school buildings is not reduced by a proportionate amount, a lot of resources will be wasted when they could be better used to provide good education for children. That is the lesson of the day that the hon. Gentleman might like to try to absorb.

Knockinlaw Project

7. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he plans to visit Kilmarnock to review the Knockinlaw project.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend cannot fit in a visit at present, but he will bear the invitation in mind for the future.

Mr. McKelvey: I am sure that the Secretary of State would not expect me to say that he is much loved in the district of Kilmarnock, but he is respected as an intelligent and sincere man. *[Interruption.]* I am not responsible for

the thoughts of my constituents on these matters. Could he make it a matter of urgency to come to Kilmarnock to see the Knockinlaw project? We are grateful for the money that the Scottish Office has provided, but we could do with more, especially to refurbish the shop frontage, which covers three commercial enterprises and two which belong to the district council. It seems that no grants are available. Will he consider whether grants can be made available so that we can brighten up the shop fronts and enhance the area so that the quality of life of shopkeepers and customers may be improved?

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend visited the Knockinlaw project in 1981 and I visited it in October 1983. We were both impressed by the successful way in which it had marshalled a wide variety of resources. The hon. Gentleman must be aware that we have given considerable resources to Kilmarnock and Loudon during the past two years. Its housing revenue account has increased by 53 per cent.—and that is no mean figure. I appreciate that there can be difficulties because of varied ownership, but the commercial shopowners might consider a joint approach to the Scottish Development Agency to explore the possibility of assistance towards the cost of improving the general appearance of their premises.

Hospital Facilities (West Fife)

8. **Mr. Douglas** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the future development of hospital facilities in west Fife.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr. John MacKay): I have asked the health board to give further thought to its proposals for the provision of acute services in the whole of its area, including west Fife. I shall give careful consideration to the board's revised proposals when they are submitted.

Mr. Douglas: That is an interesting reply. What does the Minister have in mind by asking the Fife health board to give the matter further consideration? Does he share the board's anxiety that this further review might incur a delay in phase two of the Dumfermline and West Fife general hospital, which would not be in the interests of the overall development of hospital services in west Fife? When does he expect to make a decision on this further review?

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate the anxiety on this matter. The hon. Gentleman knows that there are different points of view in Fife about the board's future building programme. The original appraisal of the options open to it was based on the assumption that scope for development of the Victoria hospital in Kirkcaldy was limited. The most recent professional building advice states that further development may be possible. On that basis, I have asked the board to explore that possibility.

Mr. Gordon Brown: Is the Minister not ashamed of the latest figures for Fife, which show that more than 5,000 people are on the waiting list, 2,000 of whom have been waiting for more than one year and more than 1,000 of whom have been waiting for more than two years? Is he aware of the advice of the chief medical officer, that the waiting list will not fall substantially until the second phase of the Dunfermline and West Fife hospital is built? Will he therefore give urgent attention to the approval of the hospital scheme?

Mr. MacKay: Of course I shall give urgent attention to its approval, but it is important that we get the plan right, because it will have to serve the area for some time to come. In the past seven years, three major projects have come on stream in the Fife health board area. In addition to the major projects, Fife health board, as a beneficiary of SHARE, is employing more medical and nursing staff and is attending to considerably more patients than when the Government took office.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. Friend accept that although it is important to get this matter right, it is unfortunate that his Department has come along comparatively late in the day inviting further consideration of the position in Kirkcaldy? Is he aware that the people of Fife are grateful for the amount of new building that has been provided under this Government, one measure of which is that the rates bill for the new build since 1979 amounts to £500,000 a year?

Mr. MacKay: I appreciate my hon. Friend's point. He rightly stresses the expense to the health boards, not only in Fife but elsewhere in Scotland, of local authority rates. That is not helped by the higher rating of new premises that have come on stream since 1979. I am aware of the need to make a decision, but I am equally aware of the need to make the correct decision and to consider the position in Kirkcaldy before making a final decision.

Forestry Commission

9. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received concerning the consultation paper, "The Composition and Procedures of the Forestry Commission's Regional Advisory Committees".

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received no representations.

Mr. Davies: Will the Minister confirm that representations should have been received by last Friday if individuals or organisations wished to make representations to him? As he has received no representations, will he now consider opening regional advisory committee meetings to the press and public? The Government have committed themselves to freedom of information. They have supported legislation requiring local authorities to open their proceedings to the press and public. In view of the increasing sensitivity of the public to the operations of the Forestry Commission, does he accept that if the press and public were guaranteed access to the meetings and deliberations of the RACs that would provide greater safeguards for the public interest?

Mr. MacKay: Comments were asked for by the Forestry Commission, and the deadline was the end of May. I understand that the commission has received written comments from 28 organisations, and they are being analysed. The commission has decided to extend the period to allow for further written comments. There is no deadline, but the commission and the Government wish the comments to arrive as quickly as possible. The commission would be willing to meet any reasonable requests for meetings to discuss openness.

Mr. Pollock: Does my hon. Friend accept that a most effective way of ensuring the future operation of the regional advisory committees would be for the

Government to make clear their continuing commitment to the Forestry Commission as a whole, remembering that it commands wide public respect and support throughout Scotland?

Mr. MacKay: I have drawn the attention of hon. Members, including my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Mr. Pollock), to the statement made by the former Secretary of State for Scotland—my right hon. Friend the Member for Ayr (Mr. Younger)—on the Forestry Commission. That remains Government policy.

Electricity Generation

10. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what he estimates the excess electricity generating capacity will be over peak demand in Scotland, after the commissioning of the nuclear power station at Torness.

Mr. Rifkind: The preparation of demand forecasts is a matter for the Scottish electricity boards. They estimate that in 1989-90, by which time the Torness nuclear station will be fully operational, the plant capacity additional to that required solely to meet the maximum demand with planned security is likely to be 27 per cent. This excludes oil-fired capacity placed in reserve and does not allow for any exports in the course of trading with England and Wales.

Mr. Wallace: As the Secretary of State said earlier that the Government were in no case to do anything, presumably in the context of the nuclear industry, will he confirm, or deny, that the South of Scotland Electricity Board has been withdrawing staff from other plants to put them into Torness to hasten commissioning of the reactor? In view of the Chernobyl incident and the fact that, once commissioned, the plant will at some stage have to be decommissioned, with all that that entails in relation to the production of nuclear waste, and in view of current oil prices, would it not be better to bring Inverkip out of mothballs and keep Torness in mothballs?

Mr. Rifkind: I have no information on the first point. On the more general proposition, the hon. Gentleman should appreciate that it is in the interests of Scotland to have the maximum of cheap electricity for industry and for the consumer. As the hon. Gentleman knows, that is not only my view but that of his Social Democratic colleagues in the alliance, and it is a view widely held in many parts of Scotland, except in some of the circles in which the hon. Gentleman mixes.

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton: Assuming that Torness is to be commissioned before the next election, what plans are being prepared for the evacuation of people living near the plant in the event of a Chernobyl-type disaster? If such plans do not exist, will the Secretary of State ensure that plans are prepared and that they are published?

Mr. Rifkind: The hon. Gentleman should be aware that the Government have given particular importance to issues such as civil defence and how to deal with any emergencies that may take place. The hon. Gentleman and his colleagues have utterly opposed any attempt to encourage local authorities and others to participate in normal sensible preparation for any problems that might arise involving power stations or any part of the local community. Notwithstanding that, the South of Scotland Electricity Board and all responsible public authorities take into account the need for proper provision for any incident that might take place. The hon. Gentleman should also be aware that the record of the nuclear industry in Scotland and in the United Kingdom over the past 30 years has no equal anywhere in the world.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that the purpose of Torness is to provide cheap electricity for those for whom the Opposition consistently bay in favour of a cheaper way of life and that there is no risk of a Chernobyl-type disaster at Torness because of our safety standards? Will he further confirm that a British Conservative Government, unlike the Socialist Government in Russia, would not cynically keep secret such an accident regardless of the consequences?

Mr. Rifkind: No doubt consideration of the kind to which my hon. and learned Friend referred in the first part of his question led to the Labour Government ordering Torness, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Mr. Home Robertson) supporting its construction and the present leader of the Labour party declining to enforce its decommissioning.

Local Government Finance

11. **Mr. MacKenzie** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he next proposes to meet the officers of Convention of Scottish Local Authorities to discuss the matter of local government finance.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend next plans to discuss local government finance matters with the convention on 18 July.

Mr. MacKenzie: Will the Minister bear in mind that as a result of the recent elections officers of the convention have a massive mandate to tell the Secretary of State that they do not approve of his massive interference in the management of local government finance and that there is massive opposition to rate reform as envisaged by the Secretary of State? Will he take those two points on board and really listen to what the officers have to say?

Mr. Ancram: We shall obviously listen to what representatives of the convention have to say when the meeting takes place. The idea of the Government being able to take an overview of local authority spending did not come about under the present Government. Indeed, it was one of the right hon. Gentleman's colleagues in government who told local authorities in 1976 that the party was over because they were overspending. There are still local authorities in Scotland which intend to spend more in real terms than they were spending in 1979. The Government have an interest in ensuring that that expenditure is properly restrained.

It is interesting to note that those who oppose rate reform have no thought-out alternative to put in its place.

Only the Government have been prepared to grasp the nettle to get rid of the present totally discredited rating system.

Mr. McQuarrie: When my hon. Friend meets representative of COSLA, will he take the opportunity to discuss with them the question of increasing employment through the Prime Minister's decision to clear the streets of litter? When he discusses that question, will he actively promote further jobs in urban areas in order to ensure that the streets of Scotland are kept clean?

Mr. Ancram: Obviously we shall want to examine closely the proposals that are being made for the clearing of litter south of the border to see how they can be used in Scotland. The collection and disposal of rubbish and litter are, in my view, not necessarily best done by local authorities. Indeed, we have encouraged local authorities over a long period to put out to tender those services to see whether they can be more efficiently and better done.

Mr. Bruce: Will the Minister recognise, whether COSLA makes the point to him or not, that there is real concern that the introduction of a poll tax will unfairly affect residents in rural areas? Will he take that concern on board and recognise that rural authorities will need more resources to maintain services, given that the Government refuse to set up a rural development fund?

Mr. Ancram: If the hon. Gentleman were to consider the indicative figures that we put out at the time of the publication of the Green Paper as to the likely levels of community charge, he would find that it is precisely in rural areas that those charges are likely to be lowest.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Assembly Building

24. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland what area of the Scottish Assembly building in Edinburgh is currently used by him, by the Lord Advocate and by their staff.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland (Mr. Peter Fraser): As I have indicated previously to the hon. Gentleman, Crown Office buildings are fully occupied as office accommodation with the exception of the debating chamber, a lobby and a press room.

Mr. Canavan: Is it not an absolute national scandal that the debating chamber of the Scottish Assembly building is lying empty and unused for most of the time because this Tory Government are refusing to respond to the legitimate demands of the majority of the people of Scotland, who want a democratically elected Scottish Assembly instead of being ruled by an undemocratic Tory junta which has received no mandate from the people of Scotland?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The chamber would have been much better used if a number of the hon. Gentleman's colleagues had attended the last time the Scottish Grand Committee held its meeting there. As part of a Government who have done more than any of their predecessors to reform the private law of Scotland since 1979, in my view we are much better to concentrate our efforts on that than to waste months of parliamentary time putting together another unworkable scheme.

Mr. Bill Walker: Does my hon and learned Friend agree that the lack of interest shown by the Scottish people in the meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee that have taken place in Edinburgh, and the lack of attendance of Labour Members, which was referred to by my hon. and learned Friend, and of other Opposition Members shows clearly that the debating chamber is best left empty for most of the time?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Certainly, there has not been much of a turn-out recently either of hon. Members or of the public, although in the past we have taken the oportunity of using the Scottish Grand Committee meetings in Edinburgh to put forward the legislation and the reform of which I have already made mention.

Mr. Wallace: Does the Solicitor-General agree that if the Royal High school building was used for a Scottish Assembly it might generate more interest among his colleagues than is witnessed today by the lack of interest in this place, where not one Scottish Conservative Member has a question on the Order Paper?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Attendance at meetings of the Scottish Grand Committee in Edinburgh has been thin, as the hon. Gentleman will have noticed if he has been there. If he wants to encourage greater use of the building, I am sure he knows how to set about it.

Mr. Michael Forsyth: Does my hon. and learned Friend agree that, rather than go through the farce of wasting vast sums of public money on running the Scottish Grand Committee meetings in that building, it would be better to sell it and use the resources on the Health Service or on something useful in Scotland, given that his Department survived without it in the past, and as the people of Scotland certainly do not want a Scottish Assembly?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Much as I appreciate the architecture of the Royal High school building in Edinburgh, as Solicitor-General I believe that the sooner we can move out of it and return to a proper Crown Office, the better.

Mr. Dewar: Will the Solicitor-General expand on that last remark? He appeared to support the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth) and his scheme. Is that the Solicitor-General's personal view? Will he note that the Opposition are strongly in favour of continuing the present practice of meeting in Edinburgh as a prelude to the day when we have a Scottish Assembly properly established there?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I thought that I said clearly that at present the Crown Office occupies the greater part of the building. As a lawyer, the hon. Gentleman will appreciate that Crown Office activities are to some extent separated not only from the Court of Session and the High Court, but from the sheriff court in Edinburgh. It would be much more appropriate for my Department to be closer to those courts. There are a number of possibilities for the future use of the building, but I certainly would not suggest that it would be right to use it for a Scottish Assembly.

Criminal Justice Act 1980

25. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland when he intends to meet procurators fiscal in Scotland to discuss the use of evidence in courts obtained under part I of the Criminal Justice Act 1980.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I meet procurators fiscal from time to time to discuss various matters, including the 1980 Act, but no particular meeting is planned to discuss evidence under part I.

Mr. Maxton: Does the Solicitor-General remember, when he was a mere Back Bencher serving on the Committee on that Bill, that his right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State, then a junior Minister,

promised that there would be research into the working of detention powers? Is it correct that that research was carried out and that a report was produced in March 1985, which went to the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), which demanded that it be repressed and that no further research be carried out? Will he now ensure that that report is published?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: That is a searching and compelling question, but it is inappropriately addressed to me. It is for my right hon. and learned Friend the Secretary of State.

Police (Complaints)

26. **Mr. Foulkes** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland how many complaints against the police in Scotland have been referred from procurators fiscal to the Lord Advocate for advice or decision.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: To date this year, 142 cases of complaints against the police have been reported by regional procurators fiscal to the Crown Office for consideration by Crown counsel. In 1985, 493 cases were reported. Such cases are seen by me and occasionally by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Mr. Foulkes: I am most grateful to the Solicitor-General for that reply. Will he give serious consideration to an examination by his Department into whether the police are referring to the procurators fiscal complaints which have nothing to do with the alleged offences? When the procurators fiscal say that they will take no action, it gives some spurious exoneration to the person under complaint. If that examination shows that that is the case, will the Solicitor-General give further consideration to the possibility of an independent complaints procedure for complaints against the police, in which the Scottish public would have much greater confidence?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman raises a serious and difficult matter. There are occasions when the police cannot immediately identify a complaint and when it would be inappropriate for them to reach a conclusion on whether it is purely a disciplinary matter or one which contains an allegation of criminal conduct by the police. Clearly, in those circumstances they tend to veer on the side of caution. They certainly put some cases which do not have a criminal content to procurators fiscal and the Crown Office. I am not sure that that causes the difficulties that the hon. Gentleman mentions, but I am prepared to look into the matter.

Mr. Fairbairn: Will my hon. and learned Friend confirm that all complaints against the police are reported to a Law Officer and are scrutinised by him, or his noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate, so that the highest consideration is given to any complaint of alleged abuse by the police?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, I can confirm that matters have not changed and that the policy has not been altered since my hon. and learned Friend had these responsibilities. Not everyone is involved if it is only a matter of a possible breach of disciplinary code within the police. Furthermore, if it is a complaint which clearly has no substance, it is not reported to Crown counsel or to one of the Law Officers. Otherwise, as I said, a considerable number of complaints are personally examined by me or by my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate.

Dr. Godman: Of the 400 or so complaints, how many originated in Greenock and Port Glasgow, and of those how many led to disciplinary or criminal proceedings being taken?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: The hon. Gentleman has me at a loss. I am not able to tell him immediately what the Greenock and Port Glasgow figures are, and I cannot tell him how many of them resulted in disciplinary proceedings, because the pursuit of disciplinary proceedings would be a matter for the assistant chief constable and the chief constable rather than myself. Those instructions would come from me only if there was a decision to proceed with criminal proceedings against a police officer.

Mr. Henderson: Does my hon. and learned Friend accept that while one wants to see complaints made against the police properly and fully investigated, it is equally important, when frivolous or malicious complaints are made, that the full rigour of the law is taken against people who distract the police and other officers of justice from their proper duties?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Yes, indeed. The policy is clear. If at some stage it is identified that the complaint is in any way malicious or is a wilful effort to waste the time of the police, often to secure a balance, proceedings are taken against those who make the malicious complaints.

Procurator Fiscal (Kilmarnock)

27. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland if he plans to meet procurators fiscal in Kilmarnock to discuss matters of accommodation.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: I have no immediate plans to discuss matters of accommodation with the procurator fiscal at Kilmarnock. His accommodation problems are well understood. The planned solution is to relocate his office in the old Kilmarnock sheriff court house once that building has been vacated.

Mr. McKelvey: Can the Solicitor-General for Scotland tell me whether the Crown Office has, therefore, approved the sketch plans for the refurbishment and redevelopment of the old Kilmarnock sheriff court? If it has done so, would he perhaps discuss with his colleague, the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the possibilities of Government funding to give that project the go-ahead?

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: As I said in my original answer, it is certainly the intention to relocate. That is a policy which my noble and learned Friend the Lord Advocate and I warmly support. A considerable amount of work has already been done on that, but, as the hon. Gentleman appreciates, funds have not yet been committed to it. However, we certainly want to see the project go ahead.

Scottish Question Time

3.33 pm

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. On previous occasions some of my colleagues have asked you to take account of the fact that, in comparison with other Question Times, where Government members are in excess, at Scottish Question Time there are twice as many Scottish Labour Members as Scottish Tory Members. On this occasion, Scottish Tory Members have tabled only one question, and that was by the hon. Member for Dumfries (Sir H. Monro) who was not even present. In addition——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I did exactly that today. If the hon. Gentleman looks carefully at *Hansard* tomorrow, he will see exactly what happened.

Mr. Foulkes: I am grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. I was about to conclude by saying that in addition to that there were only six Tory Back Benchers present. I shall look at *Hansard* tomorrow, but I was counting up. For example, the hon. Member for Stirling (Mr. Forsyth), who did not table a question, was called on three or four occasions.

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is my discretion. However, if the hon. Gentleman looks at *Hansard* tomorrow, he will find that Opposition Members were called much more frequently. It is always my endeavour at Question Time to call those hon. Members who have questions on the Order Paper if they can be broadly linked. Furthermore, I endeavour to give everyone an opportunity of being called at least once.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Dennis Canavan (Falkirk, West): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I shall take Mr. Bill Walker's point of order first.

Mr. Bill Walker: Mr. Speaker, can you confirm that when the House is taking questions on what are considered to be United Kingdom matters, Conservative Members expect the questions, quite properly in my view, to go from one side to the other and that is what happens? No cognisance is taken of the fact that there are many more Conservative Members present during what could be called United Kingdom questions, yet, unlike what the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) is calling for, no allowance is made for that.

Mr. Speaker: Order. I do not propose to enter into a debate with the House on how I call hon. Members at Question Time.

Mr. Canavan: The hon. Member for Eastwood (Mr. Stewart) was not present to answer questions this afternoon because, as I understand it, he is in Mexico for the World Cup finals. In view of the fact that the hon. Member is not only the Scottish Minister for sport but the Scottish Minister for industry, with a track record of scoring own goals against Scottish industry, can we have an assurance that he is in Mexico simply as a spectator and not as a replacement for Kenny Dalgliesh?

Mr. Speaker: Order. I think that we should move on.

Mr. Victor Paige

3.36 pm

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the resignation of Mr. Victor Paige from the chairmanship of the National Health Service Board.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): In October 1983 I announced that the Government accepted the recommendations of the NHS management inquiry, under the chairmanship of Sir Roy Griffiths, that general management should be introduced into the NHS, and that a board should be set up within my Department to be responsible to Ministers for the Department's functions in relation to the management of the NHS.

Mr. Victor Paige took up appointment as chairman of the board, and as second permanent secretary within my Department, on 2 January 1985. His contract was for three years. The board was established in April 1985 and contains members drawn from business, the National Health Service and the Civil Service. Mr. Paige has paid tribute to the abilities of the Board and the progress the board has already made. I should like to express my thanks to Mr. Paige for his part in that progress.

I confirm that substantial improvements have already been made in the efficient management of the NHS. Those achievements reflect great credit on the Health Service itself, including authorities, managers and staff, and on the direction and leadership which the service has had from my Department.

As the House will be aware, Mr. Paige has resigned his position as chairman of the management board. He discussed his intention with me, and we agreed that it would be right for him to stand down. I have published in full the exchange of letters between us in which Mr. Paige explained his reasons. There is nothing that I can add to what he has said and my reply. I have therefore appointed Mr. Len Peach, who is the board's director of personnel on secondment from IBM, as acting chairman of the board. I shall make a substantive appointment as soon as possible.

The Government remain fully committed to better management of the National Health Service. I have every confidence that, under the leadership of the management board, health authorities and their general managers will continue to ensure that more and better care is provided for patients and that the best value for money is obtained.

Mr. Dobson: The statement raises more questions than it answers.

Will the Secretary of State tell the House precisely why Mr. Paige gave up his £70,000 a year job in mid-contract? Did he jump, or was he pushed? Was he pressed for too many or too few cuts? Does his departure leave in tatters the policy of bringing private bosses into the National Health Service? Is it true that, in the past two months, three similar appointees have resigned as district managers — three out of the 25 outsiders? Is it true that the business genius who was appointed to head an audit into value for money in the NHS has just gone bankrupt to the tune of £300,000?

Does the Secretary of State agree that his policy is wrong, or is it just that he is a bad judge of people? Will

he now appoint someone from the thousands who have made the NHS their life's work and not appoint another rank outsider with no staying power? Will he ensure that the new person uses the National Health Service instead of relying on the private sector?

Mr. Fowler: I do not accept what the hon. Gentleman has said. Mr. Paige set out the reasons in his letter. I do not think that there would be much point in my trying to interpret further what he said. There was no question of disagreement about resources. We have 750 general managers in post, and two or three have left. That shows the confidence in the concept of general management. I think that the hon. Gentleman will concede that Mr. Paige himself endorsed the concept of general management.

Substantial achievements have already been made. Indeed, £150 million of cost improvements have been made. The concept of identifying one person as being responsible and accountable for ensuring that decisions are made and that action is taken can only be right. We have no intention whatever of turning our backs on the general management concept. That concept is in the interest of the Health Service, and it is about time that the hon. Gentleman supported it.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Although one regrets Mr. Paige's departure, is not the important point that the concept of general management is now sufficiently well established — notwithstanding Mr. Paige's decision to go—and that very few people, other than one or two Opposition Members, would want to return to the old idea of a bloated bureaucracy? Does my right hon. Friend concede that, if any lesson is to be learnt, it is perhaps that Mr. Paige's successor should be given even more support, if that is possible, in standing up to the vested interests in the NHS, who have no interest in the NHS running on a commercial basis?

Mr. Fowler: There is much truth in that, and particularly in my hon. Friend's opening remarks. The general management concept is accepted in the NHS. As the Institute of Health Service Management has said in a statement made during the past 24 hours, general management is beginning to work very well, and the NHS will provide better quality care and value for money as a result. That is why general management is important, and that is why it will and should continue.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): Irrespective of one's view about the principles of general management, is there not widespread concern about the way that it is being implemented? Following Mr. Paige's unfortunate resignation, will the right hon. Gentleman undertake a review of the implementation of unit management policy? Does the Secretary of State have any intention of reviewing the new incumbent's terms of reference?

Mr. Fowler: No, I do not think that that is necessary. The managment board is carrying out an important job. It continues in post, although obviously with the exception of Mr. Paige, and it will continue to do its work. Mr. Len Peach, the acting chairman, comes from outside industry, and is a man of enormous experience. I believe that the management board will establish itself and will continue to achieve great things for the NHS.

Sir William Clark (Croydon, South): Does my right hon. Friend agree that management by committee cannot be very effective? Does he further agree that trying to manage by consensus must lead to inefficiency? Surely it is high time that we returned to a system of one person in a hospital being responsible for all management. That would be much better than having many committees, with one looking after provisions, one looking after beds, one looking after cleaning, and so on, without any one person being in charge. That is the problem in the NHS.

Mr. Fowler: My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and that is why general managers are being introduced, not just at the regional or district level, but, most importantly, as my hon. Friend said, at the hospital or unit level. That is the philosophy behind what we are doing. The concept involves identifying the person responsible and accountable for ensuring that decisions are made and that actions are taken. It replaces the old unsatisfactory system which in, for example, the Stanley Royd case might lead to great tragedies for the NHS.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): Why does not the Secretary of State come clean? He knows very well that Mr. Paige was not prepared to be shoved round by him and his Department. The right hon. Gentleman talked about Mr. Paige's resignation, but we need the right hon. Gentleman's resignation on the table.

Mr. Fowler: I have endured three months of the hon. Gentleman during the proceedings in Committee on the Social Security Bill and I suppose I can take a little more than that. However, his comments on the NHS are no nearer the mark than any of his comments on social security matters.

Mr. Robert B. Jones (Hertfordshire, West): I thank my right hon. Friend for his tribute to my constituent, Mr. Victor Paige, and his work in the NHS. Mr. Paige, together with my right hon. Friend and many Conservative Members, is deeply committed to the idea of general management because of the result that it has already produced. Is my right hon. Friend aware that the 25 per cent. more nurses at the Hemel Hempstead hospital in my constituency are paid for partly by the efficiency savings that have been brought about by strong general management? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the terms of reference for the new chairman will not only be the same as those for the previous chairman but will be redoubled in an effort to obtain efficiency?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. We have already achieved £150 million in the cost improvement programme. That money goes directly into the Health Service and is valuable to it.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Does not this affair show that one cannot impose the blunt instrument of commercial markets on what is effectively a social service? Why does not the Secretary of State tell the truth? Why in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) did he stick so religiously to his brief? Why does he not tell us what really happened and what arguments have taken place in the past two months between Mr. Victor Paige and the departmental Ministers on the running of the service?

Mr. Fowler: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, it would be——

Mr. Campbell-Savours: We know what has happened.

Mr. Fowler: We have exchanged letters on this matter. Mr. Paige has put out his reasons for resigning, and I have replied to them. We agreed that it would be right for Mr. Paige to step down.

Mr. Roger Sims (Chislehurst): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, in his letter, Mr. Victor Paige does more than endorse management principles; he warmly and enthusiastically supports them? Does he further agree that the management of the NHS is, as Mr. Paige has said, complex? Is it not inevitable that there will be difficulties in introducing business management methods into this enormous concern, which covers professional people and staff in catering, laundering, cleaning and many other activities, all of whom have traditional but inefficient practices? Is my right hon. Friend aware that we shall fully support the new chairman, when he is appointed, in helping him to rid the Health Service of these practices and to achieve efficient business management within the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The Health Service is a complex management job, and it employs about 1 million people. The Griffiths report recognised that complexity, and Mr. Paige's achievement has been that he has taken the management process to stage one and, in particular, to the stage when general managers have been appointed almost entirely throughout the country.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): Is the Secretary of State aware that, while people may not care too much either way about Mr. Paige, they are aware that there is insufficient funding of the National Health Service resulting in continued cuts, lengthy waiting lists and closures? Is he also aware that there is no lack of understanding on the part of the public regarding the Conservative party's attitude to the NHS? It has no genuine commitment to the NHS, and it would not stay in power for five minutes were it not for electoral reasons.

Mr. Fowler: There is nothing in the resignation of Mr. Paige to do with the question of more resources. The attitude of the Conservative Government to the Health Service is shown by the fact that we are spending £18·75 billion on the Health Service, which is a 24 per cent. real increase on what the last Labour Government spent.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Will my right hon. Friend take on board Mr. Paige's two comments about improving employees' commitment and the importance of management education? Does he agree that we are lucky to have a large number of committed and able people within the NHS who, with a little encouragement and a dollop of that management education, might provide the general managers of the future, whom Mr. Paige rightly regards as vital to the future of the NHS?

Mr. Fowler: That is an important point, particularly in relation to management education. The new acting chairman of the management board, Len Peach, with his experience will be well placed to implement just that.

Mr. Charles Kennedy (Ross, Cromarty and Skye): Do not the terms of Mr. Victor Paige's resignation letter to the Secretary of State make abundantly clear the Government's absolute folly when they decided to implement the Griffiths report wholesale and appoint 750 general managers throughout the country, creating this new edifice of which Mr. Victor Paige was the top point, without bothering to test the Griffiths report in pilot schemes in different health authorities throughout the country?

As the Secretary of State has laid such emphasis on the need for general management and lines of responsibility, does he not feel that what comes through loud and clear from this resignation is that, instead of decisions being taken in the front line, they were being referred more and more up the line to the Elephant and Castle and that they were falling victim to personalities and politics there?

Mr. Fowler: No, I do not think that that is the case. The concept of general management is that decisions should go down the line to the hospital and to the districts, and that is what is taking place. I have heard before what the hon. Gentleman has said about pilot schemes, but I do not think that that is a very sensible way of introducing the concept of general management into the Health Service. I certainly do not think that if we had done it that way we should have secured anything like the cost improvements that we have managed to secure under the plans and policies that we have implemented.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a private notice question. I shall allow one more question from a Member on each side of the House.

Mr. Michael Morris (Northampton, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, although the National Health Service management board has been in existence for just over a year, much of the best work that it has done has been in recent months, particularly in its evidence to the Public Accounts Committee? Is he able to give a commitment to the House that this work will continue with even more rapidity than before, even while we are awaiting the appointment of a new chairman?

Mr. Fowler: Yes, entirely. I am grateful for what my hon. Friend has said. The work of the management board will go on as usual. I can give him totally that assurance.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): What estimable qualities other than those possessed by Mr. Paige is the Secretary of State looking for in his successor?

Mr. Fowler: We need someone with management experience and I think, above all, with a commitment to the National Health Service.

Legionnaire's Disease (Badenoch Report)

3.52 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): With permission, Mr. Speaker, I will make a statement about the first report of the Badenoch committee of inquiry into the outbreak of legionnaire's disease in Stafford.

The outbreak at Stafford district general hospital occurred in April 1985; 101 patients caught the disease and there were 28 deaths. This was the second most serious incident ever recorded, surpassed only by the outbreak in Pennsylvania in 1976 from which the disease was first recognised. The source of infection was traced to the air conditioning system. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services appointed a statutory public inquiry on 7 June 1985, chaired by Sir John Badenoch.

The inquiry has produced a first report covering the Stafford outbreak and has also made recommendations more generally about hospital air conditioning systems. The inquiry will now consider and make recommendations on action to reduce the possibility of future outbreaks, whether in hospitals, other buildings or elsewhere, and the Government expect to receive this second report around the turn of the year. The first report concludes that, on present knowledge, the outbreak at Stafford cannot be attributed to any single factor, nor does it hold any individual or group directly responsible. It points out that legionnaire's disease has only recently been identified and is not well understood. The report refers to a combination of circumstances which appear to have contributed to this outbreak.

These circumstances include defects in the design and construction of engineering services, problems during the commissioning of the air conditioning plant, lack of knowledge and understanding of the sophisticated engineering plant, shortcomings in maintenance, including chlorination, and the weather conditions. The report also points to the inherent difficulty on present knowledge of eliminating the legionella bacillus in water spray cooling towers used for air conditioning.

The report praises those who cared for the infected patients and I gladly endorse this tribute. The report makes recommendations specific to the circumstances surrounding the outbreak and requiring local action. In particular, it calls for a review of the health authority's microbiological services in Stafford. I am asking the West Midlands regional health authority and the Mid-Staffordshire district health authority to report within three months on the follow-up action they have taken or intend to take.

Revised guidance on the maintenance of cooling towers was issued to health authorities in January 1986 following consultation with Sir John Badenoch. This reflects the lessons learned at that stage from the inquiry. In the light of the completed report, the Department has today issued a further circular to health authorities asking them to check for features similar to those found at Stafford and to take appropriate action. They are also being asked to ensure that existing guidance on maintenance is being followed and that operational engineering staff have access to detailed guidance on the operation of individual water spray cooling systems.

The recommended code of practice for hospital engineers should be available by about the end of the year. In the meantime, discussions are in hand with the Public Health Laboratory Service to establish a register of engineers so that relevant expertise can be available if needed by the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre and health authorities.

The inquiry recommended that a committee of experts should be convened urgently to consider all aspects of the use of biocides as a means of minimising build up of legionella. This committee will be chaired by Dr. A. E. Wright, director of the Public Health Laboratory Service Newcastle laboratory, and will begin its work shortly.

Other recommendations dealt with reducing reliance on air conditioning in general and water spray cooling towers in particular. Current hospital building policy, with its emphasis on smaller hospitals, means that new hospitals generally use less air conditioning than before. Preliminary inquiries indicate that no new water spray cooling towers will be incorporated in hospitals currently being planned. The inquiry's conclusions will reinforce the commitment to air-cooled systems for new hospital building.

As regards existing hospitals, health authorities have been asked to give details about the type and number of water spray systems now in use, as a first step to carrying out the recommendation that urgent consideration should be given to their replacement. Only a minority of hospitals are thought to have such systems, but the inquiry will establish an accurate national picture. I understand that the inquiry team did not envisage immediate replacement of such systems; it was concerned to ensure that existing systems operate as safely as possible and those which have reached the end of their natural life or present particular maintenance problems should have priority for replacement.

Early action was taken with the two health notices in July 1985 and January 1986 and further instructions, based upon this first report, have now been issued to health authorities. These steps will reduce the risk of any repetition of the outbreak. Production of a code of practice and setting up the register of engineers experienced in this field will also contribute to that end. In the longer term, the new committee on biocides should help to clarify how these chemicals can best be used to reduce risks further. Information is being collected about existing hospital water spray cooling systems as a first step in the consideration of their longer-term future.

We owe a great deal to Sir John Badenoch and his fellow inquiry members for the energy and application they have brought to producing this report. For the broader questions about what may need to be done to reduce any risk from the disease in other circumstances in hospitals, other buildings and elsewhere, the Government look forward to the second report, which is expected around the turn of the year.

Mr. Frank Dobson (Holborn and St. Pancras): I join the Minister in thanking Sir John Badenoch and his colleagues for the work that they have done in the inquiry. As the Minister has said, the findings of the committee have revealed a considerable number of shortcomings. There are many uncertainties surrounding even that which happened at Stafford, and there are even more uncertainties about the knowledge, development and spread of legionnaire's disease generally.

[Mr. Frank Dobson]

Even the first report has implications for other hospitals in other areas, and it is not entirely clear from the Minister's statement whether the Government fully accept all the recommendations within it. I should like the Minister to be specific about that. Will he tell us whether the Government intend to find the extra staff and money that will be necessary for the investigation of the cooling systems at other hospitals and for any adaptations and replacements that may be necessary?

Does the Minister accept the committee's recommendation that there should be further research into legionnaire's disease? If he does, is he satisfied that there are presently only two Government-funded research projects into legionnaire's disease? Given the tribute that has been paid to the Public Health Laboratory Service and the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre in the report, will he reaffirm that the Government have abandoned any intention of interfering with the Public Health Laboratory Service, or to abolish it or the Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre, which were around at the time of the outbreak.

Although this is not covered by the report, I should like to know whether the final report will cover the action taken by the Minister's Department? To be fair to the Minister, that was action taken before he became the Minister for Health. Is the right hon. Gentleman satisfied that no fewer than five days elapsed between his office at the Elephant and Castle being informed that the Stafford hospital people believed that legionnaire's disease was caused by their water cooling system and the Department informing other health authorities with hospitals with identical cooling systems of what had happened at Stafford?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful for the hon. Gentleman's comments about Sir John and his colleagues. As a first step towards achieving urgent consideration about whether to replace existing spray systems, we have called for the establishment of the precise situation throughout the country. I understand that there are about 400 water spray cooling towers now in place, and we shall need to consider the details of the installations.

The assessment of where we stand can be undertaken notwithstanding resource implications within existing budgets. The immediate priority for health authorities must be to ensure that the existing equipment is correctly and safely maintained. These instructions have already gone out and they will be reinforced by the publication of the report and by the further health notice which is being issued.

Legionnaire's disease is affecting countries throughout the world and I am not aware of any research projects that are not being followed through. I would be prepared to give consideration to any suggestions that come forward and to pass them on to those responsible for medical research.

The hon. Gentleman made some rather exaggerated comments about the Public Health Laboratory Service and a report which was produced earlier this year. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made it clear quickly that he did not accept the proposals in the report and that he wished the service to continue in its existing form. My right hon. Friend's clear undertaking remains.

The content of Sir John's final report will be a matter for him and his colleagues and not for me.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement, the Badenoch report and the Government's immediate response last year to my call for a full independent inquiry, but will my right hon. Friend accept that some serious criticisms are contained in the report that show that the sort of action that is outlined in the report is necessary? Will he join me in extending sympathy to those who were bereaved during the course of the outbreak of legionnaire's disease in my constituency? Will he ensure that appropriate praise is given to the nursing staff for the wonderful work that it conducted in difficult and dangerous circumstances while the outbreak was continuing?

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, I join my hon. Friend in his expressions of sympathy, which have been made in the House before and which, I am sure, will be reiterated in all parts of it, to the relatives and friends of those who suffered. I endorse the tribute which was paid in the report and paid previously by my predecessor and by the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) to the staff. Anyone who reads the report of the inquiry will see that tribute is paid in unstinted fashion to those who had the care of the patients who, alas, suffered from this serious infection. I congratulate my hon. Friend, whose assiduous attention to detail as the constituency Member has rightly won admiration and praise in all parts of the House.

Mr. Archy Kirkwood (Roxburgh and Berwickshire): I associate my right hon. and hon. Friends with the comments that have been made about the sympathy that we should extend to the relatives of those who died in this tragic incident and the tribute that we should pay to the heroic efforts of the staff who put it right. We owe a debt to Sir John Badenoch for the expedition with which he has produced the report.

Can the Minister confirm that DHSS maintenance standards for the cooling towers are upheld and that the proper recommended procedures are followed? I understand from his statement that he found that there were maintenance defects. Has he considered the use of biocides such as Hatacide LP5 as a replacement for chlorination, as chlorination has been found to be defective, and certainly in the conditions found in modern water spray cooling systems?

Secondly, the Minister will know from the expert advice that he has been receiving that old people are especially vulnerable to legionnaire's disease. He has said that 400 institutions have water spray cooling systems, and I ask him to give especial attention and priority to those that accommodate elderly people, who are particularly at risk. If he finds that there are still suspect systems, will he ensure that no expense is spared in replacing equipment?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he has said about extending sympathy to the relatives of those who died. He has addressed himself to the maintenance of the air conditioning plant at Stafford and, as I said earlier, the report reveals a number of defects in design, installation, maintenance and chlorination which appear to have contributed to the outbreak of the disease. The inquiry was not able to point the finger precisely at any one specific failure or cause. The infection appeared to start on 9 April and appeared to cease on 19 April. The

cessation may have been contributed to by a change in weather conditions, but there is still no absolutely clear reason why the outbreak started and why it ended.

The way in which infections of this particular organism have been found to operate in different parts of the world at different times makes it extremely difficult to be precise and specific about the causes. The hon. Gentleman has referred to the use of biocides and he will have heard me say that we have accepted the recommendation that an expert committee should consider the issue. I have said that Dr. Wright, who is a distinguished expert in this area, will be chairing the committee. I hope that the membership of it will be established pretty soon and that it will get to work without delay.

The hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson) was right to draw attention to the vulnerability of old people to infection. People who have suffered from chronic infections and, indeed, those who have been heavy smokers also appear to be vulnerable. They all appear to be more liable to be adversely affected by the infection. The hon. Gentleman's point about the water spray cooling towers, and their relationship to institutions where there are people with particular vulnerability, such as the old, will be taken into account.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): May I associate myself with my right hon. Friend's kind and generous remarks about the care bestowed by the staff at Stafford hospital, particularly the care for my constituents, who are just five miles away from Stafford hospital? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that also about five miles away is Meaford power station? Have he and the inquiry completely eliminated the possibility of a correlation between the water cooling system of Meaford power station and legionnaire's disease? Has my right hon. Friend satisfied himself that the committee has ensured, through any consultations that it may have had with the Central Electricity Generating Board and others, that there was no connection? Will he confirm that the most rigorous inquiry has taken place as to the efficacy of the water cooling system at Stafford general hospital and, indeed, the quality of maintenance of the water cooling system?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his comments and his endorsement of the tribute to the staff concerned. He will have personal knowledge of that because some of his constituents were affected. A connection with the water cooling systems in nearby power stations has not been established, nor, I suggest —although I do so subject to correction—has it been totally eliminated. As far as I can judge from the scientific and engineering evidence that is coming forward, it is extremely difficult to be absolutely positive either for or against any proposition in this area. It has become clear that the organism that led to the deaths and illness of those affected in the outbreak was identified as being in the air conditioning system. Cooling tower No. 4 had a connection with the outpatients' department where, as far as one can judge, the majority of those who were affected picked up the infection.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): What steps will be taken to ensure that employees of the National Health Service are made aware of the contents of the Badenoch report, and what steps will be taken to ensure that sufficient training is given to staff in the NHS to overcome any problems arising from the changes that will be necessary as a result of the recommendations in the report?

Secondly, will the right hon. Gentleman assure the House that any changes that have to be made to NHS equipment in any hospital as a result of the report will be paid for out of central funds, not out of local district health authority funds, so that they will not be set against the costs of existing services and staff?

When the final report is ready, and if any changes are required in building control regulations for any other building or installation, will the right hon. Gentleman ensure that the Department of the Environment introduces the necessary building control regulations for any new central heating or water cooling systems rather than awaiting another disaster such as the one that we have already had in the NHS?

Mr. Hayhoe: The general tenor of the hon. Gentleman's remarks is much less than fair to the very careful preparation that has been done in the past to give guidance on the dangers and difficulties associated with the disease. I checked the experience in other countries, and I found that the guidance that was issued by the NHS in this country was in advance of that issued anywhere else in the world. We should take pride in the fact that NHS staff have been out in the front and leading internationally in dealing with this difficult infection.

With regard to passing on information, the report is going to all health authorities. No doubt, in their own circumstances, they will let all those concerned know. There are recommendations in the report about the need for further training and, of course, it will be carried through.

Several Hon. Members *rose*—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I must have regard to subsequent business on the Order Paper. This statement is about the inquiry into legionnaire's disease in Stafford. Will hon. Members direct their questions to that and not widen the issue?

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): As I have two hospitals in my constituency—Leicester general and the Towers hospital—will my right hon. Friend assure constituents and the elderly—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is what I was hoping would not happen.

Mr. Bruinvels: Will my right hon. Friend ensure that there is wide circulation of the Badenoch report so that elderly people in the country, including Stafford, realise that when they go into hospital they will be properly cared for and that health and safety will be maintained throughout? Will he further ensure that the report will be distributed not just to the health authorities but to those who are particularly concerned—the elderly?

Mr. Hayhoe: I can assure my hon. Friend that the report will go to all the health authorities, and indeed it has been circulated among Government colleagues and, I am pretty sure, to the professional institutions and others involved. I imagine that within the scientific and engineering community with particular concern for those systems the report's recommendations will be studied with care. The guidance that my Department will issue to all health authorities will also be made available to anyone else outside who has an interest and who asks for it.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is not the Minister aware that it was precisely because it was impossible to isolate the true origin of the epidemic at Stafford that there was considerable disquiet in the area? Will he please understand that what is required now is urgent action in relation to the other hospitals with comparable systems? That requires central funding. It is not enough to send out a circular. Those hospitals must be given money immediately so that they can do something about their existing systems.

Mr. Hayhoe: The hon. Lady slightly misunderstands the position. Guidance about existing systems has been available since 1980, and it was reinforced in July 1985 and January 1986. The hon. Lady does a grave disservice if she is trying to show that a shortage of finance is connected with the difficulties. If she reads the report, she will see that lack of finance was in no way involved.

Mrs. Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley): The Minister has talked about specific recommendations for hospitals, but I suggest that an outbreak could occur in air conditioning systems in other public buildings, unless proper maintenance of the systems is carried out. The remit of any committee that the right hon. Gentleman sets up should include aspects of air pollution through air conditioning systems and its effect on health. More people are recognising the link between air conditioning systems and absenteeism from work, with more infections — *[Interruption.]* But it is important that any committee——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am sure that it is important, but will the hon. Lady please concentrate on the statement?

Mrs. Clwyd: I am attempting to do so, Mr. Speaker, by showing that legionnaire's disease could occur in any public building unless there is proper control of air conditioning systems. Any committee that the Minister intends to set up should have a much wider remit than what he has suggested so far.

Mr. Hayhoe: The hon. Lady must have misunderstood what I said. She will understand when she reads the report. Sir John Badenock's committee has produced a first report dealing with the Stafford incident in particular. I said that there would be a second report, which would look at what could be done to reduce any risk from the disease in other circumstances, in hospitals or other buildings, whether in the public or private sector, and elsewhere. Even the possibility of the infection on ships has already been identified. Sir John and his colleagues are going ahead with that wider work and their report can be expected towards the end of the year.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): Has the Minister considered paragraph 52 of the report? It says that one of the ways in which the dissemination of this disease is known to occur is

"via shower heads or spray taps (which are used intermittently, and where the organism may multiply if the water is warm) . . ."

Bearing in mind that the Select Committee on Employment, on which I have the privilege to serve, looked into the problems of this disease and considered evidence to the effect that it also arises from whirlpools and Jacuzzis and in other precise systems where water goes into the air, will the Minister direct the inquiry specifically to those problems? Apparently no prosecutions are to arise from the current disasters. Can the Minister tell the House whether as a result of this inquiry and the miseries which gave rise to it steps will be taken to remove Crown immunity in respect of any such further incidents which may involve liability by hospitals or prisons or any other public institution? That immunity should have been removed long ago.

Mr. Hayhoe: Crown immunity has absolutely nothing to do with this. If compensation is paid as a result of this inquiry and this incident, it will be a matter for the Mid Staffordshire health authority operating under our regulations, and in the final analysis it will be a matter for the courts to determine. I can give the hon. and learned Member the assurance that Crown immunity will not come into that.

The hon. and learned Gentleman directed my attention to a paragraph in the report and seemed to be suggesting that I should draw Sir John's attention to that paragraph so that he and his colleagues could carry out further work. Sir John and his colleagues hardly need me to draw their attention to what they have written so that they can decide upon their further work. As I have said, that work will be wide ranging and Sir John and his colleagues will look at the action that will be required to reduce the possibility of this infection arising in hospitals, in other buildings or elsewhere. Sir John and his colleagues have taken a fairly wide remit.

Mr. Gareth Wardell (Gower): This important report demonstrates the difficulty of explaining why legionnella bacilli multiply. In following up the report, will the Minister ensure that a careful look is taken at the extent to which the problem could arise because of products being used in the manufacture of drainage systems, air cooling towers and so on that do not comply with the BSI standard, especially if such products are imported?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am sure that Sir John and his colleagues will wish to look at that matter.

The hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West (Mr. Janner) spoke about other buildings. I have checked and found that the air conditioning system in the Houses of Parliament does not have a water spray system.

Dr. John Marek (Wrexham): May I refer the Minister to the recommendations of the report and especially to recommendation 8(a) on page 64? It says:

"urgent consideration should be given to replacing any wet cooling tower with an air-cooled system".

That will involve finance. Can the Minister say whether finance will be provided and, if so, whether it will come from central funds?

Mr. Hayhoe: The report says that urgent consideration should be given to those matters and as a first step towards giving that consideration we have called for information about the systems in use. That information will need to be considered. As I have said, the immediate priority must be to ensure tha the existing equipment is correctly and safely maintained. Of course it will cost money to replace water spray cooling towers. It is clear that the inquiry did not recommend immediate replacement of such systems, and in any case the replacement of towers that are at the end of their lives will cost money.

In planned hospital building for the future we have, fortunately, turned to air cooling rather than water spray cooling and we will look into the problems identified by the survey that has been initiated about dealing with

existing water spray cooling towers. If that involves significant cost, then, of course, the matter will be looked at. Changing circumstances are always looked at in the context of the ways in which we fund the National Health Service.

Mr. Frank Haynes (Ashfield): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today we had a statement about the resignation of Mr. Victor Paige. I asked the Secretary of State a question. I am not suggesting that his reply was a lie, but I am suggesting that we should have fairness and I know that you, Mr. Speaker, try to ensure that. The Secretary of State said that the Committee which considered the Social Security Bill sat for three months. That is correct, and I never missed a sitting. He said that I suggested things in the Committee with which he totally disagreed. The Secretary of State was hardly ever there. May I suggest that you, Mr. Speaker, have a word with the Secretary of State to sort things out?

Mr. Speaker: I thought that the hon. Gentleman had asked for the Minister's resignation.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We have had an important statement about legionnaire's disease at Stafford hospital, and implications for local health authorities clearly arise from the statement. The Minister has not answered the serious question about how the local authorities are to fund the cost of implementing the recommendations in the report. Can you advise me, Mr. Speaker, by what means we can get a clear answer from the Government about this important matter that is causing many health authorities a great deal of worry?

Mr. Speaker: I called the hon. Gentleman to ask a question, but I do not know whether it was fully answered. There are other ways in which the hon. Gentleman can deal with the matter. He can deal with it at Question Time or even by way of an Adjournment debate if he is fortunate enough to get one.

BILL PRESENTED

Tobacco Products (Health Warnings)

Mr. Archy Kirkwood, supported by Mr. Roger Sims and Mr. Laurie Pavitt, presented a Bill to provide for the presentation of health warnings on packaging of tobacco products, and related advertising and promotional materials: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time on Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 170.]

Road Traffic Accidents Compensation for Victims

4.28 pm

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide compensation for victims of road traffic accidents without proof of fault and for related purposes.

The casualty toll on our roads is horrific, and from figures supplied to me last week in a written answer it appears that in the last four years for which records were available 1,251,000 of our citizens were injured in road accidents. Of those, 682,000 were men, 380,000 were women and 189,000 were children. We know from the researches carried out by the Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury, chaired by Lord Pearson, and known as the Pearson commission, that only a fraction of those who are injured on our roads receive any compensation through the ordinary provisions of the law on tort, a law which requires those who seek damages to prove negligence against the defendant. The report said:

"only about a quarter of those who are injured by motor vehicles actually succeed in recovering tort compensation".

The manner in which it is decided whether someone who is injured on the road is to get compensation is archaic, ridiculous and does not work. It is a form of legal lottery, or, as the Pearson commission said:

"the fault principle operates with particular capriciousness. The 'forensic lottery' had become 'a lunatic lottery and an absurd system for providing compensation for anyone'".

The system denies compensation to most people and ensures that in most cases those who obtain compensation are kept waiting for a long time for the money that they so desperately need.

It is the purpose of this Bill to introduce into our law the concept of no-fault liability in respect of road traffic accidents. It would ensure that when a case comes to court years after an accident people are not called upon to give evidence about what happened in a split second, which, even immediately afterwards, they cannot remember with any certainty, that they are not cross-examined in court about matters which occurred when they were suffering from shock, and even if they are trying to tell the truth —most are—will fail to do so, that matters which rely on personal recollection and not upon documentation but upon which people's entire financial futures depend, will not be matters for courts, and that people who are entitled to be compensated will obtain that compensation without having to prove negligence.

The concept is not new in our law. Under the Employers Liability (Defective Equipment) Act 1969, when an employee is injured or killed at work because of defective equipment, and in a subsequent action the employer is deemed to have been negligent, liability is imposed without fault. The House has accepted and approved a directive of the European Economic Community regarding product liability, and the Government are therefore committed to introducing legislation that will bring no-fault liability into our law in respect of defective products. If a product is manufactured in or imported into Britain after the summer of 1988 and it is defective and the defect causes death or personal injury, the sufferer will not have to prove negligence against the defendant—it will be presumed. The Bill would introduce precisely the same concept into the much

[Mr. Greville Janner]

larger, broader, more anguished and common area of road traffic accidents, in respect of which 250,000 families are affected each year by the nonsense and lack of sense and compassion of the law as it stands.

Strangely enough, matters are getting steadily worse. In Leicestershire, for example, the number of people killed on the county's roads during the first three months of this year was almost double that for the same period in 1985. Seat belts have done some good, but they have not removed the miseries of the road casualty. The Bill would provide for no-fault liability.

The question that would then arise is, who would pay for the reform? Part of the problem is that a private Member's Bill cannot involve public expenditure, because that is contrary to the rules. Part of the answer lies in the removal from lawyers and courts of cases which could properly be dealt with through a different and much less expensive system. Money would therefore be saved. Part of the answer may lie in the system which exists in New Zealand and which, I am told, is to be introduced in Australia. The state operates a scheme with or without insurance companies. The answer may lie in the insurers bearing the cost, as part of the cost would be saved by their not being forced into litigation, courts and unworthy and unnecessary costs. Part of the cost might be added to insurance premiums. I reckon that most motorists would be pleased to pay that price if it meant that, in the event of an accident, they would stand a chance of getting compensation such as is denied to them at present.

I wish to pay tribute to the memory of Lord Pearson, a man for whom I had enormous affection and respect. I wish that his report in this respect had not been hidden away since 1979-80. At least this Bill will bring to the attention of the House, the Government and the public the fact that the forensic lottery must end. That was the Pearson commission's description of this unduly slow and expensive to administer system. One day, some 45 per cent. of the cost of tort compensation will cease to be swallowed in administration costs and people will get the compensation to which they are entitled.

If the House accepts the Bill, it will add to people's prospects of getting justice. As the Pearson commission said in respect of product liability, there is no justice in our courts for most of our citizens. Those who are poor enough to get legal aid can bring a case to court, those who are rich enough not to need it may sue or defend, but for those who, like most of us, come somewhere in between, there is no hope of fighting a case. That is why some three quarters of accident victims who deserve compensation get none.

In those circumstances, I hope that the House will give me leave to introduce the Bill as the start of a campaign which I trust will end as did the product liability campaign —with a change in the law.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill ordered to be brought in by Mr. Greville Janner, Mr. Stuart Bell, Mr. Gerald Bermingham, Mr. Tony Blair, Mr. Gordon Brown, Mr. Alfred Dubs, Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody, Mr. Frank Field, Mr. Ron Leighton and Mr. Geoffrey Robinson.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS COMPENSATION FOR VICTIMS

Mr. Greville Janner accordingly presented a Bill to provide compensation for victims of road traffic accidents without proof of fault and for related purposes: And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time upon Friday 4 July and to be printed. [Bill 169.]

Building Societies Bill [Money] (No. 2)

Queens Recommendation having been signified—

Ordered,

That, for the purpose of any Act resulting from the Building Societies Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenses incurred by the Treasury for the purposes of tribunals established in pursuance of that Act to hear appeals against decisions of the Building Societies Commission established by that Act relating to the authorisation of building societies to raise funds and borrow money.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Orders of the Day

Building Societies Bill

As amended (in the Standing Committee), considered.

New Clause 3

POWER TO AMEND, ETC., TO ASSIMILATE TO COMPANY LAW

"(1) If, on any modification of the statutory provisions in force in Great Britain or Northern Ireland relating to companies, it appears to the Treasury to be expedient to modify the relevant provisions of this Act for the purpose of assimilating the law relating to companies and the law relating to building societies, the Treasury may, by order, make such modifications of the relevant provisions of this Act as they think appropriate for that purpose.

(2) The "relevant provisions of this Act" are the following provisions as for the time being in force, that is to say—

(a) so much of Part VI as relates to investigations or inspections;

(b) the provisions of part VII (management);

(c) the provisions of Part VIII (accounts and audit); and

(d) so much of Part IX as relates to winding up.

(3) The power conferred by subsection (1) above includes power to modify the relevant provisions of this Act so as to—

(a) confer power to make orders, regulations, rules or other subordinate legislation;

(b) create criminal offences; or

(c) provide for the charging of fees but not any charge in the nature of taxation.

(4) An order under this section may—

(a) make consequential amendments of or repeals in other provisions of this act; or

(b) make such transitional or saving provisions as appear to the Treasury to be necessary or expedient.

(5) The power to make an order under this section is exercisable by statutory instrument but no such order shall be made unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.

(6) In this section—

"modification" includes any additions and, as regards modifications of the statutory provisions relating to companies, any modification whether effected by any future act or by an instrument made after the passing of this Act under an Act whenever passed; and

"statutory provisions" includes the provisions of any instrument made under an Act.'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

4.37 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Mr. Ian Stewart): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause provides that if in future changes are made to the law relating to companies such as are also appropriate for building societies, comparable provisions can be made by statutory instrument to apply those changes to building societies.

By way of example, I should mention clauses 57 to 60, which deal with loans to directors and cover matters which were enacted for companies in 1980 but which had to wait for several years for primary legislation to extend them to building societies. The power proposed in new clause 3 would enable building societies to be brought into line and to avoid that problem in future.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): The Opposition have nothing of substance to argue with in the new clause. If company legislation is amended and the Government want to amend building society legislation accordingly, the new clause empowers them to do that without too much fuss. We believe that that is quite logical.

As building societies are to have more commercial purposes and as large sections of the Bill are derived or borrowed from company legislation, it seems logical to empower the Treasury to relate new and amended company legislation to building societies without primary legislation.

Only one matter has occurred to the Opposition upon which we would like assurance. In the first place, the legislation would be thoroughly scrutinised by the House if the House wished to take that opportunity. Will the Minister explain why such alterations were contemplated? Under subsection (5), that must be done by affirmative resolution. There will be ample opportunity for scrutiny and questioning about its purpose and relevance. Therefore, the Opposition do not take issue with the Government over the new clause.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 4

SERVICE OF NOTICES

"(1) This section has effect in relation to any notice, directions or other document required or authorised by or under any provision of this Act or by the rules of a building society to be served on any person other than the Commission and the central office but subject, in the case of notices or other documents to be given or sent to members of a building society, to any provision of its rules.

(2) Any such document may be served on the person in question—

(a) by delivering it to him;

(b) by leaving it at his proper address; or

(c) by sending it by post to him at that address.

(3) Any such document may—

(a) in the case of a building society, be served on the secretary of the society;

(b) in the case of a body corporate (other than a building society), be served on the secretary or clerk of that body;

(c) in the case of a partnership, be served on any partner;

(d) in the case of an unincorporated association other than a partnership, be served on any member of its governing body.

(4) For the purposes of this section and section 7 of the Interpretation Act 1978 (service of documents) in its application to this section, the proper address of any person is—

(a) in the case of a building society or its secretary, the address of its principal office;

(b) in the case of a member of a building society, his registered address;

(c) in the case of a director or the chief executive of a building society, his officially notified address;

(d) in the case of a body corporate (other than a building society) its secretary or clerk, the address of its registered or principal office in the United Kingdom;

(e) in the case of an unincorporated association (other than a partnership) or a member of its governing body, its principal office in the United Kingdom;

and, in any other case, his last-known address (whether of his residence or of a place where he carries on business or is employed).'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Sir George Young): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

Nos. 7, 33, 125, 131, 136, 143, 148, 151 to 153, 155, 157, 159, 164, 179, 180, 187, 210, 215, 217, 218, 234, 241, 242, 255, 263 to 267, 275, 290, 292, 306, 333, 337, and 341.

Sir George Young: New clause 4 and the Government amendments are a series of relatively unexciting and mainly technical amendments which improve the parts of the Bill which cover communications between a society and its members, and a society and the commission and the central office.

Mr. Weetch: If ever a true word were spoken, it is that this batch of amendments is totally unexciting. Having examined each amendment separately, there were times when I just had to hold on. I can underline what the Minister has said.

In politics nothing is quite what it seems. We are discussing a great batch of amendments, starting with new clause 4. We believe that the Bill contains certain matters of principle and the remainder is administrative superstructure. While we accept that the superstructure must be correct—and that is important—we intend as a matter of tactics and strategy to confine our main lines of argument to what is controversial, not to these administrative matters which form part of the superstructure of the Bill.

The amendments largely cover technical matters, but we must be assured that the procedures are logical, watertight and, if challenged, accord with principles of natural justice. We have examined all the amendments and are satisfied that these steps meet the criteria needed. Provided that the Government are satisfied that they meet the needs of potential problems that might arise, we give the amendments our approval. With that, the Opposition will not challenge the clause or the amendments.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 6

POWER TO MAKE ADVANCES SECURED ON LAND OVERSEAS

'.—(1) The appropriate authority may, with a view to conferring on building societies or building societies of particular descriptions powers to make advances to members secured on land outside the United Kingdom corresponding to the powers to make advances secured on land within the United Kingdom, by order—

(a) designate countries or territories outside the United Kingdom as countries or territories as respects which advances under this section may be made secured on the land;

(b) specify, or provide for the specification by direction of the Commission under the order of the forms of security on land which may be taken for advances under this section, in any prescribed circumstances and subject to any prescribed conditions;

(c) determine, or provide for the determination under the order of, the classification of the advances (and accordingly of the mortgage debts) as class 1 advances or class 2 advances for the purposes of the requirements of this Part for the structure of commercial assets;

(d) provide for the application of the provisions of this Part applicable to advances secured on land to advances under this section with such modifications as appear to be appropriate;

(e) provide for any other provisions of this Act to have effect in relation to advances under this section with such modifications as appear to be appropriate; and

(f) make such incidental, supplemental or transitional provision as appears to be necessary or expedient.

(2) Any powers conferred on building societies under this section may be conferred on building societies of a specified description or all building societies other than those of a specified description.

(3) Where, by virtue of an order under subsection (1) above, advances are made by a building society on the security of land outside the United Kingdom, the aggregate amount of mortgage debts outstanding in respect of such of those advances as are class 2 advances under the order shall count in accordance with section 18 towards the limit applicable to class 2 assets under that section.

(4) Subsection (3) above is subject to any provision contained in the order.

(5) The "appropriate authority" for making an order under subsection (1) above is—

(a) as regards the relevant British overseas territories, the Commission acting with the consent of the Treasury, and

(b) as regards other countries or territories, the Treasury.

(6) The power to make an order under subsection (1) above is exercisable by statutory instrument and, as regards the procedure applicable to such an order,—

(a) if the instrument designates other countries or territories than any of the relevant British overseas territories, the order shall not be made unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by resolution of each House of Parliament, and

(b) if the instrument designates any relevant British overseas territory and no other country or territory, the instrument shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(7) In this section—

"relevant British overseas territories" means the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and Gibraltar;

"security on land" includes any right or power in or over land to secure the payment of a debt and "secured on land" has a corresponding meaning;

"specified" means specified in an order under subsection (1) above;

and any reference to a provision of this Part is a reference to that provision as applied to advances under this section.'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir George Young: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following: Government new clause 7—*Qualifying asset holding for certain powers.*

Government new clause 23—*Loans for mobile homes (No. 2).*

Government amendments Nos. 6, 56, 58 to 60, 62 to 64, 240, 243 and 246.

Sir George Young: In fairness to the amendments that we have just dealt with, I said not that they were "totally unexciting", but that they were "relatively unexciting". The totally unexciting amendments will be dealt with in a moment.

New clause 6 honours a commitment that my hon. Friend gave in Committee. New clauses 7 and 23 deal with mobile homes. The Government believe that it is important to provide more help for the mobile home sector. These days, mobile homes are a far cry from the caravans whose image they share. Mobile homes are prefabricated units built to a high specification conforming to BSI requirements and they have a life of at least 25 years. The fittings are of a high quality and all main services are laid on. They are mobile in the sense that they can be dismantled and moved to a new site.

It is appropriate that building societies should be given greater powers to lend on security of a mobile home than other class 2 lending powers. After considering the position, the Government have decided to make an exception on mobile homes to the £5,000 limit on class 3 loans to individuals. Societies with a qualifying assets holding will be able to lend up to £10,000 on the security of a mobile home.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): I should like to introduce my brief remarks by declaring an interest. I have the honour and privilege to be a vice-president of the Building Societies Association.

I support the remarks made by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. I am sure that one way in which building societies can help is to lend money at realistic and responsible rates of interest to people who want to exercise their right to buy but who, through dint of circumstance, are unable to do so through normal and traditional methods. The only way these people can achieve that is to acquire a mobile home.

My hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State introduced legislation which brought security of tenure to those who had previously found that, although they owned a home, they did not own the land on which their home was situated. The Government have secured for them the right to ownership through the Mobile Homes Act 1983. Building societies have a responsibility to ensure that these vulnerable people who own and occupy mobile homes on mobile parks are protected. Hon. Members on both sides of the House who have mobile home parks in their constituencies know that these people do not consider themselves as owner-occupiers or council tenants in the first place. They consider themselves to be home owners in the last resort. Such people could fall prey to consumer credit organisations which charge rates of interest far in excess of those charged by responsible and prudent building societies.

I commend the new clause. I issue a challenge to building societies to allocate significant funds to extend to a large section of the mobile home community the opportunity to exercise the right to buy and the right to home ownership.

Mr. Eric Cockeram (Ludlow): I declare an interest as the parliamentary adviser to the Midshires Building Society.

New clause 6, when exercised, will give building societies the power to lend on property overseas. Does my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State intend to ensure that building societies will be given early powers to lend on land in Great Britain, for example, in the Channel Islands and on the Isle of Man?

It is an anomaly that building societies are not able to lend on the security of land in these islands. Other financial institutions in the United Kingdom with which building societies compete—the banks and the trustee savings banks, for which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury has responsibility—are able to do business on the Isle of Man and in the Channel Islands. Will my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary ensure that building societies are given powers to carry out business in those territories, even though the House understands that there are many overseas territories in which he would not wish to authorise building societies to act as that might be detrimental to the interests of lenders?

Mr. Gordon Oakes (Halton): I do not wish to anticipate what the Minister might say, but I believe that the points that have been raised in relation to the Channel Islands and Gibraltar have been dealt with satisfactorily by the Government in other new clauses.

I also declare an interest, although this is not a financial interest. I am also a vice-president of the Building Societies Association for which I am not paid. That is a great honour.

The hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) raised the important matter of mobile homes. Increasing numbers of people live in very satisfactory accommodation in mobile homes. There is no reason why building societies should not advance money on a mobile home provided that it is a permanent home on a mobile home site and not a touring caravan or something of the kind that we have read about recently in the newspapers. This is particularly important because nowadays one marriage in three ends in separation or divorce, resulting in great economic difficulties. It is all very well in Hollywood or on the screen among very rich families, but most ordinary families in this country cannot afford divorce and the cost of supporting an ex-wife as well as a current one. Often the husband or the wife—usually the husband—gives or is forced to give the matrimonial home to the spouse and family and would himself be homeless if he could not occupy a mobile home.

It is extremely sensible to provide that building societies may lend on mobile homes, and the Building Societies Association entirely agrees with what the Government are doing, but the association has just one query about the wording of the new clause. It seems not to deal with joint loans in relation to mobile homes. The association believes that the Bill should provide that a joint loan to two or more persons should be treated as though it were a loan to one of those persons for the purposes of the relevant limits. As this will not be a class 1 loan, the overall limit for class 2 or class 3 loans could be affected. Perhaps the Government could make it clear susequently, either here or in another place, that a joint loan will be treated as one loan.

Mr. Weetch: We are going through the Bill at exhilarating speed, but the Government's luck cannot last. Nevertheless, the Opposition support the new clauses and the amendments.

It was pointed out in Committee that it made more sense for building societies to lend directly overseas rather than through a clutter of subsidiaries, but one or two questions arise in relation to the new clause. I appreciate the distinction between the negative resolution procedure in relation to designated British overseas territories and the affirmative resolution procedure in relation to other overseas territories. These presumably correspond to the possible degrees of risk on categories of secured investments, the firmer security of the affirmative procedure being required as a check by the House.

Subsection (5)*(a)* of new clause 6 provides for the commission to act with the consent of the Treasury, but under subsection (5)*(b)* the Treasury will act on its own. Perhaps the Minister will explain why in one case the Treasury will advise the commission whereas in the other the Treasury will act alone.

In new clause 7 it makes a great deal of sense to separate the two principles originally contained within the framework of clause 14.

[Mr. Weetch]

By and large, all these provisions make a great deal of sense, and the provisions with regard to mobile homes are to be welcomed. I shall therefore say no more on that subject as I am most encouraged by all that has been said already.

Sir George Young: A number of points have been raised in this short debate. I can assure my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) that it is indeed our intention to lay orders at an early stage providing the relevant powers in relation to relevant overseas territories.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) made a fair point about joint loans. The Government will look again at the point and if we are convinced of the logic of the case we shall take appropriate steps in another place.

With regard to new clause 6, the Government agreed in Committee to consider an order-making power to allow societies to act directly overseas rather than through subsidiaries, thus allowing flexibility to reconsider arrangements for overseas operations if circumstances—for example, in the EEC—should change. Although the provisions in the Bill already go beyond what is available in most other states and are entirely consistent with our treaty obligations and with the draft directive, the Government have looked at the matter again and in the interests of flexibility we have decided to include an order-making power for direct operations.

On the rather technical question about the Treasury acting on its own volition or giving advice, I should like to reflect on what the right hon. Gentleman has said and write to him or see that his representative in another place gives him the answer.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 7

QUALIFYING ASSET HOLDING FOR CERTAIN POWERS

'.—(1) This section has effect for determining for the purposes of this Act whether, in any financial year, a building society has a "qualifying asset holding".

(2) A building society has a qualifying asset holding in any financial year if, and only if, the aggregate value of its total commercial assets, as shown in its annual accounts for the previous year, is not less than £100 million or such other amount as may be substituted for it under subsection (3) below.

(3) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by order made by statutory instrument substitute for the amount for the time being specified in subsection (2) above such other amount as the Commission considers appropriate.

(4) An order under subsection (3) above may contain such transitional provisions as the Commission considers necessary or expedient.

(5) An instrument containing an order under subsection (3) above shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 8

OFFICERS AND AUDITORS NOT TO BE EXEMPTED FROM LIABILITY

'.—(1) Subject to subsection (3) below, any provision to which this section applies, whether contained in the rules of a building society or in any contract with a building society or otherwise, shall be void.

(2) This section applies to any provision for—

(a) exempting any director, other officer or person employed as auditor of a building society from any liability which, by virtue of any rule of law, would otherwise attach to him in respect of any negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust of which he may be guilty in relation to the society, or

(b) indemnifying any such person against any such liability.

(3) Subsection (1) above shall not prevent a building society from indemnifying a person against any liability incurred by him in defending any proceedings (whether criminal or civil) in which judgment is given in his favour or in which he is acquitted.

(4) Section 727 of the Companies Act 1985 or, as the case may be, section 394 of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 (which empower the court to grant relief in certain cases of negligence, default, breach of duty or breach of trust) shall apply in relation to officers and auditors of a building society as it applies in relation to officers and auditors of a company.' —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The purpose of imposing obligations on individuals is nullified if the society of which they are directors or by which they are employed is unable to undertake to pay any damages or fine due from it in the event of non-compliance with any obligation. The provisions of section 92 of the Building Societies Act 1962 therefore remain appropriate and the new clause re-enacts them.

Mr. Weetch: This is a straightforward matter, merely repeating the safeguards contained in the 1962 Act. Perhaps the Economic Secretary will refresh my memory. Has this provision been separated from another part of the Bill which came before the Standing Committee, or was it an omission that is now being rectified?

Mr. Ian Stewart: When the new clause was brought to me for approval I asked exactly the same question. The provision was not included in the original arrangements. As the hon. Gentleman knows, many of the provisions of the Bill differ from those of the 1962 Act and it was not fully evident until the Bill was in being that it was still appropriate to include this provision. That is why the new clause has been put forward.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 9

RIGHTS OF APPEAL

'.—(1) A building society which is aggrieved by a decision of the Commission—

(a) to refuse to grant authorisation,

(b) to revoke authorisation, or

(c) to impose conditions or as to the conditions imposed,

may appeal against the decision to a tribunal constituted in accordance with section *(Determination of appeals)*.

(2) Any person in relation to whom the Commission, in deciding to refuse to grant or to revoke authorisation or to impose conditions, makes a determination that a person is not a fit and proper person to hold, or as the case may be, to remain in an office in the society or imposes a requirement that he be removed from an office in the society, may appeal against the decision so far as it relates to that determination or requirement.

(3) The revocation of a society's authorisation shall not have effect until—

(a) the end of the period within which an appeal can be brought against the Commission's decision to revoke it; and

(b) if such an appeal is brought, until it is determined or withdrawn.

(4) Subsection (3) above applies in relation to the expiry of a society's authorisation on a refusal to grant authorisation under section 39 as it applies to the revocation of a society's authorisation.

(5) Subject to any order of the tribunal made under section *(Determination of appeals)*(5), an appeal under subsection (1)*(c)* or (2) above shall not affect the operation, pending the determination of the appeal, of any condition which is the subject of the appeal; and no determination of an appeal by any person, under subsection (2) above shall affect the revocation for the purposes of which the Commission made its determination or requirement in relation to that person.

(6) In this section and section *(Determination of appeals)*—

"conditions" means conditions to be complied with by a building society and imposed on the grant of authorisation under section 9, on the renewal of authorisation under section 39, on reauthorisation under section 42, or under section 40;

"grant" includes renew; and

"revoke" means revoke under section 41(1).'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Government new clause 10 — *Determination of appeals*,

Government new clause 12 — *Further appeals on points of law*,

Government amendments Nos. 24, 32, 135, 139, 235 and 293 to 300.

5 pm

Mr. Stewart: The new clause and the amendments deal with the system of appeals. The clauses provide for a new system whereby building societies may appeal to an independent tribunal against decisions of the commission regarding matters of authorisation. Under existing legislation, the chief registrar's use of discretionary powers on prudential matters is subject to Treasury consent and, ultimately, of course, to judicial review in court.

Under the new building society regime, we have concluded that societies should have available a formal system of appeal which is designed to take account of the new system of authorisation to be established by the Bill and which can be brought into operation as rapidly as possible in cases of dispute. The clauses have been discussed extensively with interested parties, and particularly with the Building Societies Association, which has welcomed their inclusion. I hope that they will also be welcomed by the House.

Mr. Weetch: The commission that was set up earlier in the Bill will have considerable powers. It is right that there should be comprehensive rights of appeal. The Opposition accept that fully in principle. We have scrutinised the new clauses and the amendments. The clauses cover rights of appeal, the determination of appeals, costs and related conditions, and appeals on points of law. They appear to be comprehensive, which we welcome.

I have one question on the detailed text of new clause 9. Similar points arise later on other new clauses and on some of the amendments. The imposition of conditions, as well as the impositions themselves in terms of the subject matter, is now to be subject to appeal. An appeal may be mounted on both aspects— the principle as to whether conditions will be imposed and the factual content of the conditions themselves.

As I understand it, a building society can appeal against the principle of conditions being imposed and against the subject matter of the conditions. In new clause 10(6)*(c)*, the tribunal will have power to direct the commission to determine conditions. Therefore, do I understand correctly that if a building society loses the day on the imposition of conditions, the tribunal can say what the conditions are to be? Subsequently, could another appeal be mounted against the factual contents of the conditions that were declared as a result of the request of the tribunal?

Mr. Ian Stewart: The hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn attention to the technical operation of the provisions. We decided that appeal should be available across the range of decisions which the commission can make, that is to say, not only on the granting or on the revoking of authorisation but on the imposition of conditions. The hon. Gentleman has put his finger on a difficulty: a society can appeal against conditions absolutely, but it can also appeal against the conditions themselves.

If the commission is clear that the society should be able to continue with authorisation only provided that conditions are attached, an appeal against any conditions being applied would in effect be a challenge to the commission on its assessment of the position. The commission might well respond by suggesting revocation. It is more likely in practice that the appeal will be on the nature of the conditions rather than on the imposition of conditions. That means that it is more likely to be a single exercise of the appeal procedure than a to-ing and fro-ing. I shall read later what the hon. Gentleman has said and if I have anything to add I shall write to him.

The matter was considered for its practical implications during the consultation period. I am advised that the points which the hon. Gentleman has raised have been dealt with in the proposed system and that that system is the one most likely to operate cleanly and quickly. One of the most important requirements for any appeal procedure in relation to a society is to deal with the appeal with as little fuss and bother as possible so that the affairs of the society are not held up to public view and its dirty linen is not washed in public, which might cause anxiety to members and depositors and therefore damage the credibility of the society in the market. We want to avoid that. Therefore, we want as direct and rapid a system as possible. We think that we have achieved it. That is what the amendments are designed to do.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 10

DETERMINATION OF APPEALS

'.—(1) Where an appeal is brought under section *(rights of appeal)* a tribunal to determine the appeal shall be constituted in accordance with subsection (2) below.

(2) The tribunal shall consist of—

(a) a chairman appointed by the Lord Chancellor or the Lord Advocate, and

(b) two other members appointed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

(3) The chairman shall be a barrister, solicitor or advocate of at least seven years standing; and the other two members shall

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

be persons appearing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to have respectively experience of accountancy and experience of the business of building societies or of other financial institutions.

(4) On any appeal against any decision of the Commission the question for the determination of the tribunal shall be whether, for the reasons adduced by the appellant, the decision was unlawful or not justified by the evidence on which it was based.

(5) The tribunal may, on the application of the building society concerned, order that the operation of any condition which is the subject of an appeal by the society be suspended pending the determination of the appeal.

(6) The tribunal may confirm or reverse the decision which is the subject of the appeal but shall not have power to vary it except by directing the Commission—

(a) in the case of an appeal against a decision to refuse to grant authorisation, to determine the conditions to which the grant of authorisation is to be subject;

(b) in the case of an appeal against a decision to revoke authorisation, to determine the conditions or different conditions subject to which the authorisation is to continue in force, as the case may be;

(c) in the case of an appeal against the imposition of conditions or as to the conditions imposed by the decision, to determine the conditions or different conditions subject to which the authorisation is to be granted or is to continue, as the case may be.

(7) Where by virtue of subsection (6) above the tribunal directs the Commission to determine conditions or different conditions, the Commission shall by notice to the society concerned impose such conditions to be complied with by the Society as it considers expedient in order to protect the investments of shareholders or depositors and—

(a) Part III of Schedule 3 to this Act shall apply subject to the modifications made by paragraph 11 of that Schedule; but

(b) the society concerned may appeal to the tribunal against any of those conditions;

and on any such appeal the tribunal may confirm or reverse the Commission's decision with respect to the conditions which are the subject of the appeal or may direct the Commission to determine different conditions.

(8) Where by virtue of subsection (7) above the tribunal, on an appeal against any conditions, directs the Commission to determine different conditions, the other provisions of that subsection shall apply as they apply where the tribunal gives such a direction by virtue of subsection (6) above.

(9) Where the tribunal reverses a decision of the Commission to refuse to grant authorisation, it shall direct the Commission to grant it; and where the tribunal reverses a decision of the Commission to make the grant of authorisation subject to conditions, it shall direct the Commission to grant it unconditionally.

(10) Notice of a tribunal's determination, together with a statement of its reasons, shall be given to the appellant and to the Commission; and unless the tribunal has directed the Commission to determine conditions or, in any other case, the tribunal directs otherwise, the determination shall come into operation when the notice is given to the appellant.

(11) The Treasury may out of money provided by Parliament pay to the persons appointed as members of a tribunal under this section such fees and allowances in respect of expenses as the Treasury may determine and any other expenses incurred for the purposes of this section.'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 12

FURTHER APPEALS ON POINTS OF LAW

'(1) An appeal shall lie to the High Court at the instance of the building society concerned or of the Commission on any question of law arising from any decision of a tribunal uner section *(Determination of appeals)*, and if the court is of the opinion that the decision was erroneous in law, it shall remit the matter to the tribunal for re-hearing and determination by it.

(2) In the application of this section to a building society whose principal office is in Scotland, references to the High Court shall be construed as references to the Court of Session.

(3) No appeal to the Court of Appeal or to the Court of Appeal in Northern Ireland shall be brought from a decision under subsection (1) above except with the leave of that court or of the court or judge from whose decision the appeal is brought.

(4) An appeal shall lie, with the leave of the Court of Session or the House of Lords, from any decision of the Court of Session under this section, and such leave may be given on such terms as to costs, expenses or otherwise as the Court of Session or the House of Lords may determine.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 13

SCHEMES FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

'(1) An individual shall, by virtue of and in accordance with schemes under this section, have the right, as against a building society, to have any complaint of his about action taken by the society in relation to a prescribed matter of complaint which affects him in prescribed respects investigated under the scheme.

(2) An individual shall also, by virtue of and in accordance with schemes under this section, have the right, as against any body which is associated with a building society, to have any complaint of his about action taken by that body in relation to a prescribed matter of complaint which affects him in prescribed respects investigated under the scheme.

(3) Every authorised building society shall be a member (and it may be the sole member) of one or more recognised schemes which or which between them confer the rights required to be conferred by subsection (1) above in relation to every matter (within its powers) which is for the time being a prescribed matter of complaint.

(4) The obligation imposed by subsection (3) above, in so far as it relates to a prescribed matter of complaint arising out of the exercise of adoptable powers, is to be construed as requiring a society to be a member of a recognised scheme conferring rights in relation to that matter not later than the date at which the alteration of the society's power takes effect.

(5) Every authorised building society shall secure that each of the bodies associated with it is a member of one or more recognised schemes which or which between them confer the rights required to be conferred by subsection (2) above in relation to every matter (within the powers of that body) which is for the time being a prescribed matter of complaint.

(6) Schedule *(schemes for investigation of complaints)* to this Act has effect for the purposes of this section and, in that Schedule—

(a) Part I prescribes the matters for which provision must be made by a scheme if it is to be a scheme which qualifies for recognition for the purposes of this section;

(b) Part II prescribes the matters action in relation to any of which must be subject to investigation under a scheme if it is to qualify for recognition for the purpose of investigations in relation to that matter; and

(c) Part III contains other requirements to which a scheme must conform if it is to be so recognised.

(7) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by order vary Part II or Part III of Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)* by adding to or deleting from it any provision or by varying any provision for the time being contained in it; and an order under this subsection may make such transitional provision as appears to the Commission to be necessary or expedient.

(8) The Commission shall have the function, in accordance with Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints: recognition, accession etc.)* of granting recognition of schemes and of withdrawing any recognition it has granted; but recognition does not extend to, and if not required for, provisions in a scheme which are not required to be made in pursuance of Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)* to this Act.

(9) The Commission shall have power to do anything which is calculated to facilitate the discharge of its functions under subsection (8) above, or is incidental or conducive to their discharge, but this does not extend to expenditure for the purpose of operating a scheme.

(10) For the purpose of complying with the duty imposed on it by subsection (3) above, a building society may—

(a) make, or join with other building societies or other bodies in making, a scheme or schemes to be submitted to the Commission for approval by it as a recognised scheme; or

(b) accede as a member to any scheme, whether a scheme it has made or joined in making or a scheme made by other building societies or other bodies, which is for the time being a recognised scheme.

(11) A building society may also make or join in making, or accede to, schemes which are not required for the purposes of this section.

(12) The central office shall have the function, in accordance with Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints: recognition, accession, etc.)* of recording accessions to schemes and of confirming any withdrawal from a scheme.

(13) A building society may withdraw from membership of a scheme but, if the scheme is a recognised scheme, its withdrawal is not effective except in accordance with the applicable provisions of Schedule *(Schemes for investigations of complaints: recognition, accession, etc.)*.

(14) The power to make an order under subsection (7) above is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(15) In this section, section *(Investigation of complaints: supplementary provisions)*, Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)* and Schedule *(Schemes for investigations of complaints: recognition, accession, etc.)*—

"accede", in relation to a scheme, means assume the obligations and rights of membership and "accession" has a corresponding meaning;

"action" includes any failure to act, and so as regards "exercise" in relation to any power; and "action", in relation to a society, includes action on its behalf by any body associated with it;

"prescribed", in relation to matters of complaint, means prescribed for the time being in Part II of Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)* and, in relation to the respects in which a complainant is affected by any action, means prescribed for the time being in Part III of that Schedule as grounds for making action subject to investigation under the scheme; and

"recognition" means recognition of a scheme by the Commission for the purposes of this section.'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Sir George Young: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to take the following:

Government new clause 14 — *Investigation of complaints: supplementary provisions.*

Government new clause 15—*Settlement of disputes.*

Government amendments Nos. 4, 5, 251 to 253, 261 and 291.

Sir George Young: This is an important new clause which imposes an obligation on societies to belong to an ombudsman scheme in relation to certain of their activities and to enable the commission to recognise schemes for that purpose. The provisions give effect to an undertaking that we gave in Committee to oblige building societies to belong to an approved ombudsman scheme. While voluntary ombudsman arrangements have become more widespread in recent years, and while the Building Societies Association had been planning a scheme for building societies, this is the first compulsory scheme outside the public service.

Before coming to the provisions, I want to pay a tribute to my hon. Friends the Members for York (Mr. Gregory) and High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) for the energy and diligence with which they argued the case for a statutory ombudsman. The introduction of the new clauses is due in no small measure to their efforts.

New clause 13 contains the obligation for societies to belong to a scheme in respect of the relevant activities and provides for recognition of schemes by the commission. It also gives effect to a new schedule which sets out the criteria that a scheme must satisfy if it is to obtain recognition. Firstly, the scheme must cover some or all of the activities on which there must be recourses to an ombudsman: broadly speaking, savings accounts, whether shares or deposits, services relating to the handling of money and all lending, whether classes 1, 2 or 3.

Secondly, the schedule sets out the powers which the ombudsman must have to investigate complaints. It makes it clear, however, that his writ does not run to questions purely about a society's commercial judgment about the creditworthiness of a customer, for example, in deciding whether or not to make an advance or to make available a cheque guarantee card or other facilities. It is a fundamental point of principle to the prudent operation of its business that a building society must ultimately reserve the right to make such decisions without the possibility of their being overturned by an outsider. Where there has been maladministration, the ombudsman will be able to ask the society to take the decision again but he will not be able to take the decision for the society.

Thirdly, the schedule deals with the powers of the ombudsman to offer redress to complainants. He may require a society to take steps to remedy its actions or to pay compensation up to a maximum of £100,000, as in the voluntary insurance ombudsman scheme. The scheme need not oblige societies to comply, so long as their reasons are spelt out in the annual directors' report and made public in a way laid down by the ombudsman. That is to avoid derogation by statute from the normal rights of a building society before the courts. However, it would be open to the societies voluntarily to join a scheme which offered no such let-out.

New clause 14 deals with some supplementary points. It sets out the criteria which the ombudsman must use in determining complaints; provides for his decision to be final if accepted by the complainant, although the society may always seek leave to appeal to the High Court on a point of law arising from his decision; and provides a penalty for non-compliance with the statutory obligation to belong to a scheme.

The related new schedule sets out the procedure for recognition of schemes by the commission and for the registry to record their membership. The statutory obligations will be enforced primarily by the criminal penalty for non-compliance, but, as a last resort, the commission may assist in the establishment of a scheme.

Those provisions mark a major step forward in the protection of consumers and will help to ensure that

[Sir George Young]

building societies continue to observe the high standards in dealing with their customers for which they are justly renowned. I commend them to the House.

Amendment No. 253 gives effect to arrangements for the reference of disputes to an arbitrator of the High Court or the commission. They replace part IV of schedule 2 and, if required, I can give a more detailed explanation.

Mr. Oakes: I congratulate the Government on carrying out the express wish of both sides of the Committee. I agree that two Conservative Members suggested establishing an ombudsman for building societies, and that was fully supported by the Opposition.

I have one minor query. Some societies are uneasy about new clause 14 and about paragraph 4 of the new schedule listed as amendment No. 251. At first sight it seems that the adjudicator can override contractual agreements between a building society and a complainant. That may well be right in some cases, especially exceptional ones where the society had clearly acted unreasonably, but the clauses seem to be far more complex than ever we imagined they would be in Committee. We imagined the establishment of an ombudsman to be a simple matter. The clauses are legalistic and complex. This may be necessary — I am not complaining — but they seem to be long winded.

Societies believe that an adjudicator should intervene if a building society's act is overridingly and clearly unreasonable. However, it is hoped that the ombudsman will not use his powers under the schedule to intervene in minor matters where there is a clear contractual agreement between a complainant and a building society.

Mr. Cockeram: I support the Government's new clauses. I heard my hon. Friend the Minister say that this is the first compulsory scheme outside the public sector, and I deplore the fact that he had to make that statement. I am not criticising him, but I am criticising the Building Societies Association, the banks, the insurance companies and a host of other industries concerned with consumers. The furniture industry, for example, has set up a complaints procedure under the Office of Fair Trading. I deeply regret the fact that the building societies have had to be forced into a statutory scheme.

As the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) said, the clauses are much more legalistic and lengthy than we expected when we tabled the amendments in Committee, requiring the establishment of an ombudsman for consumer complaints. I regret and deplore the fact that the scheme is so rigid and inflexible, and I hope that other industries in the financial sector and elsewhere which deal with consumers will learn a lesson from this, namely, that it is much better for them to set up their own scheme than to have one imposed upon them.

5.15 pm

Mr. Oakes: As a vice-president of the Building Societies Association, I must say that the building societies in no way oppose the estabishment of an ombudsman. For years the association knew that there was to be a Building Societies Bill. The Government wisely listened to the points made in Committee and inserted this clause in the Billl. It has not been forced on the Building Societies Association. The association happily acquiesces in it.

Mr. Cockeram: I do not dispute that the building societies accept this need. My point is that other industries, including those in the financial sector, have recognised both the need for an ombudsman and the pressure from consumers for an independent adjudicator to whom they can take complaints, and have set up their own ombudsman scheme. It would have been better if the BSA had recognised that pressure and done something similar, thereby avoiding this long and inflexible scheme, which is not in the interests of consumers to the extent that it could have been had the building societies set up their own scheme at the outset.

I congratulate the Minister on having acted in this way, following pressure in Committee.

Mr. Austin Mitchell (Great Grimsby): I echo the remarks of my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) and the hon. Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) in welcoming the new clause. The proposal had all-party support in Committee, which may be why the Government agreed to take it up, although it may be that we had an unusually relaxed and friendly Committee. I pay tribute to the Government for being so accommodating.

The new clause puts into law an important principle, and I accept my right hon. Friend's point that it is not being forced on the building societies, but that they welcome it. It has been inserted in the Bill because this is the most convenient way of providing for an ombudsman. The Government listened to the arguments and seized this opportunity. The building societies are pioneering a development which should be universal and have enforceable provisions. It should exist for the whole of the banking sector more strongly and effectively than it does, for financial institutions, for insurance companies and, indeed, for newspapers. I know that the *Daily Mirror* has its ombudsman, probably in Liechtenstein, or somewhere equally convenient, for adjudication purposes. I should like this development to spread over a wide range of industries.

Some suspicions have been voiced, especially by solicitors, who are afraid of building societies doing conveyancing, but we shall come to that later. They attempt to give the impression that building societies are huge domineering monopolistic organisations of which people should be afraid. That is not their nature. I do not expect an overwhelming rush of complaints. It is right that building societies should show themselves whiter than white by acceding to the scheme, and I hope that they will accede to a compulsory, binding scheme, not one that allows them to dismiss adjudications in their annual report. It should not be like the local government scheme, which enables local government to reject the ombudsman's recommendations too easily.

Consumers need some help and protection. They need a body to identify with and an agency which will protect them with clear, simple, straightforward procedures so that they have confidence to operate in a system which is often intimidating and frightening.

Mr. Weetch: On behalf of the Opposition, I warmly welcome the principle of an ombudsman for building societies. From experience, I know that disputes between building societies and their members have caused much dissatisfaction. I have been involved in several disputes on a constituency basis, and I have followed some others

through the newspapers. Some celebrated disputes with building society boards of management reached the press some years ago and obtained publicity. To put it no higher, there was a feeling among some ordinary members of building societies that when a dispute occurred and had to be adjudicated upon, the cards were stacked against the ordinary membership. That being so, it was high time that there was an alteration.

I shall keep my remarks about the clauses to a minimum because most of the substantial issues have been discussed. The fact that we have a scheme will give much confidence to the public and will probably underline the increased confidence which investors and members have in building societies. I am pleased that the promise given to the Standing Committee by the Economic Secretary to the Treasury to set up a scheme was fulfilled. He should be personally commended on it. In principle, it covers almost everything: indeed, perhaps it covers too much and a little more should have been left to discretion. However, one can never get these matters right. The scheme covers the fact that an individual has a right to make a complaint on stipulated matters and that a building society must be a member of an approved scheme.

The Government have said that a scheme must be compulsory. They lay down basic principles that must be followed and leave the building society movement to construct a scheme. That is as good a way forward as any.

The ombudsman principle is well founded in public life. It is a success. There are good precedents in the insurance industry and in banks, and it is a sound way of adjudicating in disputes. I underline the fact that, although the clause was the responsibility of the hon. Member for York (Mr. Gregory), it had substantial all-party support. The hon. Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) was also involved. Such all-party support is the clause's political strength. It has been put firmly on the political map, which is a good thing.

The provisions for an ombudsman to adjudicate in disputes are lengthy, detailed and complicated. Could we not have set up a scheme which occupied less print? In the brief which it sent to hon. Members who were interested in arguing the Bill, the Building Societies Association said that the amount of print is such that it may create some awkward legal precedents. Is that the case? What legal scrutiny has it received? Will there be more scrutiny when it reaches the other place so that any rough bits can be made smooth?

Although I make those comments, I do not wish to detract from anything that I said at the beginning of my speech. The House welcomes this considerable step forward for the building society movement.

Sir George Young: I am grateful for the kind words from hon. Members on both sides of the House about the new clause and the Government's initiative to set up an ombudsman scheme. I shall deal briefly with the points that were raised.

On the complexity and length of the schedule, no one is more anxious to keep down the volume of print than my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary and myself, but the complexity is an inevitable result of trying to codify in statute what is a voluntary arrangement. Once the decision is taken to specify that in statute, it becomes unfortunately necessary to do so in some detail, given the criminal sanctions against non-compliance.

The right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) was worried about the adjudicator overriding the contractual arrangements between the society and the complainant. Clause 14(4) is the let-out clause that I mentioned in my opening remarks. The adjudicator's finding is legally binding if accepted by the complainant, but is subject to the let-out in subsection (4) whereby the society is not obliged to accept the findings so long as it gives the reasons for so doing in the way specified in the new clause and the amendments. We felt obliged to include the let-out clause by which a society may decide not to comply with the ombudsman's decision as long as it explains its reasons publicly, because we did not want to remove the legal rights of a society before the courts.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) expressed the hope, with which I agree, that the occasions on which a society would take advantage of the let-out clause would be exceptional. Nothing in the provisions would prevent a society from voluntarily giving up the let-out clause. But there is a point of principle. In requiring societies to belong to a scheme under which they must accept the directions of a third party, we should be depriving them of their rights of law before the courts. Parliament would not wish to do that. It is one thing voluntarily to contract to give up those rights, which is an option, but another to remove them. That is why that clause was included. I hope that the building societies will not seek to abuse the clause or use it lightly. They can expand the scope of the scheme beyond the basic minimun that is already in the Bill.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) asked whether the Government would have any further thoughts on the Bill. The Government tabled several hundred amendments between Committee stage and Report, and I doubt whether the ingenuity and investigative powers of the draftsmen are as yet exhausted, so there may be another opportunity to improve and refine the Bill.

In the secure knowledge of all-party support for this fresh initiative, the Government are happy to leave the matter as it is for the time being.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 14

INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

'(1) A building society, as a member of a recognised scheme, shall discharge any obligations and is entitled to enforce any rights imposed or conferred by the scheme or any determination of the adjudicator under the scheme, but nothing in section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)*, this section or a scheme requires or authorises a building society to do anything which is outside its powers or otherwise contrary to any provision of this Act or any instrument under it.

(2) Determinations of complaints under recognised schemes shall be made by reference to what is, in the adjudicator's opinion, fair in all circumstances of the case and any direction given to a building society or associated body by an adjudicator may (if the complainant accepts the determination) require it and the complainant to vary any contractual or other obligations or rights subsisting between them.

(3) Subject to subsections (4) and (5) below, a determination of the adjudicator under a recognised scheme which is, by virtue of the complainant's acceptance of it, binding on the building society or associated body shall be final and conclusive and shall not be questioned in any court of law.

(4) Subsection (3) above does not apply where a society or associated body is authorised by the scheme to relieve itself of its obligation to take the steps it is directed to take or pay the

[Sir George Young]

compensation awarded by the society's undertaking an obligation to give the requisite publicity for the reasons for not doing so and the society undertakes that obligation.

(5) Where a determination of the adjudicator under a recognised scheme is binding on the building society or associated body, the adjudicator shall, at the request of the society or associated body, state a case for the opinion of the High Court on any question of law and the High Court may direct the adjudicator to reconsider the complaint.

(6) A decision of the High Court under subsection (5) above shall be treated as a judgment of the High Court within the meaning of section 16 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 or section 39 of the Judicature (Northern Ireland) Act 1978 (which relate to the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal to hear and determine appeals from any judgment of the High Court) but no appeal shall lie from the decision of the High Court on any case under subsection (5) above without the leave of the High Court or of the Court of Appeal.

(7) In the application of this section to Scotland—

(a) for the references in subsection (5) above to the High Court there shall be substituted references to the Court of Session; and

(b) subsection (6) above shall be omitted.

(8) If a building society fails to comply with section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)* (3) the society shall be liable on summary conviction—

(a) to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale; and

(b) in the case of a continuing offence, to an additional fine not exceeding £100 for every day during which the offence continues;

and so shall any director of the society who is also guilty of the offence.

(9) If a building society fails, without reasonable excuse, to comply with section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)* (5) the society shall be liable on summary conviction—

(a) to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale; and

(b) in the case of a continuing offence, to an additional fine not exceeding £100 for every day during which the offence continues;

and so shall any director of the society who is also guilty of the offence.

(10) If a building society fails to comply with section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)* (3) or (5) the Commission may make an application to the High Court for an order directing the society to comply within a specified period with that subsection and the High Court may, if it thinks fit, make an order accordingly.

(11) In subsection (4) above the reference to an obligation to give the requisite publicity for a building society's or associated body's reasons is a reference to such an obligation undertaken in pursuance of a provision of the scheme authorised by paragraph 6(2) or (3) of Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)*.'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 15

SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

'.—(1) Schedule *(Settlement of disputes)* to this Act shall have effect for the settlement of certain disputes between a building society and a member, or a representative of a member, of the society or, as provided by Part II of the Schedule, between a building society and a depositor with the society.

(2) Nothing in that Schedule affects the jurisdiction of any court to hear and determine disputes arising out of any mortgage or any contract other than the rules of a society.'.—*[Sir George Young.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 16

TRANSFER OF BUSINESS TO COMMERCIAL COMPANY

'.—(1) A building society may, in accordance with this section and the other applicable provisions of this Act, transfer the whole of its business to a company (its "successor").

(2) The applicable provisions of this Act other than this section are section *(Transfers of business: supplementary provisions)*, section *(Regulated terms: compensation for loss of office, etc)*, section *(Regulated terms etc: distributions and share rights)*, section *(Protective provisions for specially formed successors)*, section *(Transfer regulations)*, pargraph 27A of Schedule 2 and Schedule *(Transfer of business: supplementary provisions)*.

(3) The successor may be a company formed by the society wholly or partly for the purpose of assuming and conducting the society's business in its place or an existing company which is to assume and conduct the society's business in its place; and for the purposes of the transfer the society may, notwithstanding anything in section 16, form, or acquire and hold shares in, a company whose objects extend to the carrying on of activities which a building society has no power to carry on.

(4) In order to transfer its business to its successor a building society must—

(a) in the case of a specially formed company, secure that it is formed having articles of association with the requisite protective provisions;

(b) agree conditionally with its successor in a transfer agreement on the terms of the transfer which, in so far as they are regulated terms, comply with section *(Regulated terms: compensation for loss of office, etc)*, section *(Regulated terms etc: distribution and share rights)* and transfer regulations;

(c) approve the transfer and the terms of the transfer by the requisite transfer resolutions, that is to say, resolutions passed by the members of the society in accordance with paragraph 27A of Schedule 2 to this Act; and

(d) obtain the confirmation of the Commission of the transfer and its terms.

(5) In so far as the transfer agreement made between the society and its successor provides for rights to be conferred on members or officers of the society, whether or not in pursuance of regulated terms, the members or officers shall, in relation to those provisions, be treated as if they had been parties to the agreement and the rights shall be enforceable accordingly.

(6) If the Commission confirms the transfer under section *(Transfers of business: supplementary provisions)* then, on the vesting date, all the property, rights and liabilities of the society making the transfer (whether or not capable of being transferred or assigned), except any shares in its successor, shall by virtue of this subsection and in accordance with transfer regulations be transferred to and vested in the successor.

(7) Where a building society continues to hold shares in its successor after the vesting date, the consideration (if any) for the disposal of the shares together with any other property, rights or liabilities of the society acquired or incurred after that date shall, by virtue of this subsection, be transferred to and vested in its successor on the date specified for its dissolution under subsection (10) below.

(8) A building society which has obtained confirmation of the transfer of its business shall send to the central office notice of the date which is to be the vesting date and shall do so not later than seven days before that date; and the central office shall record the date and, if a later date is notified under subsection (10) below, that date, in the public file of the society.

(9) Except where notice is given under subsection (10) below, a building society which under this section, transfers its business to its successor shall, by virtue of this subsection, be dissolved on the vesting date; but the transfer effected by subsection (6) above shall be deemed to have been effected immediately before the dissolution.

(10) A building society may, for the purpose of facilitating the disposal of shares in its successor, include in the notice of the vesting date under subsection (8) above notice of a later for the dissolution of the society; and, if it does so, the society shall by virtue of this subsection be dissolved on that date instead of the vesting date but the transfer effected by subsection (7) above shall be deemed to have been effected immediately before the dissolution.

(11) As from the vesting date a society which has given notice under subsection (10) above shall cease to transact any business except such as is necessary for the purpose of securing the disposal of the society's holding of shares in its successor.

(12) In this section, and the other applicable provisions of this Act—

"company" means a company within the meaning of the Companies Act 1985 or the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 which is a public company limited by shares; and a company is a "specially formed" company if it is formed by a building society (and by no others than its nominees) for the purpose of assuming and conducting its business in its place and is an "existing" company if it is a company carrying on business as a going concern on the date of the transfer agreement;

"confirmation", in relation to a transfer, means the confirmation of the Commission required by subsection (4)*(d)* above;

"regulated terms" means any terms of a transfer agreement which are regulated terms under section *(Regulated terms: compensation for loss of office, etc)*, section *(Regulated terms etc: distributions and share rights)* or section *(Transfer regulations)*;

"the requisite protective provisions" means the provisions required to be made by section *(Protective provisions for specially formed successors)* (2);

"the requisite transfer resolutions" has the meaning given by subsection (4)*(c)* above;

"successor", in relation to a building society, has the meaning given by subsection (1) above;

"transfer agreement" means the agreement required by subsection (4)*(b)* above and, in relation to it, "conditionally" means conditional on the approval of the transfer by the requisite transfer resolutions and on confirmation of the transfer;

"transfer of business" means the transfer of the business of a building society to its successor under this section and "transfer" has a corresponding meaning;

"transfer regulations" means regulations under section *(Transfer regulations)*; and

"the vesting date" means the date specified in or determined under the transfer agreement as the vesting date for the purposes of subsection (6) above.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to discuss the following Government new clauses:

No. 17 — *Transfers of business: supplementary provisions.*

No. 18—*Regulated terms: compensation for loss of office, etc.*

No. 19 — *Regulated terms etc: distributions and share rights.*

No. 20—*Protective provisions for specially formed successors.*

No. 21—*Transfer regulations.*

No. 22—*Cancellation of registration.*

Government amendments Nos. 113 to 123, 211, 220, 229, 230, 254 and 272.

Mr. Stewart: New clause 16 relates to the conversion of building societies into limited companies. Our principles in approaching the matter have been clear. First, any such decision by the members of a building society must be made with clear support from investing and borrowing members and from a significant proportion of the entire membership. It is an important change in the nature of the business of a building society to move from mutual to incorporated status, and it would be wrong for such a change to be made without the strong support of the society's members.

Secondly, we have been anxious to ensure that the process protects the rights and interests of members in such a way that it does not, at the same time, encourage members of the public to switch their funds around in the market on a speculative basis hoping to make a quick profit, which has happened in the United States.

5.30 pm

Thirdly, we felt that limits should be placed on the compensation payable to outgoing directors so that conversion is not a course of action promoted by management in its own interests. I think that those principles are supported not only by the Building Societies Association, but by both sides of the House.

The details of the clauses have been carefully worked out, but the main question is one of principle. The Bill sets out a regime for all societies, large and small, local and national. It may be that as financial markets develop some societies will want to develop more rapidly than the Bill allows. I see no reason to prevent that, provided they have the overwhelming support of their members. It seems to be the essence of mutuality that members should take the crucial decisions. That is what we are providing in this procedure.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins (High Peak) *rose*—

Mr. Stewart: I hope that my hon. Friend will contribute to the debate, but I would just like to finish this passage.

It may also be useful if there is a degree of diversity in the movement as to whether all building societies remain as mutual institutions. However, the possibility of converting into incorporated status would add to the range of types of society or mortgage-providing institutions.

I should like to listen to the debate and, if I am fortunate enough to catch Mr. Speaker's eye at the end, I could then respond to the points raised. At this stage I should like to say that I have taken careful note of the arguments put forward during the passage of the Bill so far, but they have not convinced me that conversion is wrong in principle. I am now more than ever sure that it is an option which should be available, subject to the necessary safeguards and principles that I have described. Therefore, I should like to respond more fully when I have heard the views of my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) and other hon. Members.

Dr. Oonagh McDonald (Thurrock): So far the debate on the new clauses has proceeded amicably, with agreement between the two sides of the House, but I fear that at this point the two sides will differ.

I understand that the Minister has carefully considered what safeguards can be built into the process of conversion from a mutual organisation to a plc, and I appreciate that he has resisted pressures to, for example, decrease the percentage of members who would necessarily have to vote for such a conversion. One must be grateful for small mercies. It is a small mercy, because for a variety of reasons we do not see the necessity for building societies to convert from mutual organisations into plcs. I know that the Minister is aware of some of the reasons that have been presented by the Opposition, but I hope that even at this late stage he will reconsider his decision.

Several points need to be made in connection with the process of conversion. First, during the progress of the Bill the Minister has considered in great detail what sort of

[Dr. Oonagh McDonald]

legislation is necessary for building societies and just how he can ensure that the legislation is correct and will not cause undue difficulties. However, he has not attended sufficiently to the fact that changes in the nature of the building societies are being proposed and will take effect shortly after other aspects of the financial markets will have undergone major changes. If nothing else, conversion to plcs ought to be postponed until one sees what the effects of the so-called big bang, due to take place at the end of October, will be. Therefore, I would recommend even more caution than the Minister has proposed.

Secondly, the proposal to allow the conversion to company status, taken together with the proposal to allow for contested mergers, can speed up the concentration of the number of building societies. Indeed, even without the provisions in the Bill, mergers are taking place, leading, for example, the chief executive of the Abbey National building society, Mr. Peter Birch, to say recently that he expected that over a period of 10 years there would be only five mega-building societies and possibly a number of smaller building societies.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I wonder whether the hon. Lady is aware that it is not only conversion that is the threat. New clause 16(3), which was not in the original Bill discussed in Committee, says that the successor company may be an existing company. In other words, an existing company, such as a foreign bank, may take over a building society even though it has not converted to plc status.

Dr. McDonald: I thank the hon. Gentleman for making that point. I was about to move on to the problems that I consider are caused by takeovers. The two provisions in the Bill that I have mentioned can speed up the process that the hon. Gentleman has in mind, although, as he rightly says, it can happen without conversion to company status. That is a matter of concern.

I am concerned because I believe that over a period of time, though obviously not immediately after the Bill takes effect — probably in April next year — we will find ourselves with a small number of large financial institutions. Because of the possibility of the takeover of existing building societies by foreign banks—we know that some foreign banks, such as Citicorp and Standard Chartered have already shown their interest in this matter — we shall have a small number of financial institutions, large in size, but without any particular commitment to the provision of finance for housing. They will obviously continue to offer mortgages, because I think that the mortgage market will continue to grow for the rest of this century, but they will have no prime commitment to housing.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): Has that not already taken place, as in the past year or two the joint stock banks have moved heavily into providing mortgages?

Dr. McDonald: It is true that other organisations also offer mortgages. For many years we have had the benefit of a range of institutions primarily concerned with financing housing. As we know, the Bill allows building societies to provide other financial services. The building societies have enormous assets—£100 billion. This is an important source of finance to be concentrated on the provision of housing, either through mortgages, or through the provision of something which we in the Labour party strongly favour—housing provided through part equity and part rent. This enables young couples especially to purchase their first house more easily than by raising the deposit for a mortgage or by facing the prospect of a 100 per cent. mortgage.

Mr. Teddy Taylor (Southend, East): The hon. Lady has obviously studied the matter more thoroughly than I have, but my understanding is that under subsection (3) it would be possible for Citibank to [illegible] the Halifax building society in its present form. There seems to be a real threat, which must be considered carefully.

Dr. McDonald: I think the hon. Gentleman is unaware that that point was made earlier and that I accepted it. I am trying to develop the argument that conversion to plc status will also facilitate the process. That is why I have argued against that point of view. I have argued the possibility that large financial institutions may not have the commitment to housing that building societies have.

The point has been made that building societies need the possibility of such conversion to provide themselves with adequate capital funds, despite the fact that the Building Societies Association, in its bulletin of October 1985, stressed that owing to the mutual nature of the building societies they were readily able to raise funds, and had successfully done so, on the wholesale market. The argument that conversion to plc status is necessary to provide building societies with adequate funds is one that we need not take too seriously.

I cannot understand the Government's prejudice against the continued existence of mutual organisations. It is a perfectly proper, respectable and successful alternative to company status. Why not encourage its continued existence? It is true that criticisms can be made of the nature of the mutuality of building societies. Perhaps that was not the case in years gone by when building societies were smaller. Nevertheless, building societies have been able to concern themselves to a greater extent with social objectives, with concerns and needs, of which housing is a fundamental aspect. Conversion of building societies to plc status and being swallowed up by banks which are concerned, not with the social need of housing but with all kinds of financial provision, and so on, is a step backwards, and not a step forwards.

For the reasons that I have outlined briefly — the argument was put both on Second Reading and in Committee — the Opposition are firmly convinced that the provisions in the new clauses are wrong. Therefore, we shall reject and vote against them.

Mr. Heddle: I shall not approach the subject as analytically and with the same economic expertise as the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald), but I agree with much of what she said. I think that on a point of detail the hon. Lady was wrong to advise the House that the Standard Chartered bank was a foreign bank. I am reliably informed by my hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Mr. Cockeram) that the Standard Chartered bank is British, is proud to be British and hopefully will remain British. I agree with some of the hon. Lady's sentiments. I approach the matter from the point of view of sentiment.

Although the Bill, in broad terms, will enable building societies to extend into a much broader field, way beyond the definition of mutuality — with which I have no quarrel whatsoever—I am concerned that new clause 16 could, in certain circumstances, enable our much-loved building societies, which many of us associate with our towns, counties and regions, to become multinationals. It might be fine for certain large building societies to become part of the First National Bank of Chicago, but it would not necessarily be right for the Staffordshire building society to do so, because it might become a nameless and faceless subsidiary of a nameless and faceless multinational which breaks the link between the borrower and the lender. I believe that the link between the borrower and the lender is a fundamental, vital and almost unquantifiable benefit of the building society movement as we know it today.

5.45 pm

Perhaps I can illustrate the point by narrating a story that was told to me by the chairman of one of the major building societies at the recent annual conference of the Building Societies Association held in Bournemouth. He reminded me of a lady who went into her local branch of his building society wanting to withdraw £1,000 from her savings account. She had only about £1,000 in her account. She said to the counter clerk, "Do not worry, young man. I only want that money to buy clothes and books for my daughter who is going to university in September. I promise you that I shall put the money back as soon as I can." The lady had a direct relationship with, and a direct loyalty and obligation to, her building society. If she had been the customer of a bank, she would not have cared a tuppenny damn about putting back the money. There is not the same loyalty between a bank and its customers as there is between a building society and its customers. If that sense of mutality is broken, which the new clause will enable financial institutions to do, that link of loyalty, which is inestimable, will be broken.

What worries me about the clause is that it is not only another lending institution, another savings institution, or another bank that will be enabled to take over a building society. As I understand it, any company — national, international or multinational—could do so. Therein lies a real cause for concern.

In my constituency of Mid-Staffordshire, the much-loved and very British 200-year-old company of Wedgwood is under threat of takeover by the London International Group, formerly known as the London Rubber Company. No doubt it is well known and much respected for producing certain rubber goods to meet the everyday requirements of some people, but what expertise and qualifications does that American-owned company have for taking over a ceramics company that manufactures tableware that hon. Members in this and another place use every day? The company has no real understanding of the highly specialised, top-market sector of the industry.

What about job security? What undertaking would the company give to the shareholders and employees of Wedgwood if other parts of that conglomerate play-pen based in the United States or elsewhere were to fall prey to the international economic recession? What job and economic security would the shareholders of that company have? Let us suppose that the London International Group, formerly known as the London Rubber Company, took over the Goldhawk building society, the Staffordshire building society or the Abbey National building society. Let us assume that there was a down-turn in the market for rubber gloves in Ohio or elsewhere and the company was forced into liquidation. In what position would that leave the borrowers of mortgages from the Goldhawk building society, the Staffordshire building society or the Abbey National building society?

Let us take the example of a constituent of mine who falls, through no fault of his or her own, into arrears. He or she does not have the same relationship with the local manager, because the local manager does not have the same relationship with head office, because head office is not situated in Stafford, Birkenhead or Burgess Hill. It is probably somewhere in Baltimore or Boston, and so there is not the same link, loyalty or understanding between lender and borrower as was highlighted in the case of the lady who wanted to borrow £1,000 to provide books and clothes for her undergraduate daughter.

I am concerned about the new clause. I did not serve on the Committee, and so I did not have an opportunity to express these views. However, I expressed them to members of the BSA at the annual conference of the Metropolitan Association of Building Societies. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will consider those points and will withdraw the new clause to allow further debate within the building society movement and to allow wider debate, as the hon. Member for Thurrock said, after the big bang. Incidentally, that big bang may well turn out to be a little whimper. The new clause could then be reintroduced, in the light of experience, in the other place.

Mr. Oakes: I agree with what my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) and the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) have said. The hon. Gentleman was absolutely right about the building societies. People invest their savings in building societies rather than in banks partly because, as the hon. Gentleman said, there is a mutuality of trust and understanding between the society and its customer. That mutuality is never felt between a bank, even a small bank, and its customer. The investor in the building society knows that his money is not only safe but will be used to provide a mortgage to give someone a home. The investor can feel quite proud of his investment.

I imagine that the new clause was initiated by the Treasury rather than by the BSA or individual building societies. I do not know who asked for it, but it can only be the Treasury that wants to convert building societies into plcs. Apart from the Treasury, I do not know of anyone who wants the new clause. But perhaps we are worrying unduly. After all, the new clause requires that 20 per cent. of the building society's subscribers must vote and that 75 per cent. of them must agree before the society can be converted into a limited company. It takes some doing to persuade 20 per cent. of borrowers to vote. Big societies have run major campaigns but have not managed to get even 10 per cent. to vote.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: They could be bribed to vote.

Mr. Oakes: I do not know about that, but I agree with the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire that those who vote will do so out of loyalty to their society, and so will not want it to be turned into a limited company.

[Mr. Oakes]

Moreover, the new clause gives the Treasury power, by negative resolution of the House, to alter that 20 per cent. figure. If building societies could not get 20 per cent. of their members to vote, or anything like that number, would the Treasury reduce the figure to 10 per cent. or 5 per cent.? If so, there is a grave danger of that mutuality disappearing. We want building societies to be brought into the modern world. That is what the Bill is about. We want to transform the 1871 Act into a 1986 Act in order to allow building societies to compete in the modern world, but we also want to preserve the peculiarly British nature of building societies and to retain that mutuality. I fear that the new clause, which has been introduced solely at the whim of the Government, could destroy that mutuality.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I merely wish to ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary two questions which I would have asked during his speech if he had given way. First, why do we want to allow companies which are not building societies to buy building societies, including those which have not converted? It would be interesting to know the reasons for that. Secondly, there is a technical problem with new clause 19. Subsection (4) specifies the bribes that may be paid to people voting for or against converting a building society into a plc. I have been over this issue with people in the BSA and in building societies, and none of us can make head nor tail of it.

Half the time the new clause appears to say that bribes can be paid only to people who have less than £100 in the building society, and thus to people who do not qualify to vote. I refer to subsection (2)*(b)*, which is qualified by subsection (4). In other parts, the new clause seems to suggest that payments could be made to people with more than £100 in the building society. Clearly it is important that building societies should know exactly what the new clause means. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary would explain it to me now. If he has as much difficulty as the rest of us in understanding its drafting, perhaps he will drop a line to me and to the BSA.

Mr. Craigen: I did not like the idea of a building society converting to plc status when it was discussed in Committee. I think that the provision has been reintroduced because several Conservative Back Benchers did not like the idea either. Treasury Ministers felt that they had to assuage in some way their Back Benchers' feelings. Indeed, the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) has outlined some of the concerns.

I found the Economic Secretary's reasoning rather faulty — and I am being generous to him. He had already made up his mind. Yet he came to the House and told us that he did not have much to say today, but that he would listen, as though he might be converted at the end of the debate. Judging by his actions and statements, and by the way that he dealt with the subject today, it is obvious that his mind is made up.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes), I just wonder what has generated this great desire for conversion. That word conversion makes people think immediately of some religious connotation, as though conversion would be a bracing experience for everybody. But it will be nothing of the kind. We are really talking about immersion, whereby the whole character of the building society movement will be changed. I suspect that the building society movement will be led away from its original purpose, which was to finance house purchase and home improvements. There is a danger that following the helter skelter towards conversion, as the Treasury puts it, we shall end up with more banks than the economy requires.

The Economic Secretary has never fully dealt with how he thinks that the building society movement will benefit from this proposed change. He has not really answered the points that have been made, not only today but in Committee, about whether, in the long run, this will strengthen the building society movement or, as many of us believe, will weaken and divert the building society movement from its purpose.

6 pm

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton, I have a non-pecuniary interest as an honorary vice-president of the Building Societies Association, but that does not mean that I cannot say what I think, and I think that the United Kingdom does not need any more clearing banks. The Economic Secretary has somewhat fogged the issue of principle by the way that he has tried to impose his ideas on conversion of building societies to company status, and even by the way in which the consultative paper came up out of the blue. People were told that it will be a great thing if the Government allow building societies to become companies, when, for many years, they have been functioning satisfactorily as mutualities.

Like my right hon. Friend the Member for Halton, I agree that there is a need for improvement, but there is great danger that if the Government have their way in the new clause this will reduce the potential that is available to the ordinary man or woman to acquire housing finance either for home purchase or improvement. I fully support the points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald).

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It is important that the Labour party adds its voice to the doubts that have been expressed by Conservative Members. Given that the Minister heard so many hostile speeches, and that so many critical doubts were raised on this matter, I would find it surprising if he persevered with this new clause, for which there is no great need. He said that he was open to argument and would listen to it, but as he has not listened to the serious doubts raised in Committee, he will not be listening to the arguments now. He will not be accommodating himself to the views of the House and his party but will be steamrolling the clause through with the backing of the Government's majority. That is wrong.

It is important that the Labour party emphasises its opposition to the nature of this proposal. If the Minister perseveres with it, we shall vote against the new clause. I hope that he will make some accommodation to the doubts that have been expressed. We are talking about a substantial change in the nature of building societies for which no good reason has been given.

I do not see pressure from the building societies for this. I know that some would like to spread out into the financial services sector, but they wish to do so always on the basis of the organisation and principle from which they sprang, the good, sound and extremely important basis of mutual principles. That differentiates them from other predatory financial institutions which are much more the embodiment of organised greed.

Why are the Government allowing this important principle to be undermined? The Minister has given no adequate reason for taking an axe to the whole trunk of the building society movement. That movement involves people who have a habit of thinking in terms of their building society and feeling some participation in it, even if they do not attend meetings and take but little interest. That is important to maintain because it conditions the thinking of the people who run the building societies. We should not like to see their transformation into just another predatory financial institution, working for their own interests and those of organised greed.

In Committee, we argued about whether building societies were Socialism in action or capitalism in action at the level of the ordinary man. The mutual principle means that they are at the level of ordinary man, and we want to keep them there and keep their unique nature. That is a strong reason for voting against the new clause.

Mr. Michael Shersby (Uxbridge): I am disturbed by what I have heard in the debate. I did not serve on the Committee and I came into the Chamber to listen to the debate and speak later. However, I now have some questions to ask my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to which I would like a reply.

Can my hon. Friend give reasons for the policy contained in this new clause? Is it a fact that building societies, on conversion, can be taken over not only by banks and other companies in the United Kingdom but by banks in other countries? If that is so, would we not possibly face, in some years' time, the situation in which the major building societies were owned by a number of dominant banking groups, and the ownership of the societies, taken together with the business that such companies already transact in the market, might produce an even more dominant position?

I am concerned about the possibility that our building societies might be owned by consortia of American or Community banks. The unique feel that the building societies have for most people might then be diminished. What are the reasons for that policy? I was not aware of its inclusion in the Bill when it was originally published, and so I am rather surprised to find ourselves debating it now.

I should also like my hon. Friend to comment on the approval that needs to be given for such transfer by the members. As I understand it, the conversion requires a 20 per cent. vote of which 15 per cent. must be in the affirmative. In many cases, borrowing members of building societies will take the lead from the chairman of that society and from others who recommend a particular course of action. Many of them will cast their votes in accordance with advice, while others will take advice from their professional advisers, whether banks, solicitors, accountants or whoever may advise them. Is my hon. Friend satisfied that, in the event of such a major step being contemplated by a society, the ordinary members of the building societies who not only support them with their savings but depend upon them for their mortgages will be fully informed and able to play an active role in making decisions of this magnitude?

Mr. Ian Stewart: I begin by saying in self-defence to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) that it seemed to me proper to introduce the new clause briefly so that the House could have an opportunity to debate it properly before I attempted to respond to the questions. I am not sure whether he would have been any happier if I had tried to respond to the questions before hon. Members had had a chance to put them. However, my attempt at courtesy to the House has been misunderstood, so I hope that it will accept that that is what I had in mind.

My hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) said that he had recently come into the Chamber and was disturbed by what he had heard. He has every right to be disturbed because the case has been overstated. I recognise the anxieties that have been expressed on both sides of the House, as I recognised them in Committee. The Government have been mindful of the controversial nature of conversion, not only back to the original introduction of the Bill, when we published the discussion document about these proposals, but back to the earlier Green Paper and the earlier stages of the discussion. We need to measure the likely developments of the building society movement against the actual impact of the proposals that are included in the new clauses.

I thought that the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) was fair minded when he said that in practice these would be difficult criteria to meet. One has to accept that the whole debate should be in the context of the fact that these proposals are not meant to be an easy option. They are not proposals that can be lightly nodded through by a few members without the general support of the membership of the societies.

However, I must put the right hon. Gentleman right about one point. The hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill (Mr. Craigen) raised the same point. They said that nobody wants these proposals, that they have been cooked up by the Treasury and that the Government do not have many supporters for them. These proposals were first put forward by the Building Societies Association, of which the right hon. Member for Halton is a distinguished vice-president, in its 1983 discussion paper. In its brief for the Report stage of the Bill, the Building Societies Association says:

"The Association considers that it is necessary to have a procedure by which a building society can convert to another corporate form with the agreement of its members, although it doubts whether many societies will wish to consider this option."

That is probably a fair and balanced assessment of what is likely to happen. The Government's proposals——

Dr. McDonald: Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Stewart: In a moment, when I have finished my sentence.

The Government's proposals have been designed to strike exactly this balance between not making this process impossible and at the same time imposing quite significant requirements. In her opening remarks the hon. Lady was good enough to say that she accepted the fact that I had been under some pressure to make the requirements less stringent but that I had resisted that pressure.

Dr. McDonald: The Minister referred to the BSA report. I think I am correct in saying that in mentioning the 1983 report the Minister was referring to the extremely ambitious Spalding report, which was much modified in later reports by the BSA as to how it viewed the future. The Spalding report was over-ambitious and was very much watered down in later BSA reports. Therefore, it is not fair to take the BSA's Spalding report as a guide. To my knowledge, it has been primarily the Abbey National

[Dr. McDonald]

building society that has favoured conversion status. Belatedly, possibly feeling that it must follow in the footsteps of the Abbey National building society, the Halifax building society has come round that point of view.

Mr. Stewart: I do not want to spend too long on the history of this matter. However, I have been told that it was dreamt up by the Treasury. I have pointed out that it has a longer history and that originally this idea was initiated by the Building Societies Association. I accept the hon. Lady's point that in its latest form the association is not quite so enthusiastic about the idea as it was originally, but that does not mean that the BSA believes that this route should not be open at all. I find myself very much in agreement with the Building Societies Association about this.

I do not think that our proposals are likely to lead to any great rush to conversion. Indeed, I should not have wanted them to be formulated in the way in which they are formulated if that had been the likely consequence. However, I agree with the right hon. Member for Halton and with the Building Societies Association in its note to hon. Members that this is not an option that many societies will want to consider.

In some quarters I have been strongly criticised for making the requirements far too difficult. In other quarters I have been criticised for apparently making it possible for a mad rush to take place by the whole of the building society movement towards conversion. My view is that the truth, as is so often the case, lies in between the two, and that the proposals that we have put forward are realistic. They are not permissive, in the sense that they make it easy for members of building societies to take the decision to convert. At the same time, they are not unattainable.

The hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) suggested that I might have some prejudice against mutual status. That is certainly not the case. The hon. Member for Maryhill asked how these proposals would strengthen the building society movement. I have the same respect for the building society movement as he has. I appreciate the qualities of loyalty and the traditions that have given the building society movement its strength. I do not wish to dismantle all that. Certainly I do not want an Act that I have taken through this House to be on the statute book which would lead to such a consequence. There are many provisions in the Bill which strengthen the concept of mutuality. I do not intend to rehearse them now, but they give members a greater opportunity to take part in the affairs of building societies. They also give members better opportunities to vote on issues than they have ever had under the existing legislation. Therefore, I do not think that I can fairly be accused of doing anything to dismantle the mutual principle. Indeed, I hope that we have given it a new strength and a new lease of life.

6.15 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I still do not follow the argument on the central point of why the mutuality principle should be weakened in any way. We are sending this pristine maiden, the building societies, out into the financial jungle where dangers abound and rapists throng. Why, in any sense, loosen the lock on the chastity belt?

Mr. Stewart: I think that I ought to resist following too far the imagery that the hon. Gentleman has conjured up, particularly in view of the nature of the bidder for Wedgwood, and various other matters that have been brought into the debate.

However, let me reflect for a moment on the point that the hon. Gentleman has raised, because it is important. We have had to face a problem in trying to legislate for the building society movement. I am sure that it is necessary at this stage to have a single legislative framework for building societies. Building societies can be very large, national institutions, or they can be small local or regional societies. Their needs are diverging.

If the option of conversion under certain circumstances had not been available, it would probably have been necessary to draft a Bill that went wider as to the business that can be conducted by building societies as mutual institutions in order to take account of the realities of the situation and of the way in which the financial markets are developing. The building societies must continue to compete in that market. It is no good saying, on grounds of sentimentality, or whatever it may be, that all building societies have been lovely in the form in which they have existed for more than 100 years and that we want them to stay that way, regardless of whether they will be able to attract the necessary funds for future mortgage lending if they stay exactly as they have been for all that time.

We came to the conclusion that it would be right to allow a degree of flexibility within the Bill so that further stages of relaxation and gradual evolution could be permitted over the years and that it would also be right to allow the small and very limited number of societies that might feel they are too much constrained by the legislation —perhaps because they need further capital to compete on the scale on which they are conducting their business —to convert themselves into limited companies and therefore to be able to step outside the framework of building society legislation. That enables us to maintain one regime for all societies. It is a better solution than either constricting societies too much or widening the provisions of the Bill in such a way that many other societies that do not want to convert might then lose their identity and change their nature very much more rapidly than any right hon. or hon. Member would like them to do.

Mr. Heddle: What my hon. Friend has just said does not put my mind at rest. I have listened very carefully to what he said. He says that he respects, but does not believe that he can be persuaded by, the views expressed by hon. Members and me on this aspect, because the Building Societies Association says that if this new clause is carried tonight it will relate only to one or two societies. I do not believe that to be a particularly valid argument. It was Adam who is reputed to have said to Eve, "You know, my dear, we are living in changing times." What may be true today may not be true this time next month. The permission that the House might give to the building societies industry if it passes this new clause this evening is not simply, as I understand it, to allow building societies to change from being mutual societies to public liability companies. That I can live with. I can understand why building societies might wish to do that for the reasons that my hon. Friend has just given. It will enable them to raise capital and meet much more easily the requirements of those who want to buy houses. I stand corrected if my hon.

Friend can persuade me, but I believe that the clause goes much further. It will enable building societies, having become plcs, then to become subsidiaries of multinational conglomerates whose prime function may have nothing whatever to do with the provision of——

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is a Report stage. The hon. Gentleman is intervening to ask a question, not to make a further speech.

Mr. Heddle: I am grateful for that, Mr. Speaker. I was trying to establish whether my hon. Friend had understood the fears and concerns that I expressed earlier. I am seeking clarification and comfort from my hon. Friend on behalf of borrowers and lenders of the Staffordshire building society in my constituency. It just so happens that my constituency chairman is also chairman of the Staffordshire building society. It might find, having been taken over by the London Rubber Company — which also wishes to take over Wedgwood in my constituency — that it is forced into liquidation because the market for rubber gloves in America——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We must get back to the clause. If the hon. Gentleman asks a question, no doubt the Minister will answer it and then we must get on.

Mr. Heddle: My question to my hon. Friend is: what protection will lenders and borrowers of building societies in the United Kingdom have in the event of the clause going through because it will enable building societies, having been converted to plcs, to become subsidiaries of multinational companies, leaving that borrowers' and lenders' link inextricably ruined?

Mr. Stewart: I wonder whether my hon. Friend will permit me to intervene in his speech. I was trying to be accommodating to the House in responding to the point made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell). I said at the beginning that I would try to respond to the points raised in the debate. Most, in fact all, of the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire (Mr. Heddle) have already been made in the debate and, therefore, I shall deal with them. However, I must continue my speech in order to do so.

I was talking about the general question. Although I have not satisfied the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, it is important that building societies should be enabled to respond to changing circumstances. The option of conversion should be open to them provided that the necessary safeguards exist.

I now come to the next general point which was raised in the debate and which my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Staffordshire has now underlined, and that is the terms on which building societies could convert to companies and the safeguards and requirements for support from members to enable them to do so.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) reminded the House, it is necessary in order to pass the resolution for conversion that 75 per cent. of those investing members of a society who vote should vote in favour of it. That is a prime requirement. It is also a prime requirement that more than 50 per cent. of borrowing members should also support such a resolution. That is an innovation in this legislation. Borrowing members have never before had significant rights in building societies, certainly not statutory rights which must apply to all societies. We have carefully introduced this because we think that it is important when considering the possibility of changing the nature of a society from mutual status to incorporation that the borrowers should be happy with what is proposed. In many ways they are much more locked into the society than investing members. That provision has been generally welcomed.

In addition to that, we have a requirement that at least 20 per cent. of the members should vote and take part. The reason for that is that we do not believe that a significant change of the kind that is involved in moving from mutual status to a company should be taken without the active participation of a considerable proportion of members. There has been a lot of dispute about the 20 per cent. As the hon. Member for Thurrock reminded the House, there has been considerable pressure from certain quarters to reduce that figure because it has been described as an impossible hurdle. One should not necessarily go on the basis of experience. I hope that under the provisions of the Bill when enacted building societies will be encouraged to communicate much more frequently with their members. The relationship between the societies and their members will be strengthened by the very fact that societies will be able to offer more services and it will therefore be in their own commercial interests to communicate with members. That is one of the fundamental purposes of the Bill.

The climate in which building societies encourage members to take a greater interest in their affairs means that the threshold of 20 per cent. should be at a level which is higher than that which has been generally achieved in certain merger resolutions in the past. The cultural change which will follow from the implementation of the Act will move in that direction and therefore it is right that the hurdle should be at a level that is not prohibitive but certainly demanding.

Mr. Cockeram: Will my hon. Friend explain the apparent inconsistency in his argument? On the one hand he is putting forward the argument that this fundamental change is desirable and on the other hand he is going on to explain how difficult it will be to bring about that so-called desirable change. If he believes that this is so desirable, surely he should be making it easier. If, on the other hand, he is seeking to make it difficult, why is he introducing it at all?

Mr. Stewart: With great respect, my hon. Friend is putting words into my mouth. I never said that the change itself was desirable. I said it was desirable that there should be an option for that change to take place if members of a particular society wished it to happen. That is a different matter. The level of approval should not be prohibitive and I do not believe that the level of 20 per cent. is prohibitive. Equally, the possibility should not be excluded, and in that I agree with the Building Societies Association.

I must deal briefly with the question of takeover by public companies. That matter has caused a good deal of concern on both sides of the House.

Mr. Oakes: What sort of criteria does the Minister have in mind for a future Government, in co-operation with the commission, varying that 20 per cent. to possibly a much lower figure by negative resolution of either House, which would seriously undermine what we are talking about today?

Mr. Stewart: I can speak only for myself. We have no expectation of altering that figure. I have been under some

[Mr. Stewart]

pressure to say that we would do so and to list the terms and conditions which would encourage us to do so. I do not want anyone, inside or outside the House, to get the impression that that figure is just a cockshy which we expect to change in a few months' time. It is not that at all. We believe that that is the right figure. If in the fullness of time the figure appeared to be wrong, it could be changed, but I do not think that the only factor to take into account would be the percentages achieved in particular cases. In addition to that, we would have to take into consideration the development of the building society movement and whether we wanted to change and make easier this particular form of conversion. As I say, in the foreseeable future we have no intention of doing that.

6.30 pm

Some rather worrying comments have been made by a number of hon. Members about takeovers. They have said that there might be takeovers by unsuitable bodies such as large foreign banks. I draw their attention to the practical provisions that are set out in the clauses and the demanding nature of the figures which are included in them. If there were to be a takeover by a limited company, 50 per cent. of members of a society would be required to vote in favour and not 75 per cent. of members with a threshold of 20 per cent. If I am told that 20 per cent. is unobtainable by those in some quarters, 50 per cent. would be a much more difficult hurdle to surmount. As an alternative, a takeover would have to be approved by the holders of 90 per cent. of the shares of a society, which again is an extremely high figure. It is the same figure as is required to trigger the special resolution procedure for the acquisition of an outstanding minority in the Companies Act in a takeover. As there are so many more shareholders in a building society than in a limited company, the percentage is very much more difficult to meet.

As the Government share the anxieties that have been expressed by some hon. Members and those of the building society movement that predators could move in on them, we have provided that takeovers may take place only in extreme circumstances where the overwhelming body of the members of a society want it to happen, and in practical terms I cannot see any likely prospect of that happening for a long time. Meanwhile, there will be a 15 per cent. minimum on any shareholding for the first five years of a building society's existence as a public company.

Taken together, I think that the proposals strike the right balance. The fact that the Government have been criticised from opposite directions for the measures that we are bringing forward reassures me that we have taken into account all the conflicting views which have been expressed on this difficult and contentious issue. Accordingly, I commend the clause to the House.

Dr. McDonald: I listened carefully to the Minister's reply and he revealed even more greatly his uncertainties about the measure that he is proposing. It has been rightly said by a Conservative Member that, on the one hand, the Minister is committed to allowing this process of change to take place while, on the other, he is uncertain about its usefulness and rightness and is trying to put as many obstacles in its way as possible. I hope that the House will put a proper obstacle in the way of conversion to plc status because the Opposition intend to vote against all the new clauses that will allow that process to take place.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that, on behalf of a number of building societies, I asked whether he would explain the meaning of subsection (4) of new clause 19. When can bribes be paid to people to vote for conversion? Can a bribe be paid only to those with less than £100 in a society? Can it be paid only to those who have been in the society for more than two years? Before we vote on the new clause, we should understand what lies behind it.

When the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) said that the new clause had been bounced in by the Treasury, I did not think that she was referring to conversion, which has been mentioned at times with support by the BSA. Who asked whether a company should be allowed to buy a building society which is mutual? The issue did not come before those who considered the Bill in Committee. That is the answer to those who say that it is a pity they were not members of the Committee. We are faced with a new clause on Report. In Committee, we understood that companies did not have the ability to buy building societies that had not converted. The position in Committee was that once conversion had taken place there could be a takeover. That was because the society had plc status. The position now is that a company can take over a building society, even if it has not converted.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I apologise to my hon. Friend for not responding to his question on new clause 19. I had intended to do so, but I was somewhat diverted by those of my hon. Friends who intervened in my reply. I shall write to the building societies, the BSA and to my hon. Friend on that issue. His other question was fully explained in the consultation document that we put forward in December.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

The House divided: Ayes 229, Noes 148.

Division No. 203] **[6.35 pm**

AYES

Amess, David	Cash, William
Ancram, Michael	Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Ashby, David	Chope, Christopher
Aspinwall, Jack	Churchill, W. S.
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.	Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*	Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*	Clegg, Sir Walter
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*	Conway, Derek
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*	Coombs, Simon
Batiste, Spencer	Cope, John
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Couchman, James
Best, Keith	Cranborne, Viscount
Bevan, David Gilroy	Currie, Mrs Edwina
Biffen, Rt Hon John	Dorrell, Stephen
Boscawen, Hon Robert	Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia	Dunn, Robert
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*	Durant, Tony
Brandon-Bravo, Martin	Eggar, Tim
Bright, Graham	Eyre, Sir Reginald
Brinton, Tim	Fallon, Michael
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon	Farr, Sir John
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*	Favell, Anthony
Bruinvels, Peter	Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Bryan, Sir Paul	Fletcher, Alexander
Buck, Sir Antony	Fookes, Miss Janet
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*	Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*	Forth, Eric

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Goodlad, Alastair
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grounds, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norf'k, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mills, Sir Peter *(West Devon)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, P. *(Belfast E)*
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Viggers, Peter
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Tim Sainsbury and
Mr. Francis Maude.

NOES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Ashton, Joe
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Beith, A. J.
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Rt Hon J.
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cohen, Harry
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Haynes, Frank
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kennedy, Charles
Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mikardo, Ian
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Raynsford, Nick
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rowlands, Ted
Sheldon, Rt Hon R.
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*

Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*	Wilson, Gordon
Wainwright, R	Winnick, David
Wallace, James	Wrigglesworth, Ian
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*	Young, David *(Bolton SE)*
Weetch, Ken	
Welsh, Michael	Tellers for the Noes:
Wigley, Dafydd	Mr. James Hamilton and
Williams, Rt Hon A	Mr. John McWilliam

Question accordingly agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 17

TRANSFERS OF BUSINESS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

'(1) Part I of Schedule *(Transfers of business: supplementary provisions)* to this Act shall have effect for imposing on a building society proposing to transfer its business to a company an obligation to issue statements to its members relating to the proposed transfer.

(2) Where application is made to the Commission for confirmation of a transfer of business to a company it shall, except as provided in subsections (3) to (5) below, confirm the transfer; and Part II of that Schedule shall have effect with respect to the procedure on an application for such confirmation.

(3) Subject to subsection (4) below, the Commission shall not confirm a transfer of business if it considers that—

(a) some information material to the members' decision about the transfer was not made available to all the members elegible to vote; or

(b) the vote on any resolution approving the transfer does not represent the views of the members eligible to vote; or

(c) there is a substantial risk that the successor will not become or, as the case may be, remain a recognised bank or licensed institution for the purposes of the Banking Act 1979; or

(d) some relevant requirement of this Act or the rules of the society was not fulfilled.

(4) The Commission shall not be precluded from confirming a transfer of business by virtue only of the non-fulfilment of some relevant requirement of this Act or the rules of the society if it appears to the Commission that it could not have been material to the members' decision about the transfer and the Commission gives a direction that the failure is to be disregarded for the purposes of this section.

(5) Where the Commission would be precluded from confirming a transfer of business by reason of any of the defects specified in paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* of subsection (3) above, it may direct the society making the transfer—

(a) to take such steps to remedy the defect or defects as it specifies in the direction; and

(b) to furnish the Commission with evidence satisfying it that it has done so;

and, if the Commission is satisfied that the steps have been taken and the defect or defects has or have been substantially remedied, the Commission shall confirm the transfer; but, if it is not so satisfied, it shall refuse its confirmation.

(6) The steps that a society may be required under subsection (5)*(a)* above to take include the calling of a further meeting, securing the variation of the transfer agreement or securing the alteration of the approved protective provisions of the articles of association of its successor.

(7) A failure to comply with a relevant requirement of this Act or the rules of a building society shall not invalidate a transfer of the business of the society; but, if a society fails without reasonable excuse to comply with such a requirement, the society shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale and so shall any officer who is also guilty of the offence.

(8) In this section "relevant requirement", with reference to this Act or the rules of a society, means a requirement of the applicable provisions of this Act or of any rules prescribing the procedure to be followed by the society in approving the transfer and its terms.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 18

REGULATED TERMS: COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF OFFICE, ETC.

'(1) Subject to subsections (2) and (3) below, the terms of a transfer of business by a building society to the company which is to be its successor may include provision for compensation to be paid by the society or the company to or in respect of any director or other officer of the society for loss of office or diminution of emoluments attributable to the transfer.

(2) Any such provision must be authorised so far as the society is concerned as follows, that is to say—

(a) except in so far as paragraph *(b)* below applies, the provision must be approved by a resolution passed as a special resolution, not being one of the requisite transfer resolutions;

(b) if regulations are made under subsection (3) below authorising payments of such compensation within prescribed limits and the provision for such compensation includes only payments of amounts not exceeding the prescribed limits, the passing of the requisite transfer resolutions is sufficient authority for their payment.

(3) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by regulations authorise payments of compensation to directors or other officers attributable to transfers of business under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)* subject to limits specified in or determinable under the regulations and the regulations may make different provision for different classes of person.

(4) Nothing in subsections (2) or (3) above prevents a director or other officer from receiving payments which, in the aggregate, exceed any limit applicable to him under either of those subsections if the excess payment is included in provision approved as required by subsection (2)*(a)* above; but if any payment is received which has not been authorised under paragraph *(a)* or *(b)* of that subsection it shall be repaid.

(5) The power to make regulations under subsection (3) above is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(6) In this section—

"compensation" includes the provision of benefits in kind;

"loss of office" includes, in relation to a director or other officer of a building society holding office in a subsidiary of that society or in an associated body by virtue of his position in that society, the loss of that office; and

"prescribed", with reference to limits on compensation, means prescribed by regulations under subsection (3) above;

and any terms of a transfer of business to which subsection (2) or regulations under subsection (3) above apply are regulated terms for the purposes of section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 19

REGULATED TERMS ETC: DISTRIBUTIONS AND SHARE RIGHTS

'(1) Subject to subsections (2) to (8) below, the terms of a transfer of business by a building society to the company which is to be its successor may include provision for part of the funds of the society or its successor to be distributed among, or other rights in relation to shares in the successor conferred on, members of the society, in consideration of the transfer.

(2) The terms of a transfer of a society's business must—

(a) require its successor to assume as from the vesting date a liability to every qualifying member of the society as in respect of a deposit made with the successor corresponding in amount to the value of the qualifying shares held by him in the society; and

(b) confer a right, subject to subsection (7) below, to a distribution of funds, whether of the society or its

successor, by way of bonus on every qualifying member of the society equal to the relevant proportion of the value of the qualifying shares held by him in the society, and

(c) in a case where the successor is a specially formed company, confer a right on every qualifying member of the society to a priority liquidation distribution by its successor calculated in the prescribed manner so as to represent the extent of his deposit under paragraph (a) above and secured on the property or undertaking of the successor.

(3) For the purposes of the liabilities assumed under subsection (2)(a) above by the society's successor, a member is a qualifying member if he held shares in the society on the day immediately preceding the vesting date and his qualifying shares are those held by him on that day.

(4) For the purposes of the rights conferred under subsection (2)(b) above on members of the society, a member is a qualifying member if he held shares in the society on the qualifying day and was not eligible to vote on the requisite transfer resolution, his qualifying shares are those held by him on that day and the relevant proportion is the proportion which (as shown in the latest balance sheet of the society) the society's total liability to its members in respect of shares bears to its reserves.

(5) For the purposes of the rights conferred under subsection (2)(c) above on former members of the society, a member is a qualifying member if he held shares in the society on the qualifying day, was eligible to vote on the requisite resolution and is a depositor with its successor.

(6) For the purposes of subsection (2)(c) above,—

(a) a right to a liquidation distribution by a society's successor is a right to a distribution of its assets in the event of its being wound up;

(b) the right shall confer priority in the distribution of the assets over all other creditors and members of the company other than those creditors the debts to whom are preferential debts for the purposes of the Insolvency Act 1985; and

(c) "prescribed" means prescribed by transfer regulations.

(7) The Commission may, where it confirms a transfer of a society's business to an existing company, as it thinks fit having regard to what is equitable between the members of the society, direct that no bonus distribution of funds in pursuance of subsection (2)(b) above shall be made or that the amount distributed shall be such lesser amount as it provides for in the direction; and where the Commission gives a direction under this subsection no liability to make such a distribution shall arise or, as the case may be, that liability shall be discharged by payment of the lesser amount.

(8) The following restrictions apply to any distribution of funds, or any conferring of rights in relation to shares, in connection with the transfer of its business from the society to its successor where the successor is a company specially formed by the society, that is to say—

(a) no distribution shall be made except that required by subsection (2)(b) above;

(b) where a distribution of funds is made to members of the society or rights are conferred on them to acquire shares in priority to other subscribers, the distribution shall be made to, or the right conferred on, those members who held shares in the society throughout the period of two years which expired with the qualifying day, and no others; and

(c) where negotiable instruments acknowledging rights to shares are issued by the successor within the period of two years beginning with the vesting date, no such instruments shall be issued to former members of the society unless they are also issued, and on the same terms, to all other members of the company;

and it is unlawful for any distribution of funds to be made or right in relation to shares conferred in contravention of the provisions of this subsection.

(9) Where the successor is a specially formed company, the terms of the transfer must include provision to secure that the society ceases to hold any shares in the successor by the date on which the society is to dissolve.

(10) Any terms of a transfer of business to which subsection (2), (8) or (9) above apply are regulated terms for the purposes of section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*.

(11) In subsections (4), (5) and (8) above, "qualifying day" means the day specified in the transfer agreement as the qualifying day for the purposes of this subsection." —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 20

PROTECTIVE PROVISIONS FOR SPECIALLY FORMED SUCCESSORS

"(1) No company specially formed by a building society to be its successor shall, at any time during the protective period,

(a) offer to the public, or allot or agree to allot with a view to their being offered for sale to the public, any shares in or debentures of the company, or

(b) allot or agree to allot any share in or debenture of the company, or

(c) register a transfer of shares in or debentures of the company,

if the effect of the offer, the allotment or the registration of the transfer would be that more shares or debentures than the permitted proportion would be held by, or by nominees for, any one person (other than the society).

(2) The articles of association of the company shall include provision such as will secure that the company does not offer the public, allot or register transfers of, shares or debentures in contravention of subsection (1) above and no alteration in those provisions may be made by the company during the protective period.

(3) Any provision (including any altered provision) of the company's articles of association which is to any extent inconsistent with subsection (1) above shall, to that extent, be void; and any allotment or registration of a transfer of shares or debentures in contravention of that subsection shall be void.

(4) The Bank of England, if it considers it desirable in the interests of the depositors and potential depositors of a successor to do so, may direct by notice to the successor that this section shall cease to apply to the successor.

(5) In subsections (1) to (3) above—

"the permitted proportion", in relation to shares in or debentures of the company, is 15 per cent. of, in the case of shares, the company's issued share capital and, in the case of debentures, the total indebtedness of the company on its debentures, as the case may be;

"the protective period" is the period beginning with the date of the company's incorporation and ending five years after the vesting date; and

"transfer", in relation to shares or debentures does not include a transfer to a person to whom the right to any shares or debentures has been transmitted by operation of law;

and any expression used in those subsections and in the Companies Act 1985 or, as regards Northern Ireland, the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 has the same meaning in those subsections as in that Act." —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 21

TRANSFER REGULATIONS

".—(1) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by transfer regulations under this section, make provision regulating transfers of business under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*.

(2) Transfer regulations may, in particular—

(a) make provision for and in connection with the transition from regulation by and under this Act to regulation by and under the Companies Act 1985 and the Banking Act 1979;

(b) make provision for the treatment, in the hands of companies taking such transfers, of the property, rights and liabilities transferred and for the modification of any enactment in its application to property, rights and liabilities so transferred;

(c) make provision for the purposes of and incidental to section (*Regulated terms etc: distribution and share rights*) and section (*Protective provisions for specially formed successors*).

(3) The power to make transfer regulations is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(4) Any terms of a transfer of business to which transfer regulations apply are regulated terms for the purposes of section (*Transfer of business to commercial company*).'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 22

CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION

'(1) Where the central office is satisfied, with respect to a building society—

(a) that the Society has been dissolved by virtue of section 82(5), 83(10) or (*Transfer of business to commercial company*) (8), or

(b) that the society has been wound up under the company insolvency laws and dissolved,

the central office shall cancel the registration of the society.

(2) Where the central office is satisfied, with respect to a building society—

(a) that a certificate of incorporation has been obtained for the society by fraud or mistake and that the society is not an authorised society, or

(b) that the society has ceased to exist,

the central office may cancel the registration of the society.

(3) Without prejudice to subsection (2) above, the central office may, if it thinks fit, cancel the registration of a building society at the request of the society, evidenced in such manner as the central office may direct.

(4) Before cancelling the registration of a building society under subsection (2) above, the central office shall give to the society not less than two months' previous notice, specifying briefly the grounds of the proposed cancellation.

(5) Where the registration of a building society is cancelled under subsection (2) above, the society may appeal to—

(a) the High Court, where the principal office of the society is situated in England and Wales or in Northern Ireland, or

(b) the Court of Session, where that office is situated in Scotland,

and on any such appeal the High Court or the Court of Session, as the case may be, if it thinks just to do so, may set aside the cancellation.

(6) Where the registration of a building society is cancelled under subsection (2) or (3) above, then subject to the right of appeal conferred by subsection (5) above, the society, so far as it continues to exist, shall cease to be a society incorporated under this Act (and accordingly shall cease to be a building society within the meaning of this Act).

(7) Subsection (6) above shall have effect in relation to a building society without prejudice to any liability actually incurred by the society; and any such liability may be enforced against the society as if the cancellation had not take place.

(8) Any cancellation of the registration of a building society under this section shall be effected in writing signed by the central office.

(9) As soon as practicable after the cancellation of the registration of a society under his section the central office shall cause notice thereof to be published in the London Gazette, the Edinburgh Gazette or the Belfast Gazette according to the situation of the society's principal office, and if it thinks fit, in one or more newspapers.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 23

LOANS FOR MOBILE HOMES (NO. 2)

'(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, a building society may make mobile home loans to individuals, whether or not they are members of the society.

(2) A mobile home loan is a loan secured by a mortgage of a mobile home, with or without other security.

(3) No such loan shall be made unless the building society, when it makes the loan, is satisfied that—

(a) the borrower or a dependant of his of a prescribed description is or will be entitled under an agreement to which the Mobile Homes Act 1983 applies to station the mobile home on land forming part of a protected site;

(b) the mobile home is for the residential use of the borrower or a dependant of his of a prescribed description;

(c) the amount lent will not exceed the amount likely to be realised on a sale of the mobile home on the open market; and

(d) subject to subsection (4) below, no other mortgage of the mobile home which is to secure the loan is outstanding in favour of a person other than the society.

(4) The requirement in subsection (3)(*d*) above shall be treated as satisfied if the loan is made on terms that the other loan is redeemed or postponed to it.

(5) A building society shall not make a mobile home loan to an individual if the principal exceeds—

(a) the limit for the time being imposed by or under subsection (6) below; or

(b) the balance remaining after deducting from that limit the aggregate of any other sums outstanding in respect of loans made under this section or section 14 by the society to that individual;

and if two or more loans under this section or this section and section 14 are made simultaneously by the society to the same individual they shall be treated for the purposes if this subsection as a single loan of an amount equal to the aggregate of the principal of each of those loans.

(6) The limit on loans to any one individual under this section is £10,000 or such other sum as the Commission may, with the consent of the Treasury, specify by order in a statutory instrument.

(7) Loans under this section constitute class 3 assets for the purposes of the requirements of this Part for the structure of commercial assets and accordingly the aggregate of the amounts outstanding in respect of—

(a) the principal of loans under this section,

(b) the interest on those loans, and

(c) any other sums which borrowers are obliged to pay the society under the terms of those loans,

counts in accordance with section 18 towards the limits applicable to class 3 assets under that section.

(8) The power conferred by this section is not available to a building society which does not for the time being have a qualifying asset holding, but the cessation of its availability does not require the disposal of any property or rights.

(9) The power conferred by this section on a building society, if available to it, must in order to be exercisable, be adopted by the society.

(10) An instrument containing an order under subsection (6) above shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(11) In this section—

"mobile home" has the same meaning as "caravan" in Part I of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960;

"prescribed", in relation to descriptions of dependants of borrowers, means such as are for the time being prescribed in an order under section 12(1) as respects class 1 advances; and

"protected site" has the same meaning as in the Mobile Homes Act 1983.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 24

COSTS, PROCEDURE AND EVIDENCE (NO. 2)

'.—(1) A tribunal may give such directions as it thinks fit for the payment of costs or expenses by any party to the appeal.

(2) On an appeal under section *(Rights of appeal)* (2) the building society in relation to which the determination was made, or upon which the requirement was imposed, shall be entitled to be heard.

(3) The Treasury may, after consultation with the Council on Tribunals, make regulations with respect to appeals under section *(Rights of appeal)*, and those regulations may in particular make provision—

(a) as to the period within which and the manner in which such appeals are to be brought;

(b) as to the manner in which such appeals are to be conducted, including provision for any hearing to be held in private;

(c) for requiring any person, on tender of the necessary expenses of his attendance, to attend and give evidence or produce documents in his custody or under his control;

(d) for enabling an appellant to withdraw an appeal or the Commission to withdraw its opposition to an appeal and for the consequences of any such withdrawal;

(e) for taxing or otherwise settling any costs or expenses directed to be paid by the tribunal and for the enforcement of any such direction;

(f) for enabling any functions in relation to an appeal to be discharged by the chairman of the tribunal; and

(g) as to any other matter connected with such appeals.

(4) A person who, having been required in accordance with regulations under this section to attend and give evidence, fails without reasonable excuse to attend or give evidence shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale.

(5) A person who intentionally alters, suppresses, conceals, destroys or refuses to produce any document which he has been required to produce in accordance with regulations under this section, or which he is liable to be so required to produce, shall be liable—

(a) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years or to a fine or both;

(b) on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding the statutory maximum.

(6) The power to make regulations under this section is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, read the First and Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 25

LIMITED POWER TO ANTICIPATE FUTURE STATUTORY INSTRUMENT POWERS

'(1) This section has effect as regards any power conferred under ay provision of this Act on building societies or building societies of any description by—

(a) an instrument a draft of which has to be approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament before it can be made, or

(b) an instrument which is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament and which defers its operation until a future date;

and in this section "the anticipation date" is, in the case of an instrument falling within paragraph *(a)*, the date on which either House approves the draft and, in the case of an instrument falling within paragraph *(b)*, the date on which it was laid before Parliament.

(2) Every building society or, as the case may be, every building society of the description to which the instrument applies, has, as from the anticipation date, power, for the purposes of the power conferred by the instrument, to do such things, subject to subsection (3) below, as are reasonably necessary to enable it—

(a) to decide whether or not, and to what extent, to exercise (and in the case of an adoptable power to adopt) the power, and

(b) if it decides to exercise the power, to exercise it as from the date when it becomes exercisable by the society.

(3) Subsection (2)*(b)* above does not authorise a society

(a) to make contracts, other than conditional contracts, for the acquisition of land, the acquisition of a business or the acquisition of shares in any company if that company offers the public any service or facility within the power;

(b) to issue invitations to members of the society or the public to apply for any power to be exercised for their benefit; or

(c) to retain shares in a company which offers the public any service or facility within the power;

and, in this subsection, "conditional", in relation to contracts with respect to the exercise of a power, means conditional on the power's becoming exercisable by the society.

(4) The power conferred by this paragraph, and activities carried on under it, for the purposes of an adoptable power are not be treated as included in, or in activities comprised in, that adoptable power for the purposes of paragraph 15 of Schedule 2 to this Act.' *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

6.45 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 383 and 384.

Mr. Stewart: At the risk of tempting providence, I shall say that I hope and believe that this is a less contentious new clause than the one that we have just debated.

The new clause and the related amendments are designed to make it clear that building societies are permitted to undertake preparatory work for the implementation of powers proposed under the Bill, since it received its Second Reading, and under subsequent statutory instruments with a comparable but more limited power of anticipation. Because of the way in which the vires of building societies are defined, I am advised that it is necessary to include a specific provision of this sort in the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Clause read a Second time, and added to the Bill.

New Clause 1

EMPLOYEES REPRESENTATIVE

'Where a building society has more than fifty employees, one of the directors shall be an employee nominated as a respresentative of employees ("employees" representative) in accordance with the society's rules and to which Section 54 does not apply. The rules of the society may impose conditions for the re-election of the employees representative, reasons for disqualification and requisite nomination procedures. The Commission may make such transitional provisions as it considers expedient.'.—*[Mr. Weetch.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Weetch: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The text and scope of this clause make its aims and intentions clear and straightfoward. I hope that the broad aims of the clause will be supported by the House.

The clause makes provision for at least one director on the board of directors to be elected by the employees of a building society, provided that society has more than 50 employees. We are talking about the principle of employee directors.

[Mr. Weetch]

Once that principle is grasped, the rest is administrative apparatus. Thus the new clause makes separate provision for this to be done outside clause 34 which lays down the main framework for elections to boards of directors.

I should like to come to the brass tacks of the case. On many occasions hon. Members have paid tribute to the success of building societies in the cause of owner occupation and in terms of service to the public. I am certain that the Opposition will be supported by hon. Members in all parts of the House. A great deal of the success of building societies is due to the dedicated, efficient and conscientious service that their employees give to the public. Such service is to be found from the counter staff to the most senior levels of management.

The skills and enormous experience of the people who work for the building societies would be invaluable in making the societies' services more available to the public. These are the people who do the day-to-day work and take the day-to-day decisions. They come face to face with the public every day, and they have a feeling for the local communities that they serve. It would be quite in character for building societies to be warmly receptive to the basic idea of this new clause.

Building societies grew up as part of the self-help movement in Britain, and they still adhere to that principle. They are still described as mutual institutions. There was a great deal of reassurance in Committee that the building society movement, although there are changes taking place, still remains firmly part of the mutal framework of Britain. There could be no better demonstration of mutuality than the acceptance of the principle that employees should be elected to and serve the boards of directors of building societies.

It has been said that building societies are entering a rougher and more competitive world. That is certainly true. But one thing is even more certain: that when the changes come the employees of building societies will be the first to take the flak. The new clause will enable employees to face those changes with a great deal more confidence. If takeovers occur and if opposed mergers are successful, there will be redundancies and unemployment, and those things will take place in the name of rationalisation. There will be difficulties, but if employees are directly represented on boards of directors they will be more confident in being able to face those problems and protect themselves. The best way to do that is to ensure that they have a say in strategic and policy decisions at director level.

I move the new clause with some optimism but rather doubtful experience, because when I moved a similar clause on the Trustee Savings Bank Bill some years ago I lost. I hope for better luck this time. The case for the clause is strong. As I have said, building societies are mutual institutions, and I am seeking to establish a democratic and mutual principle. I have read briefs advancing the argument that there is no demand for employee participation at director level. The argument is that, because there is no demand, we ought not to do anything about it. If everything had to be created by demand, few political speeches would ever be made. The argument about demand is not one that politicians can accept.

The idea of employee directors is good in principle, and I hope that the Government will accept it. The Opposition will certainly go into the Lobby in support of the clause because changes of this kind are long overdue, especially in mutual institutions. The staff of building societies have a fundamental interest in the future of their societies, and that should be recognised in the legislation. New clause 1 goes a substantial part of the way towards bringing that about. It is said that if building society employees are elected to boards of directors they will inevitably take a sectional view of the business of building societies. My answer to that is that building society employees, with their record of service to the public, are just as capable as anyone else of taking a broad rather than a sectional view.

There is great strength in this clause. I hope that the House will accept it.

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): I support what has been so ably said by the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). I am glad that the Government are paying much more attention to worker participation, profit sharing and employee share ownership. Surely the natural response to the new clause should be to accept it and agree that in future building societies should make provision for an employee director where the society directly employs more than 50 people. The arguments for that have already been advanced. We discussed it briefly in Committee, although we did not make much progress. I hope that today this proposal will be accepted, and that some thought has been given to it in the interim.

A great change is coming to all building society operations, especially housing financing. Professions, of one of which I am proud to be a member, will have to take a rather different role. Much more commerce will be involved in professions such as chartered surveying and the law. There will be greater competition. Banks and building societies will vie with one another. Building societies can now set up commercial institutions and businesses.

I entirely agree with the hon. Member for Ipswich that the employees of building societies, which may get very big—we shall have much bigger ones yet and probably very few of them—should have a firm stake in their company, with a director on the board. I hope that we shall have a positive response to the new clause. The time for such a move has long since passed.

7 pm

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The arguments have been extremely well and ably made by my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who has taken a close and active interest in the Bill and in the principle of worker representation on the board. I remember the discussions on the Trustee Savings Banks Bill, which he mentioned.

It is important to put the principle into legislation. It is good to see the Government coming round to accepting some of the principles that we have argued for consistently, such as the ombudsman, which they have now accepted. I hope that this is another. It is right that there should be representation. Employees should have a channel of influence and the feeling of involvement that comes from it. They should be able to influence the organisation their way and advance their views. A legacy such as this has been conferred on much of West German industry, and it has worked extremely well. The form is peculiarly appropriate to building societies.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich said, the new clause would extend the principle of mutuality. There

has been a dramatic change in the nature of building societies from the small, intimate, almost paternalistic locally-based organisations at the beginning of the 1960s. There has been an enormous increase in the number of branches, but a rapid shrinkage in the number of building societies. Societies are now much bigger and employ far more people. There are problems of impersonality, remoteness and lack of contact which simply did not exist a couple of decades ago. In view of that change, we should provide the principle of employee representation in legislation. I should like it to be done voluntarily, but that has not happened.

As building societies are becoming much larger financial institutions, employing large numbers of people, we should provide, through legislation, a channel which will ultimately be accepted enthusiastically. I hope that the Government will accommodate themselves to the arguments. It would be rather a shame if the Minister merely played a straight bat, which the smile lingering around his face shows he might be intending to play. I hope that he will accept the force of the arguments — building society employees do.

Sir George Young: I have quickly removed the smile from my face, as I must advise the House not to accept the new clause. It is not that we have anything against the principle of employee involvement. We favour it and have taken several steps to encourage it, but I see no logic in applying the obligation just to building societies and not to companies and other organisations, and I am not convinced that the best way in which to promote employee involvement is to impose statutory obligations such as are suggested.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) rightly said that one of the strengths of the building society movement is its staff. They have strong roots in the local community and are popular. They have achieved that status without the benefit of the new clause. I did not follow the hon. Gentleman's logic which led him to believe that we must now impose a statutory obligation on building societies if that high reputation and commitment are to be maintained.

We have heard no explanation of why such a requirement should be put on building societies but not on companies generally. If we make such provision, it should apply equally across the corporate sector. It is illogical to single out the building societies.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The Minister has accepted exactly this principle in regard to the ombudsman. We did not make that clause extend to every other organisation. Why cannot the logic of that principle be applied here?

Sir George Young: There are ombudsman arrangements for other services. One of the reasons why we introduced an ombudsman service in the Bill was the feeling on both sides of the Committee that there should be a statutory ombudsman service. Such provision is unnecessary in other sectors, as there is already a voluntary service. If other parts of the private sector want to implement the ombudsman principle, the Government would be delighted and would not stand in the way of that being done. We do not accept, however, that the nature of building societies is so different from the rest of the corporate sector that we must single them out and impose on them a statutory obligation of an employee director.

Mr. Michael Latham (Rutland and Melton): My hon. Friend knows that I am a vice-president of the Building Societies Association. Can he confirm that there is another matter that ought to be considered? Not everybody accepts that the best way for the interests of employees to be considered is for one of them to be on the board of directors. The idea is not accepted unanimously by the trades union movement, for example.

Sir George Young: Indeed. As I said earlier, there are two objections. The first is the somewhat narrow one that there is no reason to single out the building societies, and the second, more general one is whether, if one believes in employee involvement — which the Government do — this is the right way in which to proceed. Provisions consolidated in schedule 7 to the Companies Act 1985 require companies with more than 250 employees to report annually on the development of their arrangements for providing regular information to employees, for consulting them and for involving them in the company's affairs. Parallel provisions for building societies could be introduced by the commission's regulation-making powers. I am aware that the present chief registrar, as first commissioner, intends to recommend to the commission that similar provision should be made. Parity of treatment in that way seems entirely desirable.

The Government do not believe that imposing statutory obligations on organisations to have employee representatives is the right way forward. As my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) said, some trade union representatives do not believe that that is the best way in which to proceed. Employees and employers should work out between them arrangements which suit them best. We want to encourage that type of co-operation rather than impose a rigid statutory obligation which may not be appropriate.

Building society employees can always put themselves up for election to the board. A retired employee of the Abbey National got himself elected to the society's board at its annual general meeting earlier this year. That is a perfectly legitimate avenue, which is open to building society employees, to secure representation on the board. The policy of encouragement will be applied as much to societies as to companies — the reporting requirement is evidence of that. For the reasons that I have given, the Government cannot support the case for the new clause.

Mr. Weetch: I am completely unconvinced by the Minister's reply. Although I am saddened by his answer, I am not especially surprised by it. We are meeting the same stone wall on the Floor of the House as we met in Committee.

The Opposition are not singling out building societies in this respect. By adopting this approach we did not intend to saddle all other corporate organisations with the same obligations. When I put this case, I tried to argue that building societies purport to be mutual institutions and that one of the definitions of a mutual institution is that the affairs of the society are under the control of its members at all times. We believe that new clause 1 is the most effective way to bring that to pass.

We hope that the principle of industrial democracy, which we recommend in the clause, will become more widespread as the years pass. We believe that the building societies are a good place in which to make a start to achieve that industrial democracy.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—

[Mr. Weetch]

The House divided: Ayes 135, Noes 209.

Division No. 204] **[7.10 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*
Alton, David
Anderson, Donald
Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Bagier, Gordon A. T.
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Barron, Kevin
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boyes, Roland
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Buchan, Norman
Caborn, Richard
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Campbell, Ian
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Canavan, Dennis
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Conlan, Bernard
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Craigen, J. M.
Dalyell, Tam
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dixon, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Fisher, Mark
Flannery, Martin
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
Freud, Clement
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Haynes, Frank
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Howells, Geraint
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Kirkwood, Archy
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Litherland, Robert
Livsey, Richard
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Maclennan, Robert
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maynard, Miss Joan
Meadowcroft, Michael
Michie, William
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Penhaligon, David
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Randall, Stuart
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Snape, Peter
Spearing, Nigel
Steel, Rt Hon David
Stewart, Rt Hon D. *(W Isles)*
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wainwright, R.
Wallace, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. James Hamilton.

NOES

Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Batiste, Spencer
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Eggar, Tim
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Fry, Peter
Gale, Roger
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Irving, Charles
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*

Robinson, Mark (*Newport W*)
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael (*Scarb'*)
Shelton, William (*Streatham*)
Shepherd, Colin (*Hereford*)
Shersby, Michael
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim (*Beaconsfield*)
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim (*Dorset W*)
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis (*Nuneaton*)
Stewart, Andrew (*Sherwood*)
Stewart, Ian (*Hertfordshire N*)
Stradling Thomas, Sir John
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy (*S'end E*)
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald (*Calder V*)
Thompson, Patrick (*N'ich N*)
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John (*Bridlington*)
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. (*Bexhill*)
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen (*Hertford*)
Wells, Sir John (*Maidstone*)
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George (*Acton*)

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Mark Lennox-Boyd

Question accordingly negatived

New Clause 2

CODE OF PRACTICE

"(1) The Commission shall, after consultation with the Lord Chancellor and the Director-General of Fair Trading, prepare, publish and administer a code of practice with regard to the provision by building societies of conveyancing services.

(2) The code of practice referred to in subsection (1) shall (inter alia) make provision for the manner in which and the standards to which conveyancing services shall be provided by building societies and shall in particular make provision for protecting persons for whom conveyancing services are provided by building societies from conflicts of interest that might otherwise arise in connection with the provision of such services.

(3) Notwithstanding any practice rule made by the Council of the Law Society under section 31 of the Solicitors Act 1974, a building society operating in accordance with the code of practice referred to in subsection (1) above may, subject to such terms and conditions as the Commission may state, provide conveyancing services generally, including the provision of such services to persons to whom advances are made under section 10 of this Act.

(4) A building society not operating in accordance with the code of practice referred to in subsection (1) above may provide conveyancing services, but only to persons other than those to whom advances are made under section 10 of this Act." *[Mr. Weetch.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Weetch: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 409 to 412.

Mr. Weetch: It is nice to see the Solicitor-General in his place. We have crossed swords on this matter before. There was a cold wind of conflict in Committee, but with the new clause I seek to bring a warm breeze of conciliation in an attempt to find a way through some of the difficulties. I hope that when the Solicitor-General replies in the euphemistic prose of the Law Officers he will express some sympathy for what we have to say.

One of the great issues of contention in the Bill has been whether building societies should be able to offer conveyancing services to borrowers. To put it simply, is it safe to obtain a mortgage and a conveyancing service from the same society? The main lines of argument have been debated a number of times both in the Chamber and in Committee. I do not intend to cover the ground in detail again, as the main lines of the disagreement are well marked out.

It remains our view that it is in the consumer's interest that building societies should be able to offer conveyancing services to borrowers. That is the principle of the argument and it is supported by the Consumers Association, the National Consumer Council and the Building Societies Association. In a Consumers Association survey in 1984, 81 per cent. of those interviewed said that they would be pleased to have building societies offering conveyancing services. Many thousands of owner-occupiers throughout the country would like to benefit from such services. It is not a matter of whether the Government or the Opposition want it. The consumer wants it. From the point of view of a consumer or free market society, the consumer is king, and if he or she wants the service that should be the deciding argument.

I will lay out briefly the basic framework of the case. First, there is considerable consumer demand for such a service. Many owner-occupiers would welcome a conveyancing service as part of a one-stop shopping package for housing services.

Secondly, there would be more freedom of choice for the consumer. That argument should appeal directly to the Government. At present, the consumer can choose an independent firm of solicitors. Shortly, he will be able to choose a firm of licensed conveyancers. The choice would be widened considerably if the consumer could use the same people through the medium of his building society.

Thirdly, such a change could lead to lower costs. The conveyancing industry in this country has long resembled the putting out system in the 18th century. Year after year, thousands of documents asking ritual questions are shuffled out from small workshops and thousands of other workshops return the same documents with ritual answers. Building societies offer scope for change with economies of scale and a large throughput of conveyances and mortgages with beneficial effects in terms of lower costs.

The main argument against the proposition has been that conflicts of interests will arise if the recipients of mortgage finance wish to use building society conveyancing services. I accept entirely that conflicts of interest may arise, but it is a quite different matter to suggest that they cannot be resolved, and we contest that argument at every stage.

The new clause seeks to provide yet another guarantee against any possible mal-effects of the very occasional conflicts of interest that may arise. Under clause 33(1) a building society is expressly forbidden to make the use of any conveyancing or other service obligatory because the consumer is in receipt of mortgage finance. Unfair pressure of that kind will be illegal, and the consumer will be totally free to go elsewhere if he or she wishes. That is the ultimate protection in a free market. If one does not want the service, one goes elsewhere. That should be good enough for any of us.

Moreover, the building societies will largely be using solicitors who have an established code of ethics and professional practice to deal with possible conflicts of interest. We are dealing not with fly-by-nights but with

[Mr. Weetch]

professional people who have accepted practices which are ethical. If conflicts of interests arise, therefore, we look to the professional standards of those involved to find ways out of the difficulty. As I understand it, the Law Officers Department says that that is not the position. We beg to differ and we are putting forward a code of practice as a constructive way out of the difficulty.

I point out to the Solicitor-General that in the critical area of the mortgage deed and the terms of finance for the borrower, the same solicitor may already act for the building society and for the borrower in millions of transactions every year, and very few conflicts of interest arise.

7.30 pm

At the end of the day it is an argument not about conflicts of interest but about which organisation is to take the biggest share of the conveyancing market when it is opened up to free competition. The legal profession is trying to protect an established service which has always borne heavily on the owner-occupier.

To explain the basic principle of the clause, we are bending over backwards to meet every objection from the Lord Chancellor's Department. If the proposed code of practice is not right, we shall invite the Lord Chancellor to frame another. We cannot do more than that. The Solicitor-General may argue that it is impossible to frame any code of practice that would resolve conflicts of interest but we beg to differ. Conflicts of interest can be resolved.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: The problem is that there is an inherent conflict of interest if somebody operates for a building society and also for the customer. In the code of practice it would be necessary to say that a solicitor, if he felt that there was a conflict of interest, should refuse to act for both parties. There could be a conflict of interest. Most of us believe that almost all societies are good and fair. But let us suppose that a society put some nasty clauses in its mortgage contract. Would a solicitor tell every customer about that? Would that society employ a solicitor who would tell customers about those nasty clauses? There would need to be a code of practice not for the solicitor but in regard to the mortgage contract. If we could get a sensible mortgage contract which we knew was decent, fair and above board, without onerous resettlement clauses and so on, we could say that that had got rid of the most important conflict of interest because the solicitor would no longer need to comment on the mortgage contract. That is the real conflict. I do not know how the hon. Gentleman's new clause would solve it.

Mr. Weetch: I am grateful for the intervention, because it throws into sharp relief some of the issues that have to be debated. In the latter part of his remarks the hon. Gentleman may have pointed one way forward by proposing certain structural changes. Conflicts of interest do and will arise. Is there a way round them? The main consumer organisations think that there is, and they have put forward suggestions to the Lord Chancellor's Department. Perhaps we shall hear from the Solicitor-General about the to-ing and fro-ing that has been taking place. Consumer organisations and many members of the legal profession are confident that the conflict can be resolved.

The new clause provides for discussions with the Lord Chancellor's Department about what should go into the code of practice in an attempt to find a way out of the difficulties. The Solicitor-General should accept that it shall not be illegal for a building society to offer conveyancing services to a recipient of mortgage finance.

The number of conflicts of interest will be very small, and it should not be beyond the wit of hon. Members to find a way out of the difficulties. Therefore, the new clause is put forward in the constructive hope that the Government will consider the whole point and say that in principle we are right, but they will think about the detail and bring forward a solution at a later stage.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: I speak with a feeling of resignation, because we have been over the ground so many times. The arguments that we have put forward are accurate. I do not want them to be devalued by repetition, but they have to be put forward.

In attempting to stop a building society from doing conveyancing for people who are getting a mortgage from it, the Government are betraying the promises that were held out to me. It is being done on a specious pretext, in a strictly dishonourable fashion. That point has to be reiterated because of the way in which the Government have persevered in their position.

The Bill allows building societies to provide conveyancing services, but the Lord Chancellor has said that the regulations under which a society will be allowed to do so will be so defined that a society will be able to provide conveyancing services only for the customers of other building societies and not for its own customers. The principle is being conceded, but at the same time the Government are specifying that it will be under rules that will make the practice so unattractive that building societies will not do conveyancing. It is a confidence trick to fulfil the principle in such a fashion.

The Government are betraying the promises and pledges given to me by the Solicitor-General and reiterated in the House by the Prime Minister. There is no point in being mealy-mouthed about it. The Solicitor-General promised that building societies would be allowed to do conveyancing for their own customers, not for the customers of other building societies. It was clearly envisaged that that would be part of a comprehensive service provided by building societies. On the basis of those promises, I withdrew my House Buyers Bill early in 1984.

It was clear from the Solicitor-General's speech in Committee that the promises were validly made. I do not think that he has been converted to believe that the promises were wrong or that the practice cannot be conceded. He has simply been overruled by the Lord Chancellor. That is a strong argument for getting rid of that medieval anachronism and having a sensible Minister of Justice answerable to the House.

The Solicitor-General has been put in a difficult and embarrassing position. I sympathise with him, but at the same time he is betraying the promises that were held out to me. He may have been overruled by the Lord Chancellor and is not being allowed to fulfil those promises, but that was not made clear in Committee. He did not say, "I promise this but, of course, I cannot promise anything because my boss, the Lord Chancellor, can immediately tell me that black is white and I shall come to the House of Commons and say that black is

white." Since the Solicitor-General made the promise to me, the Lord Chancellor has begun to use the conflict of interest argument as a way of resiling from the promise.

That process is crude. It is clear that it is the Lord Chancellor and not anybody else who is doing this. Ministers in various Departments and former Ministers have said to me privately, "We know that you are right. It will come; do not get over-anxious and push it too far. It's Hailsham. We cannot do anything about it." Clearly the will of one man is being imposed in an area about which he has little background knowledge or information and for which he has no responsibility. He is arguing that customers of building societies should receive independent financial advice. That is a financial matter, not a legal one.

At the same time, the Lord Chancellor is betraying the Government's policy on competition. We seek to extend the principle of competition through the new clause by allowing more organisations to compete to serve consumers. I should have thought that the whole Government, apart from the Lord Chancellor, were committed to that principle.

That is the position, and it has been brought about by a dirty trick, a betrayal and by dishonourable behaviour by the Lord Chancellor. It is directly in his interests to behave in this fashion. It is possible that the income of solicitors will suffer if they lose conveyancing to building societies, but I do not think that they will. I believe that they will maintain a major share of this expanding and lucrative market.

Why should house buyers subsidise the provision of other legal services by solicitors, as they are being asked to do? Secondly, if the income of the profession suffers, it is the Lord Chancellor's responsibility to make it good by improving and extending the legal aid scheme. It is not our responsibility to give solicitors a feather bed to rely on financially to protect their income from competition. The Lord Chancellor's financial interest is that he is responsible for the allocation of legal aid. He is having difficulty in providing legal aid on the level that he would wish because there is a power in the land superior to the Lord Chancellor — the Treasury — which is saying, "Thou shalt not hand out this money."

Mr. Shersby: Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the provision of legal aid is achieved through a Vote which is not cash limited and which has been growing steadily since legal aid was introduced? Surely he is talking, not about the provision of legal aid as such, but about the fees payable to barristers under the scheme?

Mr. Mitchell: That is right, and the Lord Chancellor is in hot water with the profession over those fees. It is wrong that that influence on the Lord Chancellor should lead him to say, "I shall protect the legal profession from this competition which might affect its income because I cannot make as full provision as I should under the legal aid scheme." The Lord Chancellor has a conflict of interests which is resolved in favour of his profession—the legal profession. His motivation is extremely doubtful.

The conflict of interest argument which has been advanced for not allowing building societies to provide conveyancing services for their customers is spurious. It is only an excuse, and that is widely agreed by most knowledgeable people.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): I am a solicitor, and I have listened with interest to what the hon. Gentleman has said about a conflict of interests in the case of a solicitor acting for both a building society and a borrower. Does the hon. Gentleman think it would be a good idea for a solicitor to act for a client who is buying a house and for the builder who is selling the house? A great deal of money would be saved, but the Law Society does not allow that to happen because, in its wisdom, it believes that there will inevitably be a conflict of interests. If a solicitor acts on behalf of a builder, who may be an important client, he cannot pay proper attention to the individual who is buying from the builder. If a building society employed a solicitor to act for a purchaser, would that purchaser not be put in exactly the same position, and would that not be undesirable?

7.45 pm

Mr. Mitchell: In answer to that I shall cite the reply of the BSA to the Lord Chancellor, who put forward the argument about conflicts of interest. The letter stated:

"the conflict of interest to which you refer arises regardless of the status of the conveyancer (i.e. independent or employed) if he has accepted instructions from both parties to the transaction. While in either case the ultimate paymaster is the borrower, in practice the only way of ensuring that a borrower receives totally independent advice is to incur the cost of separate professional advisers on both aspects of the transaction."

In other words, a conveyancer can act for both parties, in which case there is a conflict of interests, and the Law Society does not stop that. Where a conflict of interests is resolvable in favour of an extra fee for a solicitor, it is permissible, but where it is in favour of an employed solicitor, it is not permissible. The argument folds on that basis and on the reality that people face when buying houses.

The *Which?* survey shows—this fact is demonstrable from all our experiences — that people go first to a building society and subsequently to a solicitor, whom they regard as a type of mechanic. He has a function, but it is less important than securing a mortgage. In most cases the terms of the mortgage are agreed before people go to a solicitor for the subordinate function of conveyancing. We are not talking about a world where people want or get independent financial advice.

In most aspects of the transaction the interests of the lender and borrower are identical. People expect to receive advice as purchasers about the property, but not as lenders or borrowers. Indeed, solicitors are not qualified to give independent financial advice about a mortgage. They do not have the experience, they are not financiers and they are not answerable for their financial advice. It has been argued that people need independent financial advice about a mortgage, but the evidence from surveys is that they do not want it or receive it. Therefore, the conflict of interests argument is specious.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: The problem is not advice on the mortgage as such in the conventional sense. Almost all building societies and banks charge almost exactly the same interest rate. The customer wants and needs advice on the clauses in the mortgage contract because it is like no other contract that any of us ever signs. It does not specify the price of the purchase, but says that the purchaser will be charged an interest rate such as the building society may care to choose at any time during the following 25 years.

I am anxious that the hon. Gentleman should have his way on this matter, if we can resolve this issue. Some

[Mr. Christopher Hawkins]

building societies are charging different rates for old and new borrowers, so there is no safeguard on interest rates. If we could get a code of practice which stated that building societies must charge the same rate to both existing and new borrowers, the client would have the safeguard of knowing that he was being charged the market rate. In that case, I would not mind if solicitors did not comment on the contract, except in so far as some societies build in onerous resettlement clauses so that if a customer does not like his interest rate which may have been pushed higher for existing borrowers, a customer is partially locked in because it is expensive to re-contract.

If we can get round that problem, I would agree with the hon. Gentleman. I wish that he would comment on that because it is a conflict of interest for everyone who signs a mortgage contract, not only for a few.

Mr. Mitchell: That is a wide-ranging problem. It is a problem on which solicitors in independent practice do not give advice to their clients. Why, therefore, should that be singled out as an area in which only employed solicitors working for the building societies have to give advice and in which people are disbarred from turning to those employed solicitors by the conflict of interest in that area. That point is not valid because it applies to all solicitors. What might be valid in the hon. Gentleman's argument is that solicitors can advise on the terms of the mortgage. That is another point. But it is interesting to note from studies carried out by building societies of their customers —the Halifax building society surveyed its customers and, more importantly, its branches—that solicitors do not give advice on the terms of the mortgage. That is the important issue. It is so rare for advice to be given that, for practical purposes, it does not exist. That is another area where a conflict of interest is alleged, but which in practice does not worry people.

I echo the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) that solicitors, whether employed or in private practice, are bound by the practice rules. Those practice rules can and should be used to obviate exactly the problems that have been held out as producing a conflict of interest. It is also important to emphasise that Ministers, especially the Lord Chancellor, have never specified what that conflict of interest is. We are asked to proceed on the basis of assertions and a specious argument which is never demonstrated and never proved. The Lord Chancellor never defines what he is talking about. Pressed to give a definition, he retreats into a cloud of gas and assertion which is never demonstrable. The practice rules will take care of the conflict of interest.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: In Committee, the Solicitor-General defined the conflict of interest in reply to questions from me. He said that a very small conflict of interest was possible over title, but that in practice interest was almost the same for the borrower as for the lender so that it was not significant. But he thought that the serious conflict of interest arose on commenting on the terms of the mortgage. That is the conflict of interest upon which I keep inviting the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) to concentrate, because I believe that it is the sticking point for the Government. Much as I agree with everything that the hon. Member for Great Grimsby has said—I can see that he is upset about not getting the concession that he was expecting—I think that that is a genuine conflict which we must resolve. I have suggested some ways of doing it, but the hon. Member may not agree with those.

Mr. Mitchell: We are agreed that the terms of the mortgage are rarely queried by independent solicitors. Therefore, on the basis of a service that people do not receive, other people will be excluded from a service which would be beneficial, competitive and cheap. There is no more specious argument than that.

On the conflict of interest, I rest my argument on the fact that solicitors do not give independent financial advice and are not qualified to give it. They are not legally responsible for any independent financial advice that they give. Indeed, independent solicitors often have a direct interest in channeling people to a building society with which they have some preferential financial arrangement. That in itself is a conflict of interest. Let us not give the impression that independent solicitors give independent advice and that that can be used as an excuse to say that people going to a building society should have independent advice. They will not necessarily get it from independent solicitors.

The arguments about conflict of interest are specious. However, the Lord Chancellor stands bloody but unbowed at the end of the arguments still asserting what he cannot prove and will not demonstrate. He sits there like a garrulous Buddha making assertions about a conflict of interest which, for practical purposes, does not exist on any serious scale.

The Solicitor-General made a charming speech in Committee, the gist of which was that this matter can be considered later. The message I received from that was that, in two years' time, when we have a sane or a different Lord Chancellor, the Government will fulfil the promises that they made. That is not good enough. We have a chance to do it now in the Bill, in terms which entrench the proposal by the building societies for a code of practice. I want a code of practice for the estate agency side of building societies. I certainly want it to be established for the conveyancing side of building societies. It is a chance to cover all the points that the Solicitor-General would want covered—even those points that the Lord Chancellor might want covered—in a clear and defined form which allows the solicitors to operate for the building societies.

I shall not quote the code of practice, because it has been circulated to hon. Members, but it provides that the customer shall be warned off in certain circumstances, that the solicitor shall give a precise definition of the services that he provides, what he is doing and what he is not doing, that he shall specify the fees and the charges and that, in some cases, he shall not act. The suggested code of practice could be rewritten. It might be the basis for a better code of practice. It could be expanded and better defined. We are arguing simply that we should write it into the Bill so that we can set down a respectable and effective code of practice.

The Lord Chancellor holds out some prospect of that in his letter to the building societies. I hope that it is not just a fob-off. He says:

"This need not be the end of the matter."

He also stated that it might be possible

"to overcome the difficulties which concern me . . . The best way forward is to continue work on a code of practice in the context of work on those rules."

If the Lord Chancellor is of that opinion, we should be obliging him in the Bill by specifying a code of practice which can be worked out subsequently.

I hope that we can pass the proposal, which concedes what the Lord Chancellor wishes, because it opens the way to the important principle of competition to serve the consumer. That is all that we are trying to get. Here is an expanding market in which house prices are increasing and in which the fees payable are increasing, in which much money is flowing into the market and in which we need competition to serve the consumer. We need competition for shares of that expanding market. It is wrong that solicitors should be feather-bedded by the exclusion of the competition from building societies in an area where, if building societies were allowed to operate, they could provide a comprehensive service such as solicitors should provide.

Following the pattern of Scotland, English solicitors are setting up solicitors' property centres. I welcome that. It is a beneficial development and an important advance. I am glad to see solicitors competing for their share of the cake. I am sorry that the Law Society is so laggardly in its rules.

Mr. Favell: Is the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) interested in allowing only building societies to act for both parties, or is he in favour of banks also acting for borrowers? I remind him that there have been some unfortunate incidents involving banks. Would he be happier if consumers were represented by solicitors also acting for Johnson Matthey? Would he be happy for estate agents selling a house also to employ a solicitor to act for their purchaser? Would he be happy for solicitors to act for both parties? Would he be happy for licensed conveyancers to act for both parties? All those instances would save money, but they would not protect the public.

Mr. Mitchell: In answer to that valid point, I must say that I am in favour of maximum competition and of people competing to serve the consumer comprehensively. The proposal for banks to do conveyancing came not only from me but from the Government. It was the Government's proposal that banks and building societies should be allowed to do conveyancing using employed solicitors for the range of property, registered and non-registered. My Bill restricted it to registered property. In this instance, we are talking only about building societies.

The principle of competing to provide a comprehensive service is valid. I should like solicitors to provide a comprehensive service through their property centres and estate agents through having employed conveyancers. Building societies should provide a comprehensive service by entering all aspects of house provision. I must emphasise that that is important, as it stops the drift of building societies into becoming big financial institutions. If the road to provide a comprehensive service to the house buyer is barred by the Government or the Lord Chancellor's whim, they will be forced much more in the direction of financial institutions and away from the prime and original purpose, which is service to the house buyer. That is what I want to see. Therefore, I want comprehensive competition. I do not see why building societies should have to face it with a ball and chain tied round their leg by Lord Hailsham when the solicitors can provide property centres, and the estate agents can do conveyancing.

8 pm

The costs of conveyancing have come down substantially with the advent of competition. However, it is a rich market and I want to keep the pressure up. The consumer has no responsibility to provide, in any guaranteed way, an income to the legal profession for other aspects of legal business. There is every reason for expanding competition. What we are arguing for today will undoubtedly come. Even Lord Hailsham cannot hold back the tide of progress for ever. We should take the opportunity to allow competition on a sane, sensible and regulated basis which takes care of so many of the unrealistic fears which have been voiced by Lord Hailsham.

This is an argument on which right and honour are entirely on the side of the change we are proposing in this new clause. It is not right for the Government to behave in this fashion. It is dishonourable to betray the word they gave me as a Back Bencher. There are other important issues at stake. All the opinion polls show that people want the building societies to be able to provide a comprehensive service. The consumer organisations, which are there to protect the consumer and speak for them, want it and they say that there is no problem. The building societies want it and can provide economies of scale and can use their computers and provide the kind of comprehensive service that the house buyer wants. Real competition and a genuine improvement in the range of choice to the consumer requires that comprehensive service. I can see no logic in the Government's position if they refuse the proposal.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: It is unfair of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell), in his undoubted enthusiasm and sincerity, to say that the Lord Chancellor is guilty of just a whim. I believe that when the Government gave the pledge they meant to honour it and they have now looked into the problem in more detail and it has turned out that serious problems are involved.

As the hon. Member for Great Grimsby knows, in principle I am strongly in favour of what he wants, but I have bumped into the conflict of interest. I should like to explain briefly why solicitors have never looked at mortgage contracts in detail, although they should. Perhaps the hon. Member for Great Grimsby will ponder on the fact that until recently we had a cartel of building societies of which many people disapproved. I did not disapprove because, since they were mutual friendly societies and non profit making, it was fine by me if they jointly set the interest rate. If they had been using the cartel to stuff up the interest rate to make vast profits and had been profit maximising plcs, then, of course, I would have been against the cartel. However, a cartel operating in a mutual society movement is nowhere near as bad as a cartel in a profit maximising environment.

The solicitors were faced with the fact that the building societies were a cartel. They fixed a common interest rate and, crucially, until recently building societies always charged the same interest rate for their existing borrowers and their new borrowers, which was the cartel rate. Therefore, why should a solicitor bother to look at a contract where the interest rate was set to suit the market at the time? Even if the contract said that the borrower would be charged such rate as the building society may choose from time to time, in practice, every solicitor knew that that meant the borrower would be charged at the cartel

[Mr. Christopher Hawkins]

rate. Therefore, solicitors got used to not bothering too much about the mortgage contract. Incidentally, given that the suppliers of mortgages have been praised by all parties in the House while they have been mutual societies operating specifically to help home ownership, there was probably little need for the solicitors to feel that they were dealing with a bunch of crooks who might be trying to rip off the customer.

However, we are now introducing a Bill in an age when the cartel has gone and where a number of building societies, I am sad to say, have started the practice of cutting the interest rate for new borrowers only and leaving it up for existing borrowers. That means that one could be heavily penalised in a way that is not specified in the contract. It should be pointed out that the contract does not safeguard a borrower from building societies charging two different interest rates. I would prefer the Government to have a mortgage Bill that stopped that nasty practice.

In addition, we should get rid of onerous resettlement clauses. If one is locked in by the higher interest rate for the existing borrower and there is also a big penalty for settling early, one cannot re-contract and become a new borrower at a lower rate with a different society. If we got rid of those practices, I would go all the way with the hon. Member for Great Grimsby and say that I could not care less whether solicitors looked at the mortgage contract. However, we do not have those safeguards.

I have suggested to the building society movement that it should have a code, of practice on mortgages. If the movement produced such a code, I do not believe that the Solicitor-General would now be having to get up to make the speech that we all know that he is about to make. He said in Committee that the only major conflict of interests that needs to be resolved is the mortgage contract.

The hon. Member for Great Grimsby and the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) cannot get away with saying that that is a minor conflict or that it relates to only a few borrowers. In the new competitive environment that we are creating, where the mutuality and charity status of the movement may become a more bracing and competitive attitude, we cannot be sure that mortgage contracts will always be as if they were guided by a cartel in a charity or mutual type movement. We are going into a different world. Whatever solicitors have done in the past, they must start looking at the mortgage contracts that they are letting their customers sign.

The Lord Chancellor is not asked to do what the hon. Member for Great Grimsby says and ask what solicitors are doing—we all know that they have not been looking at mortgage contracts. The Lord Chancellor's job is to ask what they should be doing. They should be looking at the mortgage contracts and they should not operate where they have a conflict of interests.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman is saying that there is an argument for requiring solicitors in independent practice to give financial advice to customers who come to them to arrange conveyancing. That is not being proposed. His argument put forward on the differential interest rate is valid whether employed solicitors do conveyancing or not. Therefore, it is irrelevant to his point.

Mr. Hawkins: I agree that it would be nice to get rid of the dual interest rate problem and the onerous resettlement clauses whether or not building societies do conveyancing. However, my point is still valid. Suppose all building societies had identical contracts, which I am not proposing, which had been scrutinised by the Lord Chancellor, the commission and every consumers' association and had been declared marvellous contracts and we knew that they would always charge the same interest rate, none of us would want the solicitor to bother to read the mortgage contract. Because there is a possibility of nasty clauses turning up in the mortgage contract, I believe that the Lord Chancellor has to say that it is the solicitor's duty to look at the contract, not in order to give financial advice, but to give legal advice to tell borrowers what the contract legally locks them into. At the moment, borrowers are locking themselves into a 25-year contract which does not specify the price they will pay. I do not believe that any of us should allow that. I should be delighted if the Government would take action to make each institution charge old and new borrowers the same interest rate and not have onerous resettlement clauses. Therefore, if people were ripped off they could re-contract at low cost.

I shall read part of the Building Societies Association's code of practice which is fairly hilarious. All hon. Members have received immense help from the Building Societies Association. As a result of its advice, the Bill has been dramatically improved. The following part of the association's code of practice makes the Lord Chancellor's case far better than I am able to do:

> "If the conflict of interest is in respect of a matter which, in all the circumstances, is not of a minor character, the employed conveyancer shall forthwith cease to act for the client."

If a conflict of interest is not of a minor nature, the association's view is that its own solicitors should not act for the client. We are not talking about a minor conflict of interest. We are talking about a 25-year contract that people sign to purchase probably the most expensive object they will ever buy. Some people spend nearly half their annual income on mortgage repayments. We cannot say that there is no conflict of interest when a solicitor says, "Sign this contract which has been dished out by my employer. The contract is perfectly all right, but it does not specify the interest rate and it has a few onerous resettlement clauses which I shall not mention, because my employer would fire me if I did so."

The Solicitor-General (Sir Patrick Mayhew): I thank the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) for his kind welcome to me in the debate. I return the compliment by saying that we have crossed swords on the topic on a number of occasions, but I have always welcomed and admired not only the dexterity of his attacks but the unfailing courtesy in which they have been expressed. I am grateful for the manner in which he moved the new clause. We are on interesting ground, but it is ground that has been thoroughly surveyed in Committee. Therefore, I believe that my response to the debate can be more succinct than otherwise would be necessary and courteous.

The Government's amendments are further positive evidence of the fact—as the Lord Chancellor, myself and other members of the Administration have repeatedly asserted—that the Government are strongly in favour of legislative progress towards integrated house buying services, subject only to the proper and sensible safeguarding of the customer against becoming the victim of a serious conflict of interest.

What distinguished the speech of the hon. Member for Ipswich from the much longer speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) was that the hon. Member for Ipswich acknowledged that a conflict of interest can arise. I found it hard to discern in the speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby any recognition of that fact. When there is a conflict of interest with a solicitor offering services to a customer of his employer, there is a divided loyalty.

8.15 pm

The Government's amendments are designed to bring the sole practitioner within the scheme of schedule 17, whereby the Lord Chancellor may make recognition rules in respect of those to be permitted to carry out conveyancing services. Under the Bill as drafted, the sole practitioner was omitted. That point was raised by the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) in Committee, and I promised that the matter would be considered. I am glad to say that the amendments are the result, and I hope that they find favour with the House.

I can offer the House further evidence and confirmation of the Government's policy in favour of moving towards integrated house purchase services. In December last year, we announced that consultations were to take place on the questions whether conveyancing services might be provided by subsidiary companies to lending institutions, and whether estate agents should be permitted to offer a combined house purchase and conveyancing service to vendors. Those consultations are now complete. In consequence, the Lord Chancellor has decided in principle that, subject to satisfactory safeguards, both subsidiary companies and estate agents should be allowed to offer conveyancing services. The nature of the safeguards that will be needed will be considered carefully by him when he makes the recognition rules under the provisions of schedule 17.

The kind of provision that might feature is a code of practice to prohibit preferential pricing arrangements of the kind so vividly alluded to by my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins), who knows so much about the subject and speaks without being vulnerable to the charge that he is yet another lawyer out to protect his cosy monopolies.

The new clause requires the commission to prepare, publish and administer a code of practice to cover the provision of conveyancing services by building societies, to be made after consultation with the Lord Chancellor and the Director General of Fair Trading. Societies operating in accordance with such a code would be able to provide conveyancing services to their borrowers.

I take minor issue with the speech of the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. On more than one occasion he spoke of the code. The new clause does not specify a code. No doubt, the hon. Gentleman had in mind the revised code already alluded to which was offered to the Lord Chancellor by the Building Societies Association. I shall say something about that in a moment. The new clause does not specify a code. It makes provision for a code to be provided by the Building Societies Commission.

I turn to the draft code that was kindly provided to the Lord Chancellor by the chairman of the BSA last month. It is a revision of a code which was first put forward in the middle of last year. I shall quote a passage from a letter that the Lord Chancellor sent to the chairman, Mr. Cox, on 16 May, because it succinctly says what I wish to say in answer to the debate. The letter states:

"The adoption of a suitable code of practice may well be the best way of avoiding problems of conflicts of interest. I have seen your code and, while I think there is much to praise and a clear determination to protect the public, I am not at present satisfied that it yet overcomes the inherent problem of a conveyancer serving two masters.

I believe that it is somewhat unrealistic to expect a conveyancer to give advice in the best interests of both parties. The relationship between borrower and lender is one in which the interests of both can all too easily be at odds. Where this happens, both require an advisor who can tell them what they ought to do, not one who is 'impartial' or who is giving one party advice which is entirely against the best interests of the other. The code seems to leave the clients without an advisor at the one point in the transaction where, if a conflict does arise, he most requires this service."

The Lord Chancellor in his letter to the chairman made the point that my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak has just made. He said:

"The distinction between a 'major' and 'minor' conflict is, moreover, somewhat puzzling. It is not clear what is 'major' and what 'minor' or, indeed, who should take the responsibility of advising the borrower on such matters. There seems to me scope here for delay and complexity.

I am sorry to write in such terms, but I think you appreciate the difficulties I have over this. I do not at present think that this code does overcome the problem of a conflict of interest. I should make it clear, however, that this need not be the end of the matter. Clause 101 and Schedule 17 of the Building Societies Bill are deliberately drafted in wide and flexible terms. No amendment to the Bill would be required to enable a code to be used if it proves possible to overcome the difficulties which concern me. All that would be needed would be an amendment to the recognition rules. The content of these rules is very far from settled and I am sure the best way forward is to continue work on a code of practice in the context of work on those rules."

In that passage from the Lord Chancellor's letter, the House will be unable to recognise the machinations of an unscrupulous protector of his profession's cosy monopolies which were conjured up by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby. If I did not know the hon. Gentleman as well as I do, and if the House did not know the amiable way in which he invariably addresses it, I should feel, on behalf of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, a certain fleeting resentment at some of the expressions that the hon. Gentleman applied to him. But I let that pass.

From the passage that I have read from the Lord Chancellor's letter to the chairman of the BSA, it is plain that the Lord Chancellor is motivated by one concern alone —that the Government's desire to enlarge competition should not be fulfilled at the expense of the proper interest of the customer in not becoming the victim of a serious conflict of interest.

In view of what has been said, I feel obliged to cite again some of the examples that I gave in Committee of where the need for separate advice may arise in practice. I used examples that were provided by the chairman of the Luton and Dunstable Law Society, including one involving mortgage terms. One example given by the Luton and Dunstable Law Society was as follows:

"That draft mortgage Deed contains a provision that the loan of £86,250 would carry a rate of interest of either . . .

(i) a rate of interest higher by 6 per cent. than the base lending rate from time to time of the National Westminster Bank plc or

(ii) the rate notified in writing by the company to the borrower." — [*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 20 February 1986; c. 479.]

In other words, in this case the life assurance company had an open-ended ability to charge what it liked. I happily

[The Solicitor-General]

believe that the number of such instances would be small although not negligible, but the customer must be protected from the divided loyalty of the solicitor or licensed conveyancer who is employed by the building society or bank. It is not a matter of conjuring up fantasies. We must have regard for what happens in real life.

In Committee, I also referred to a letter published in the *Daily Mail* from a manager of a branch of Lloyds bank. He said:

"I am the manager of a small branch of Lloyds. In the past five years I have seen the job changing from that of a general financial adviser to that of a salesman of Lloyd's products.

This is not to say that I doubt their worth, but increasingly I have difficulty in giving impartial advice when I am all the time looking to achieve business targets.

So far I think I have been able to achieve a happy compromise, but as I am under increasing pressure to sell 'in-house' products, especially insurance, the impartiality is bound to disappear. By far the worst aspect of this is that the financially less aware will have nowhere to go for advice which will be truly impartial—everyone will have an axe to grind."

That would be just as true of a solicitor employed by a building society that is in competition with others.

Mr. Christopher Hawkins: As my hon. and learned Friend knows, I entirely agree with the point about the conflict of interest over a mortgage contract. But does he agree that we could get rid of that conflict of interest by having a code of practice on what mortgage contracts should contain?

The Solicitor-General: That is an interesting suggestion. It falls outside my exceedingly limited field of ministerial responsibility, but I shall ensure that it is passed on and considered in the right quarter. However, I agree that that is where the conflict of interest principally arises.

There is great merit in the way in which the Bill is formulated. Schedule 17 empowers the Lord Chancellor to do three things: to make rules for the purpose of recognising institutions as being suitable to undertake the provision of conveyancing services and to recognise institutions under those rules; to exempt them from the present restrictions on persons who can undertake conveyancing; and to impose conditions on those institutions with which they must comply to remain recognised.

Following our consultation, we felt that we could not in all conscience sweep under the carpet serious warnings about a conflict of interest and legislate as though that consultation had never taken place. That would have been dishonourable.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: Will the Solicitor-General give way?

The Solicitor-General: I shall give way in a moment. The hon. Gentleman took me to task for having said to him in February 1984:

"We will shortly issue a consultation paper on how best to ensure that conflicts of interest and anti-competitive practices do not arise when solicitors employed by banks, building societies and other organisations are permitted to undertake conveyancing for their employers' customers. We hope to bring forward legislation permitting building societies to offer the service next Session." — *[Official Report,* 17 February 1984; Vol. 54, c.347.]

It is abundantly plain, and must have been at the time, that if that consultation threw up advice to the effect that it was impossible to overcome conflicts of interest in all circumstances where the solicitor's employer was lending money, it would be dishonourable to proceed.

Mr. Austin Mitchell: It was also dishonourable for the Government to say that they hoped to bring forward legislation. The intention was clear. Can the Solicitor-General cite any instance of a conflict of interest that was not known at the time that he promised me that building societies would be allowed to do conveyancing through employed solicitors?

The Solicitor-General: It was our intention to introduce legislation. We are not sufficiently arrogant about our confidence in our right thinking to say that, whatever consultation throws up, we shall not be influenced by it. We live and work in the hope that we may be able to overcome these difficulties. The Lord Chancellor's letter makes that clear. Meanwhile, the task is to press ahead with the hard work on the rules, consulting the BSA and others, with a view to bringing them into force with the minimum delay.

Although I regret not being able to commend the new clause to the House, I hope that my explanation—which has taken longer than I intended because I felt obliged to answer the points raised—will lead to the motion and clause being withdrawn.

Mr. John Whitfield (Dewsbury): I should declare my interest in the debate. I am a practising solicitor, and, although I do not engage in much conveyancing, I obviously have an interest in the matter.

It is extraordinary that more of my professional colleagues have not spoken in the debate. Apparently none served on the Committee, and that was also extraordinary. As a profession, I believe that we have much to be proud of, and that is at the heart of this debate. The problem is that the consumer is in danger of being sacrificed on the altar of competition. The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) said that the consumer was king and that if he demanded it he should have the right to have it. I shall explain why that is a strange proposition.

Principally, we are concerned about conflicts of interest. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) belittled this concept and seemed to be saying that conflicts of interest can be got round, avoided or somehow rubbed out. That cannot be true. They cannot be overcome simply. Warning consumers that conflicts of interest exist does not mean that they will go away. No amount of warning in this day and age is sufficient for the majority of consumers. They want to buy a house and they have set their heart on one. They want as large a mortgage as they can possibly get, possibly more than they can afford, and warnings will not prevent them from going ahead with the transaction.

8.30 pm

Perhaps the most vivid example is the conflict of interest between banks and customers on the making of wills and the appointing of executors. Surely no customer would appoint a bank to be an executor if he knew how much it would cost—it is usually 5 per cent. of the assets in the estate. Despite that, time after time, perfectly straightforward estates are complicated by the involvement of banks and the extortionate—there is no other word for it — charges that banks make for the administration of wills.

Competition is there to serve the consumer, and it is the Government's responsibility to see that that is the case and that competition does not become a god in its own right. The hon. Member for Great Grimsby said that my profession has been featherbedded against competition from building societies. To give him some credit, his initiative in the House Buyers Bill has made a fundamental change in the profession. Solicitors engaged in conveyancing are not featherbedded against competition from their own colleagues, and we are not afraid of competition from building societies. I doubt whether building societies will do conveyancing for less than solicitors are prepared to charge, and this is one of the sectors in which the consumer will be duped. He will be offered a package of an all-in loan which will cover his costs, and he will not know what the costs are. By the time that he has finished paying for the conveyancing, he will have paid many more times what he would otherwise have paid.

Another charge made by the hon. Member for Great Grimsby is that solicitors are not liable for advice that they may give on financial matters. Nothing can be further from the truth. We are men of affairs and give advice to clients on the full range of aspects of house buying, and we are liable personally for that advice. If it turns out to be wrong, we are personally liable to reimburse the client.

Various uncomplimentary statements have been made about my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor. My hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General has already rejected them, as we must. My noble Friend has a tremendous record of looking after the profession, and he is the last man who would stand in the way if he believed that what was proposed was right.

It has been alleged that solicitors are simple mechanics in the matter of house transfer, but this is inaccurate. A solicitor advises as to the suitability of the property for the buyer. He advises as to the terms of the contract, and all the flak that has been thrown at my profession about sending out inquiries that do not mean anything before contract is largely unfounded. The solicitor advises as to the financial aspects of buying a house, on the terms and on the cost of the mortgage. There can be no question of the enormous institutions that building societies are becoming giving the detailed personal independent advice through their employed legal people that is offered by independent solicitors.

How can a solicitor employed by a building society, who has his business targets, possibly have the time, patience, inclination or financial incentive to give independent advice to borrowers? All these are major matters, and even if the building societies' code which would make it necessary for the building society solicitor to send the customer elsewhere were to be implemented, as my hon. Friend the Member for High Peak (Mr. Hawkins) suggested, that would be unlikely to happen. How can the building society solicitor become involved with the detailed administrative arrangements of a house purchase and sale transaction? He will not have the time and inclination. All that he will be interested in is processing as many loans as possible in as short a time as possible. The borrower, the consumer, will be the sufferer.

We should protect the independence of the legal profession. It is a vital institution in any civilised society. In-house conveyancing does not cost the public any more. It is probably already costing the consumer a great deal less than he would pay a building society if the new clause were adopted.

There is some pressure on me to sit down, so I shall end my speech by saying that I wholeheartedly support the anxieties of my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor about conflicts of interest and that I agree with the provisions of schedule 17. They will bring a tremendous wind of change to the profession, and the prospect of that has already brought some improvements to the profession. The Law Society has done its best, but it cannot keep things in the same way as they have always been. It has tried to do that, and that has been its failure. We have to admit that. The consumer must be protected, and it is the Government's responsibility to provide that protection. It is clear that the hon. Members for Great Grimsby and for Ipswich will not provide it.

Mr. Weetch: Parts of the debate have been entertaining. I thank the Solicitor-General for his reply, although I am not sure whether to glean any comfort from it. I never am when I have replies from lawyers. Such replies are like mounting the Alexandine steps, which, as hon. Members will know, are a mirage. They appear to be going upwards, but when one treads on the steps one finds that they are, inevitably, going downwards. I suspect that that is what has happened in this case.

The new clause will not do anything revolutionary. Solicitors conveyance property, and in a short time licensed conveyancers will be doing so as well on their own account. Suddenly, it is said that if we put the same class of person behind a building society plate glass window the whole conveyancing world will collapse because of the conflicts of interest that are not capable of being resolved. I reject that argument.

The Government have created a new competitive world in financial institutions. I am glad to see it, because it could have done with some more competition, goodness knows. Building societies are in a new competitive world. If they engage in ripping off the consumer through conflicts of interest, they will not survive in the new competitive climate. That, at the end of the day, will be the answer to the problem. Conflict still remains. I do not accept the Solicitor-General's reply, however hard he tried to bring some comfort to us. Therefore, I shall divide the House.

Question put, That the clause be read a Second time:—
The House divided: Ayes 114, Noes 225.

Division No. 205] **[8.39 pm**

AYES

Abse, Leo	Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*
Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	Campbell, Ian
Anderson, Donald	Campbell-Savours, Dale
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Canavan, Dennis
Ashton, Joe	Clarke, Thomas
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Clay, Robert
Bagier, Gordon A. T.	Cleiland, David Gordon
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Barron, Kevin	Conlan, Bernard
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony	Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Corbett, Robin
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Craigen, J. M.
Bermingham, Gerald	Cunningham, Dr John
Boyes, Roland	Dalyell, Tam
Brown, Gordon *(D'f'mline E)*	Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*
Brown, Hugh D. *(Provan)*	Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Buchan, Norman	Deakins, Eric
Caborn, Richard	Dewar, Donald

Dixon, Donald
Dobson, Frank
Dormand, Jack
Douglas, Dick
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Eadie, Alex
Eastham, Ken
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Ewing, Harry
Fatchett, Derek
Faulds, Andrew
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foster, Derek
Foulkes, George
George, Bruce
Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Godman, Dr Norman
Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Home Robertson, John
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Janner, Hon Greville
John, Brynmor
Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Leadbitter, Ted
Leighton, Ronald
Lewis, Ron *(Carlisle)*
McCartney, Hugh
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKay, Allen *(Penistone)*
McNamara, Kevin
McWilliam, John
Madden, Max
Marek, Dr John
Marshall, David *(Shettleston)*
Martin, Michael
Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Maxton, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Michie, William
Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
O'Brien, William
Park, George
Patchett, Terry
Pendry, Tom
Pike, Peter
Radice, Giles
Redmond, Martin
Rees, Rt Hon M. *(Leeds S)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Rogers, Allan
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, Rt Hon J. *(M'ds E)*
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Thomas, Dafydd *(Merioneth)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Thorne, Stan *(Preston)*
Tinn, James
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Wigley, Dafydd
Wilson, Gordon
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Alton, David
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Ashby, David
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruce, Malcolm
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buck, Sir Antony
Budgen, Nick
Carlile, Alexander *(Montg'y)*
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Conway, Derek
Cope, John
Couchman, James
Cranborne, Viscount
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Dykes, Hugh
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Fry, Peter
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Heddle, John
Henderson, Barry
Hickmet, Richard
Hicks, Robert
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holland, Sir Philip *(Gedling)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Howells, Geraint
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lightbown, David
Lilley, Peter
Livsey, Richard
Lord, Michael
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
MacKay, John *(Argyll & Bute)*
Maclean, David John
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Morrison, Hon P. *(Chester)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Newton, Tony
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Pawsey, James
Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Penhaligon, David
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Porter, Barry
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shersby, Michael
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Trippier, David
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Wainwright, R.
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 26

COMPETITION

'A building society shall not seek to lend money to a member where that member has sought a loan from another lender or finance broker and where that lender has sought the society's permission to register a second charge with the Land Registry.'.—*[Mr. Shersby.]*

Brought up, and read the First time.

Mr. Shersby: I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss new clause 27—

Prohibition on second charge—

'A building society shall not place a restriction in its mortgage deed which prevents its member from obtaining finance from another source without first obtaining the society's consent.'.

Mr. Shersby: First, I declare an interest. I am vice-president of the Corporation of Finance Brokers.

My purpose in moving new clause 26 is to draw attention to what many finance brokers consider to be an anti-competitive practice arising from an abuse of a dominant position by some building societies which require their borrowers to covenant within the mortgage deed not to enter into any further borrowing which requires the security of a charge upon the property without first obtaining the consent of the society in writing.

To enforce that covenant societies then apply to the Chief Land Registrar for a notice of a restriction to be entered into the register of title relating to the property. The result of that restriction is that the societies are contacted and given early notice of a borrower's intention to seek a loan elsewhere.

Building societies defend that practice by claiming that such a requirement enables them to encourage borrowers to explore their existing financial commitments and to exercise restraint if it seems likely that they may over-commit themselves. All that would be laudable were it not for the fact that building societies are themselves entering into the personal loan and second mortgage market.

In fact, the finance brokers are aware of many instances where an approach to a building society seeking consent to a second charge immediately results in that society calling in its borrowing member and persuading him or her to take a loan by way of a further advance or a second loan from the society itself.

That practice is seen by finance brokers as poaching. It makes use of the stranglehold which societies have, due entirely to the covenant in the mortgage deed. It also arises from the dominant position of a society and allows it to make a further advance at little or no cost whereas the information about the availability of further advances is often communicated to the consumer by means of an advertisement paid for and placed in the newspapers by a finance broker.

It can be argued that would-be house purchasers should read and agree to the restrictive covenant when they sign the mortgage deed. Perhaps solicitors should advise their clients on that point rather more effectively than they now appear to do. That point was touched on in the previous debate.

The fact of the matter is that most house purchasers do not read the fine print in the mortgage deed. I have often wondered whether there should be a requirement to put such a restrictive covenant in bold type in red ink, rather like those warnings that we have all seen on hire purchase contracts. However, hire purchase contracts are rather different from mortgage deeds. Most house purchasers only sign one mortgage deed in their life, or perhaps two or three at comparatively long intervals.

The effect of the restrictive covenant is, in the view of most brokers, to interfere with the borrower's freedom of choice and to influence the borrower in such a way that he feels obliged to take a loan from a building society. That occurs when the borrower is suddenly informed that the society is aware that a loan has been sought from another lender. The borrower can even be called in to discuss the matter with the manager or some other official of his building society. The borrower may then be told that the society can refuse to allow the registration of a second charge, but if he or she would care to take a further advance from the society then, of course, the request can be accommodated over perhaps a 15 or 20-year term, if desired.

What of the claim that societies are protecting their members from over-committing themselves? Let us suppose that the society refuses either to agree to a second charge or to make a further advance. What happens then? The answer is that the borrower can borrow unsecured from another lender, for example, a high street money shop. In that case he could find himself paying high interest rates ranging today from 35 to 44 per cent., or in the case of a conventional hire purchase finance agreement on, say, a three-year-old car a borrower would commonly today be paying around 30 per cent. At the very worst a borrower could go to a loan shark charging horrendous rates of interest.

That compares with about 18 to 19 per cent. APR for loans arranged by members of the Corporation of Finance Brokers who adhere to a code of practice which ensures that they not only bear in mind the interests of their clients, but exercise the utmost integrity in dealing with their affairs, have regulations governing advertising and ensure that money is not spent before a loan is made.

I am sure that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will agree that there is much to be said for secured loans at reasonable rates of interest and subject to respectable conditions. Such a position can obtain only if there is free and fair competition between societies, the banks and other established finance houses and the brokers who place business with them.

In the Green Paper which preceded the Bill it was made clear that competition in the provision of financial services is one of the desired objectives. But does the dominant position of certain building societies, which makes it virtually impossible for any other lending source to secure their loan, really add up to competition, or is it really a restrictive or anti-competitive practice?

My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury has indicated in correspondence that he understands that on the whole it is the exception rather than the rule for a borrower to need the society's consent to a second mortgage, and that it is relatively unusual for consent to be refused. That may be so if the borrower really persists, but he will obviously feel inhibited from so doing. One building society which I understand directs requests from borrowers to the provision of a loan by the society is the Nationwide, which is one of the largest societies in the country, and there are others. I ask my hon. Friend the

[Mr. Shersby]

Economic Secretary to consider whether the Nationwide is observing the policy of greater competition that the Government advance.

9 pm

These matters are of great importance to all members of the public who want to be sure that they have a free and fair choice of financial services in a competitive market. My new clauses are designed to put down a marker and to engage the attention of my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, to whom I pay tribute for his constant interest in and wise advice on these matters. I know that he is not convinced that an absolute statutory bar on restrictions on the taking of a second charge or the making of an advance when approached for permission to make a second charge is the right way forward. I share his dislike of more and, perhaps, unnecessary restrictions in a rapidly changing mortgage market, but I have sought to indicate that there is a problem and where that problem lies.

I was glad to learn from my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, in a letter that he wrote me yesterday, that he has arranged for information that I sent him to be provided to the Office of Fair Trading. I am glad to know from him also that the OFT is now to undertake some more general inquiries into the incidence of the practices which I have described and their effects on competition. I hope that all these inquiries can be completed quickly and that everything will be done to ensure free and fair competition, coupled with adequate protection for consumers against excessive interest rates that are often charged on unsecured loans.

Mr. Oakes: I hope that the Government will resist these clauses. The hon. Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) has presented them as measures that are in favour of competition, but they are far from that, because they seek to exclude building societies from that competition. The hon. Gentleman mentioned one society. I understand that only one society has a prohibition rule that means that the society's consent is required. The building societies have nothing to fear from this issue going to the Office of Fair Trading.

The hon. Member for Uxbridge has talked about people being driven into the hands of loan sharks who charge interest rates of 35 per cent to 40 per cent., but I suggest that the new clauses would do just that. A borrower from a building society is as much a member of the society as a lender, and he is proud to be a member. The building societies have a tremendous record of looking after their members. If a borrower needs extra finance, it is fair for the society of which he is a member to discuss the matter with him. The society will probably say, "Let us examine your financial affairs. Is the best way of solving your financial difficulties the granting of an extra loan? Shall we extend your mortgage? Shall we transfer more money to your mortgage? What is the problem? Can we help you?" That is all that societies do.

The Building Societies Association has informed me that over the years it has had complaints from mortgage brokers and finance companies, but apparently it has never had a complaint from a borrower. The hon. Member for Uxbridge said that the new clauses will act in defence of the borrower and in the interests of competition and fair trading, but apart from the many drafting defects—for example, unregistered land is not covered and there is reference to unsecured loans—I object to the principle which lies behind them. As I said, I hope that the Government will reject them. They will prevent building societies from assisting their members and assist others to lend money.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): I support the argument that has been advanced so eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby). I do not pretend for one moment to be an expert on building societies, but I support my hon. Friend because I have received representations from my constituency which I have passed on to him and to which he has responded. I believe that he is highlighting a problem, about which I understand he has had considerable correspondence with the Treasury, especially my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary, and that the Treasury recognises that there could be a problem.

I am sure that the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) will admit immediately that in introducing the new clauses my hon. Friend said that he had tabled them as markers in the hope that the problems might occur and the concern that has been expressed by constituents to individual Members will be taken fully into account by the Treasury.

I make these remarks with deep interest because the headquarters of the Cheshire building society are in my constituency. It is an excellent society. I have never had a single letter or word of complaint about its practices, and I commend it for the excellent service that it gives to people not only in my constituency but over a wider area.

After considerable research over many months, my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge has presented an excellent case to the Treasury. I hope that my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary will give an understanding and sympathetic reply. I doubt very much whether my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge intends to press the new clauses to a vote, but he hopes that an area that is causing concern can be taken fully into account by the Treasury. I hope that assurances will be given from the Treasury Bench.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I compliment my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge (Mr. Shersby) on a well-argued case, and on the manner in which he put it forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) has just supported him. Equally, the right hon. Member for Halton (Mr. Oakes) asked us to resist the new clauses. In fact, it would not be wise to put them on the statute book.

I listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge with considerable interest and a good deal of sympathy because the matter that he raised is a cause for concern and, as he mentioned, we have been in correspondence about it. I have also had a letter from the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald)—only in the past 48 hours, so I hope that she will forgive me for not having replied, but perhaps I can do so now.

One of the basic themes of the Bill is competition. By letting societies offer a wider range of services, we hope that they will be able to respond positively to the competition that they now face in their traditional markets, and to introduce new competition elsewhere. The line between legitimate competitive activity and abuse of market position can be very fine. We need to be vigilant in making sure that one does not turn into the other.

I do not believe that the abuse described by my hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge is very widespread, but it seems to come close to the line of what is acceptable and possibly even to cross it. I do not think that an absolute statutory prohibition of the sort that is suggested in the new clauses would be the best way to proceed, so I hope that my hon. Friend will not press the new clauses. However, I am glad to have the opportunity to comment on them because I believe that the situation that he has outlined needs further investigation.

As my hon. Friend mentioned, I have passed to the Director General of Fair Trading the papers that he sent to me, and his office is now to undertake more general inquiries into those practices to see whether further action under the competition or fair trading legislation would be appropriate. I hope that, pending the outcome of that investigation, any building society that might be tempted to poach business in that way — to put it crudely, to trade off the efforts of others — will recognise the distaste that is felt in the House for such behaviour. I should add that if that were to become a matter for legislation, which at this stage I do not accept it will, it would be for competition legislation, not for legislation relating to regulation or consumer protection. I shall ensure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is responsible for those areas, is kept fully informed about it.

In view of that, I hope that my hon. Friend will feel able to withdraw his new clause, but in doing so will be satisfied that we are taking action on the point that he has raised.

Mr. Shersby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary for his sympathetic and understanding reply. I am glad that he recognises that there is a problem in this area, and I am grateful for the action he has taken in referring the matter to the Director General of Fair Trading and for drawing to the attention of our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry the matter of the competition legislation.

In the light of his satisfactory reply, I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion and clause, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 1

THE BUILDING SOCIETIES COMMISSION

Sir George Young: I beg to move amendment No. 1, in page 2, line 14, leave out 'and'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): With this it will be convenient to take the following Government amendments: Nos. 2, 3, 8 to 11, 38 to 53, 389 to 395, 54, 55, 57, 61, 79 to 83, 415 to 418, 396 to 399, 84, 111, 124, 126 to 130, 132 to 134, 137, 138, 141, 142, 144, 145, 147, 149, 150, 419, 158, 206 to 209, 402, 212 to 214, 216, 219, 221 to 226, 228, 231 to 233, 236 to 238, 244, 245, 247 to 250, 256 to 260, 262, 268 to 271, 273, 274, 276 to 289, 301 to 305, 309, 330 to 332, 334 to 336, 338 to 340, 405 to 408, 342 to 344, 355 to 373, 404, 374 to 380, 382, 387 and 388.

Sir George Young: The Government have taken the opportunity during the interval between Committee stage and Report to refine the drafting of the Bill and the 176 amendments bear testimony to the energy and dedication of the draftsmen.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 2, in page 2, line 16, at end insert 'and'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 5

ESTABLISHMENT, CONSTITUTION AND POWERS

Amendments made: No. 3, in page 4, line 24, leave out from beginning to end of line 29 and insert

'to them advances secured on land for their residential use.'.

No. 4, in page 5, line 28, at end insert 'and'.

No. 5, in page 5, line 30, leave out from 'resolutions;' to end of line 31.

No. 6, in page 5, line 37, at end insert—

'( ) In this Act, except sections 10 to 13, "land", in the expression "advance secured on land", means land in the United Kingdom, and in so far as land in other countries or territories is, under any provision of this Act, land on which advances may be secured, land in that other country or territory.'

No. 7, in page 5, line 37, at end insert—

'(9) Any obligation imposed by this Act or the rules of a building society to give or send notices or other documents to members is subject to paragraph 13A of that Schedule'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 6

POWER TO HOLD LAND ETC. FOR PURPOSES OF ITS BUSINESS

Amendments made: No. 8, in page 5, line 40, leave out from 'may to end of line and insert

', otherwise than by acquisition, provide itself with premises'.

No. 9, in page 6, line 4, at end insert—

'(3A) A building society may exercise the powers conferred by subsections (1) and (2) above as regards premises situated outside, as well as premises situated within, the United Kingdom'.

No. 10, in page 6, line 5, after 'acquisition', insert 'or provision'.

No. 11, in page 6, line 7, leave out

'premises may be acquired and held'

and insert

'society may acquire or otherwise provide itself with and hold the premises'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 7

POWER TO RAISE FUNDS AND BORROW MONEY AND LIMIT ON NON-RETAIL FUNDS AND BORROWING

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, amendment No. 12, in page 6, line 27, leave out 'or loans'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following Government amendments: Nos. 13, 15, 16, 25 to 31, 34 to 37, 85, 87, 88, 92 to 98, 103 to 105, 112, 140, 146, 239, 307, 308, 310 and 381.

Mr. Stewart: What my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment has said about his amendments goes for my amendments as well.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendments made: No. 13, in page 6, line 40 leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 14, in page 7, line 1, after 'subsection', insert '(4A) and'.

No. 15, in page 7, line 7, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 16, in page 7, line 18, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

[Mr. Stewart]

No. 17, in page 7, line 23, at end insert—

'(4A) If a building society so elects with respect to any financial year its liabilities in respect of shares or deposits falling within paragraphs *(c)* or *(d)* (but no other provision) of subsection (4) above shall, subject to subsections (4B) and (4C) below, not be counted towards the limit in force under subsection (3) above.

(4B) The liabilities of the society to any person shall not, by virtue of an election under subsection (4A) above, be disregarded at any time during the financial year to which the election relates if at that time the liabilities to that person exceed the prescribed amount; and in that event all the society's liabilities to that person shall count towards the limit in force under subsection (3) above.

(4C) To be effective for the purpose of subsection (4A) above, an election must apply to the society's liabilities in respect of all its shareholders and depositors who fall within subsection (4)*(c)* and *(d)* above and notice of it must be given to the Commission before the beginning of the financial year to which it relates.

(4D) A copy of the notice shall also be sent to the central office and the central office shall keep the copy in the public file of the society.'.

No. 18, in page 7, line 31, leave out 'and'.

No. 19, in page 7, line 33, after first 'subsection', insert 'subsections (4A) to (4D) above'.

No. 20, in page 7, line 33, after 'and', insert '*(c)* make'.

No. 21, in page 7, line 34, leave out 'provisions as appear' and insert ' provision as appears'.

No. 22, in page 8, line 25, at end insert—

'(11A) The prescribed amount for the purposes of subsection (4B) above is £50,000 or such other amount as is for the time being substituted for it by order of the Commission made with the consent of the Treasury'.

No. 23, in page 8, line 26, leave out 'or (11)' and insert '(11) or (11A)'.

No. 24, in page 9, line 3, leave out 'and'.

No. 25, in page 9, line 13, leave out 'or other loan to'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 8

PROPORTION OF LIABILITIES TO BE IN FORM OF SHARES

Amendments made: No. 26, in page 9, line 16, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 27, in page 9, line 22, leave out 'or loans'.

No. 28, in page 9, line 29, leave out 'loans and'.

No. 29, in page 10, line 9, leave out 'loans or'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 9

INITIAL AUTHORISATION TO RAISE FUNDS AND BORROW MONEY

Amendments made: No. 30, in page 10, line 20, leave out 'or otherwise borrow'.

No. 31 in page 11, line 38, after first 'the', insert 'issue of shares'.

No. 32, in page 12, line 9, after second 'time' insert '(and notwithstanding any pending appeal)'.

No. 33, in page 12, line 16, at end insert—

'(9A) On granting authorisation to a building society under this section the Commission shall inform the central office of the fact and the central office shall record that fact, and the date on which the authorisation was granted, in the public file of the society.'.

No. 34, in page 12, line 18, leave out 'or otherwise borrows'.

No. 35, in page 13, line 3, after third 'the', insert 'qualifying'.

No. 36, in page 13, line 9, after second 'the', insert 'qualifying'.

No. 37, in page 13, line 10, at end insert '; and

"qualifying deferred shares" means deferred shares other than deferred shares which, by virtue of regulations under section 43(5), are not included in capital resources aggregated with reserves for the purposes of the first criterion in subsection (3) of that section.'

Clause 10

ADVANCES SECURED ON LAND

Amendments made: No. 38, in page 13, line 19, leave out from 'land")' to end of line 20 and insert 'secured by'.

No. 39, in page 13, line 37, at end insert

'and a reference to the land which is to secure an advance or on which an advance is secured is a reference to the estate or interest or the heritable security which constitutes the basic security.'.

No. 40, in page 13, line 37, at end insert—

'(2A) The power to make an advance secured on land includes power, subject to the restriction imposed by subsection (2B) below, to make, as a separate advance, an advance which is to be applied in or towards payment of the deposit for the purchase of the land (in this Part referred to as "an advance for a deposit for the purchase of land.")

(2B) The restriction referred to is that an advance for a deposit for the purchase of land must not exceed 10 per cent. of the total amount to be paid for the purchase of the land.'

No. 41, in page 13, line 38, leave out 'as made on the security of' and insert

'for the purposes of this Act as secured by'

No. 42, in page 14, line 31, at end insert 'and'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Dr. McDonald: I beg to move amendment No 414, in page 14, line 35, at end insert—

'(6A) A building society, once it has advanced money on the security of an equitable interest in land in England and Wales or Northern Ireland, may not sell on that loan without the express permission of the borrower which shall be obtained according to a code of practice which shall be agreed between all the building societies and which shall have received the approval of the Commissioners.'.

The purpose of this amendment is to deal with the growing market and to ensure that the borrower's interests are protected. When I raised this issue on Second Reading, the Minister said that it would be up to the

"borrower to ensure that the terms of a second mortgage were suitable." [*Official Report*, 19 December 1985; Vol. 89, c. 602.]

I think that he said that because he did not actually hear what I said. I hope that it was for no other reason. Of course, I was talking about the growth of the secondary mortgage market and urging that the borrower's interests there should be protected. Since Second Reading and our debates in Committee, I know that the Minister has taken a great interest in this issue and has encouraged his hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction to propose the need for a code of practice. A draft code of practice has been drawn up by the Building Societies Association. I hope that a final draft will be forthcoming.

It is worth saying something about the need for protection as this is a new market in the United Kingdom. It has attracted interest in United Kingdom mortgages from investors as far afield as Canada and Japan. Part of the attraction lies in the fact that, at the moment, the rate of default is extremely low, although that rate has increased partly because of increasing unemployment and partly because of the continuing high rate of divorce.

9.15 pm

Like many other newspapers, *The Times* recently carried an article on the growth of the secondary mortgage market, which said:

"To reassure borrowers the new market will have to develop guarantees that the responsibility for, say, setting interest rates and foreclosing on people who do not repay will remain with an identifiable lender and not be sold along with the underlying asset."

That is vital. I am sure that we have all corresponded with a building society about a mortgagee who is in arrears and been able to negotiate different terms for repayment to tide the borrower over a period of difficulty. That has often been easy because the branch is local and the manager knows the borrower. If mortgages are sold on and can be purchased by a foreign investor or a large finance company, however, that relationship may no longer exist. It does sometimes. It depends on what type of arrangements have been made by the purchaser of bundles of mortgages.

The matter requires a code of practice even more now than when we raised the issue in Committee and on Second Reading. Since then, the Government have announced that, for the first six months in which somebody is in receipt of supplementary benefit, payment of mortgage interest by the DHSS will be halved. The Opposition have had much to say about that. Just when people need most help and have very low incomes – they can build up substantial mortgage arrears over only six months – mortgage interest payments are halved. They may be unable to make up those arrears easily, even when the DHSS restores full interest payments if they continue to be in receipt of benefit. Bearing in mind the Government's change of policy, a proper code of practice is even more necessary. That is another issue on which consumers support the need for a code.

The Times article says that the fears of a new breed of ruthless investor entering the market who is willing to foreclose at the drop of a hat

"were highlighted when Barclays canvassed the opinions of its borrowers on the sale of their mortgages and received an unequivocal thumbs down to the idea late last year."

The Government are pursuing a voluntary code. That is an important step forward. The amendment proposes that the code should be compulsory and be agreed between the Building Societies Commission and the building societies. That would ensure that nobody could escape from the obligations, in a changing market, that they have taken on towards a borrower. It would also ensure that borrowers' interests are properly protected, even when their mortgages are sold in the United Kingdom or to foreign investors.

The matter is one of social concern. We must ensure that borrowers' interests are protected, especially when they hit hard times. They must be able to continue to deal with the person who gave them the mortgage.

Sir George Young: In asking the House not to accept the amendment I do not want it to be thought that I am in any way unsympathetic towards the remarks of the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). There is a fair degree of unanimity between us. However, as she would be the first to recognise, the amendment would apply only to building societies. As she said, it is not necessarily the building societies which are likely to abuse the ability to transfer a mortgage. She referred to a new type of ruthless investor coming to the market who might foreclose more easily than building societies. The amendment would not cover the new ruthless investor.

I am convinced that we need a broader approach to the problem which covers all people who loan on mortgages, rather than just building societies. I am therefore not convinced that the amendment represents the best way to proceed.

The hon. Lady may have seen a speech which my hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction made on 8 May. My hon. Friend said that he had great reservations about the selling of existing mortgages unless the borrower gives explicit consent to the sale. He also said that he did not necessarily feel that the Building Societies Bill was an appropriate vehicle for changes, because any code of practice would apply to all those in the mortgage market, not just the building societies. He went on to say that the Government would be examining with interested organisations the appropriate arrangements to protect the legitimate interests of borrowers while enabling innovation in the mortgage market to bring the full benefit of additional funds for home ownership and wider choice in the types of loan.

Since making that speech, my hon. Friend has asked his officials and officials at the Treasury to discuss the matter with representatives of all those involved in the mortgage market. These discussions have covered the steps that need to be taken to protect the borrowers' interests. My hon. Friend hopes shortly to make an announcement which will be of considerable interest to the hon. Member for Thurrock and to the House as a whole.

The Government share the anxieties of the hon. Lady that ordinary borrowers should be protected in the market in which they play an active part but over which they have no control. We do not believe that it would be helpful to tackle the problem piecemeal. The mortgage market is no longer the exclusive preserve of the building societies. We are at present actively pursuing an initiative which will cover the whole market and examine the need to protect borrowers in the many different areas of the market.

Against that background, I ask the hon. Lady to await my hon. Friend's announcement, which he will make shortly, and not to pursue the amendment.

Amendment negatived.

Clause 11

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ADVANCES

Amendments made: No. 43, in page 14, line 45, at end insert

"and when an advance may, for those purposes, be treated partly as a class 1 advance and partly as a class 2 advance".

No. 44, page 15, line 8, after 'security', insert

"(after deducting from that value any mortgage debt of the borrower to the society outstanding under a mortgage of the land);".

No. 45, in page 15, line 10, leave out 'by the borrower' and insert

'which is to secure the advance is outstanding'.

No. 46, in page 15, line 11, leave out 'is outstanding'.

No. 47, in page 15, line 34, leave out 'by the borrower' and insert

'which is to secure the advance is outstanding'.

No. 48, in page 15, line 35, leave out 'is outstanding'.

No. 49, in page 15, line 38, at end insert—

[Sir George Young]

(5A) An advance for a deposit for the purchase of land is also a class 1 or class 2 advance according as it is made with a view to the making of a class 1 or class 2 advance secured on the land.

(5B) Advances which would be class 2, and not class 1, advances by reason only that the extent of the residential use of the land is not as to satisfy the requirement in subsection (2)*(b)* above shall be treated as class 1 advances if and to the extent prescribed by an order under section 12(5A).'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 12

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2 ADVANCES: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 50, in page 17, line 35, leave out '(2)' and insert '(3)'.

No. 51, in page 17, line 36, at end insert

', under section 31 of the Tenants' Rights, Etc. (Scotland) Act 1980 or under Article 156 of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981'.

No. 52, in page 17, line 38, at end insert—

(5A) The Commission, by order in a statutory instrument, may, as respects advances to be secured on land which is to any extent to be used for the residential use of borrowers or persons who are dependants of theirs for the purposes of section 11(2)—

(a) require so much of the amount to be advanced as is determined by or under the order to be treated as a class 1 advance;

(b) specify the circumstances in which and the conditions subject to which advances are to be so treated; and

(c) make such incidental, supplementary and transitional provision as the Commission considers necessary or expedient.

No. 53, in page 18, line 24, at beginning insert 'basic'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 13

SECURITY FOR ADVANCES: VALUATION AND SUPPLEMENTARY AND RELATED PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 389, in page 19, line 21, after 'land', insert

'and any factors likely materially to affect its value or saleability'.

No. 390, in page 19, line 22, leave out 'land'.

No. 391, in page 19, line 40, after 'any', insert 'director, other officer or'.

No. 392, in page 19, line 45, after 'any', insert 'director, other officer or'.

No. 393, in page 20, line 8, after 'any', insert 'director, other officer or'.

No. 394, in page 20, line 12, after 'any', insert 'director, other officer or'.

No. 395, in page 20, line 30, at end insert

'and, for its purposes, a person shall be taken to have a financial interest in the disposition of any land if, but only if, he would, on a disposition of that land, be entitled (whether directly or indirectly, and whether in possession or not) to the whole or part of the proceeds of the disposition.'.

No. 54, in page 20, line 32, leave out from beginning to 'supplementary' in line 34.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 14

POWER TO LEND TO INDIVIDUALS OTHERWISE THAN BY CLASS 1 OR CLASS 2 ADVANCES

Amendments made: No. 55, in page 20, line 42, leave out from 'that' to end of line 4 on page 21 and insert 'an advance for a deposit for the purchase of land shall, if the purchase is not completed within the period of six months beginning with the date of the advance, be treated after the end of that period as a loan under this section and shall accordingly cease to be a class 1 or class 2 advance'.

No. 56, in page 21, line 4 at end insert—

'(2A) Mobile home loans do not constitute loans under this section.'.

No. 57, in page 21, line 8 after '(4)', insert 'Subject to subsection (5A) below'.

No. 58, in page 21, line 16 after 'section', insert 'or this section and section *(Loans for mobile homes)*'.

No. 59, in page 21 line 18 after 'as', insert ', in the case of loans under this section.'.

No. 60, in page 21, line 20 at end insert 'and, in the case of loans under this section and section *(Loans for mobile homes)*, as made on different occasions such that loans under this section precede those made under that section.

(4A) Subsection (4) above shall have effect (subject to subsection (5A) below) in a case where a building society has made a loan undersection *(Loans for mobile homes)* as if it precluded a building society from making a loan to an individual under this section if the principal exceeds—

(a) the limit referred to in paragraph *(a)* of it; or

(b) the balance referred to in paragraph *(b)* of it; or

(c) the balance remaining after deducting from the limit imposed by or under subsection (6) of that section the aggregate of any sums outstanding in respect of loans made under that section and under this section by the society to that individual.'.

No. 61, in page 21, line 24 at end insert

'(5A) The limit on loans to any one individual under this section does not apply to an advance for a deposit for the purchase of land which has come to be treated as a loan under this section and accordingly no account shall be taken of it for the purposes of subsection (4) above.'.

No. 62, in page 22, line 1 leave out from beginning to end of line 17.

No. 63, in page 22, line 19 leave out 'or (11)'. *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 15

POWER TO HOLD AND DEVELOP LAND AS COMMERCIAL ASSET

Amendment made: No. 64, in page 22, line 38, after 'land', insert 'in the United Kingdom'. *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 16

PART III POWER TO INVEST IN SUBSIDIARIES AND OTHER ASSOCIATED BODIES

Amendment made: No. 65, in page 24, line 2, leave out from 'may' to end of line 9 on page 25 and insert—

'*(a)* acquire and hold shares or corresponding membership rights in bodies corporate and form or take part in forming bodies corporate, and

(b) provide bodies corporate in which it holds shares or such rights or to which it is, for the purpose of any power under this section, linked by resolution with any of the following supporting services—

(i) loans of money, with or without security and whether or not at interest,

(ii) grants of money, whether or not repayable,

(iii) guarantees of the discharge of their liabilities, and

(iv) the use of services or property, whether or not for payment;

and in this section "invest" means the exercise of any of the powers conferred by paragraph *(a)* and "support" means the exercise of any of the powers conferred by paragraph *(b)* above.

(1A) A building society may invest in or support the following bodies corporate (referred to as "qualifying bodies") but no others, that is to say—

(a) companies or industrial and provident societies,

(b) bodies formed in another member State for the purpose of carrying on in other member States businesses which consist wholly or mainly in lending money on the security of land and do not (where that is not the whole business) include lending on land in the United Kingdom (referred to as "corresponding European bodies"), and

(c) bodies corporate (whether or not falling within paragraph (a) *or* (b) *above) designated as suitable for investment and support or for support for the purposes of this section by an order (referred to as "a designation order") made by the Commission with the consent of the Treasury.*

(1B) A designation order may—

(a) *designate a particular body or designate descriptions of bodies corporate,*

(b) *make different provision for different descriptions of building society,*

(c) *determine, or provide for the determination under the order of, the extent to which, the purposes for which, and the condition subject to which, investment or support is permitted, and*

(d) *make such transitional and consequential provision as the Commission considers necessary or expedient.*

(1C) Subject to subsection (1D) below, a building society shall not invest in or support a qualifying body so as to enable that body on its own account, in the United Kingdom, to—

(a) lend money to members of the public on the security of land by loans corresponding to advances secured on land,

(b) accept deposits of money otherwise than in such circumstances that their acceptance would not constitute its business a deposit-taking business or in the course of or for the purposes of providing estate agency services under section 32;

but, subject to that, it may invest in or support a qualifying body so as to enable that body to carry on any activity which it is within the powers of the society to carry on but, subject to subsection (1D) below, no others.

(1D) In the case of a qualifying body designated, or included in a description of bodies designated, by a designation order a building society may also invest in or support it for such purposes as are permitted by or under the designation order.

(1E) Subject to subsection (1F) and (1G) below, a building society shall not invest in or support a qualifying body whose objects enable it—

(a) to carry on activities which are outside the powers of the society,

(b) to invest in other bodies corporate, or

(c) to support other bodies corporate;

but this does not imply that it is unlawful for the society to complete the performance of any contractual obligations lawfully incurred in providing a supporting service.

(1F) Subsection (1E) above shall not operate so as to restrict a building society's powers under this section in relation to a corresponding European body.

(1G) Subsection (1E) above shall not prevent a building society from investing in or supporting a qualifying body—

(a) if that body is, in relation to the society, a designated body and the investment or support is made in accordance with the designation order,

(b) if, not being a body whose objects enable it to carry on activities outside the powers of the society, the investment or support is made or given with the consent of the Commission and subject to any conditions specified in the instrument giving the consent, or

(c) for a period of three months pending the alteration of the objects of that body.

(1H) For the purposes of any power conferred by this section a body corporate is "linked by resolution" to a building society if the board of directors of the society has passed a resolution making that power exercisable in relation to that body and the resolution is in force.'.

No. 66, in page 25, line 10, leave out from first 'in' to 'is' in line 12 and insert

'or support a corresponding European body'.

No. 67, in page 25, line 14, at end insert

', but the cessation of its availability by virtue of this subsection does not require the disposal of any property or rights.'.

No. 68, in page 25, line 22, leave out '(5)*(b)*' and insert '(1H)'.

No. 69, in page 25, line 24, after '4', insert '(3)'.

No. 70, in page 25, line 29, leave out '(5)*(b)*' and insert '(1H)'.

No. 71, in page 25, line 31, after '4' insert '(3),'.

No. 72, in page 25, line 33, at end insert—

'but subject to subsection (9A) below.

(9A) No rescinding resolution shall be registered without the consent of the Commission.'.

No. 73, in page 25, line 38, leave out 'at any time'.

No. 74, in page 25, line 40, leave out '(4)*(c)*' and insert '(1A)*(c)*'.

No. 75, in page 26, line 1, at end insert

'"company" means a company within the meaning of the Companies Act 1985 or the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960;'.

No. 76, in page 26, line 5, at end insert—

'"deposit" and "deposit-taking business" have the same meaning as in the Banking Act 1979;

"industrial and provident society" means a society registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 or, in Northern Ireland, the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969;'.

No. 77, in page 26, line 7, leave out from beginning to end of line 12.

No. 78, in page 26, line 18, leave out from 'one' to end of line 19 and insert

'to which the society is linked by resolution;'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 18

COMMERCIAL ASSET STRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS FOR BUILDING SOCIETIES

Amendments made: No. 79, in page 28, line 5, leave out from beginning to 'not' in line 7 and insert

'direct that subsection (2) or (3) above shall have effect during the currency of the order as if such percentage as is specified in the order were substituted for the percentage specified in that subsection'.

No. 80, in page 28, line 10, leave out from 'may' to end of line 12 and insert—

'*(a)* divide class 3 assets into sub-classes for the purposes of the order by reference to the provision of or made under this Part from which they arise;

(b) subject to subsection (5A) below, prescribe different limits for different sub-classes; and

(c) make such transitional provision as appears to the Treasury to be necessary or expedient;

and any reference in this Act to a limit for a class of commercial assets shall, if a limit is in force under subsection (4) above for any sub-class of class 3 assets, be construed as including a reference to the limit for that sub-class.

(5A) No order under subsection (4) above shall prescribe as a limit for a sub-class of class 3 assets a percentage of total commercial assets less than the percentage in force immediately before the making of the order for that sub-class or, if the sub-class is created by the order, for class 3 assets generally.'.

No. 81, in page 28, line 35, leave out 'and'.

No. 82, in page 29, line 9, leave out from 'limits' to first 'the' in line 10 and insert

'in force under this section'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 19

LIQUID ASSETS

Amendment made: No. 83, in page 29, line 37, after 'scale', insert 'of the business'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 21

POWER TO HEDGE ASSET POSITION

Amendments made: No. 415, in page 31, line 13 after 'may', insert

'effect contracts of a prescribed description'.

No. 416, in page 31, line 15, leave out from 'business' to end of line 17.

No. 417, in page 31, line 25, at end insert 'and'.

No. 418, in page 31, line 27, leave out 'financial futures contracts and'.

No. 396, in page 31, line 30, after '(3)', insert

'Except as provided under subsection (3A) below,'.

No. 397, in page 31, line 33, at end insert—

'(3A) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by order provide that subsection (3) above shall not have effect, as regards prescribed powers, in relation to prescribed descriptions of building societies.'.

No. 398, in page 31, line 37, leave out '(2) above' and insert

'(2) or (3A) above—

(a) includes power to make such transitional provision as the Commission considers necessary or expedient, and

(b)'.

No. 399, in page 32, line 2, leave out 'above' and insert 'or (3A) above, as the case may be'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 24

POWER TO LEVY CONTRIBUTIONS AND TO BORROW MONEY IN EVENT OF INSOLVENCY

Amendments made: No. 84, in page 34, line 2, after '1985', insert

'or section 258 of the Companies Act Act (Northern Ireland) 1960.'.

No. 85, in page 35, line 9 leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

Clause 25

PAYMENTS TO INVESTORS

Amendments made: No. 86, in page 36, line 14, leave out 'three quarters' and insert '90 per cent.'.

No. 87, in page 36, line 33, leave out

'or otherwise lent money to'.

No. 88, in page 36, line 37, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 89, in page 36, line 40, after 'instrument', insert—

'*(a)* amend subsection (2) above so as to substitute for the percentage for the time being specified in that subsection such other percentage as may be specified in the order; and

(b)'.

No. 90, in page 36, line 43, leave out from first 'order;' to end of line 45.

No. 91, in page 36, line 45, at end insert—

'(6A) No order shall be made under subsection (6) above unless a draft of it has been laid before, and approved by a resolution of, each House of Parliament.'.

No. 92, in page 37, line 5, leave out 'or loan'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 26

LIABILITY OF INSOLVENT SOCIETY IN RESPECT OF PAYMENTS BY BOARD

Amendments made: No. 93, in page 37, line 43, leave out 'or loans'

No. 94, in page 38, line 10, leave out 'or loans'.

No. 95, in page 38, line 23, leave out 'or loans'.

No. 96, in page 38, line 27, leave out 'or loans'.

No. 97, in page 38, line 29, leave out 'or loan'.

No. 98, in page 38, line 33, leave out 'or loans'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 27

REPAYMENTS IN RESPECT OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Amendments made: No. 99, in page 40, line 23, leave out 'received' and insert 'retained'.

No. 100, in page 40, line 24, leave out from 'amounts' to 'those' in line 25 and insert

'not exceeding the contributions due from'.

No. 101, in page 40, line 28, leave out

'; and if the Board does so'

and insert—

'(4A) If the Board makes appropriations under subsection (4) above,'

No. 102, in page 40, line 30, after first 'societies', insert

'in or towards discharge of its debts to them'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 29

VOLUNTARY SCHEMES

Amendments made: No. 103, in page 41, line 31, leave out

'or otherwise lent money to'.

No. 104, in page 42, line 4, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 105, in page 43, line 14, leave out 'or loans'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 32

POWERS TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL SERVICES OR SERVICES RELATING TO LAND

Amendment proposed: No. 424, in page 43, line 40, after 'Part', insert '1A or'.—*[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take the following amendments: Government No. 425.

No. 106, in clause 33, page 45, line 3, leave out 'a class 1' and insert 'any'.

No. 107, in line 6, at end insert—

'(1A) Where, in relation to subsection (1) above, any insurance or other financial services are provided other than by the Society or its subsidiary, the Society or its subsidiary may not make any charge or increase in the mortgage rate in respect of that service.'.

No. 108, in line 18, at end insert—

'(3A) Where a Society or its subsidiary offers to provide a service in relation to an advance to any person, the Society or its subsidiary shall inform that person in writing that he is free to make his own arrangements to obtain that service.'.

No. 109, in line 19, leave out 'or (2)' and insert '(1A), (2) or (3A)'.

No. 110, in line 24, leave out '(2)' and insert '(1A), (2) or (3A)'.

Government Nos. 311, 312, 426, 313 and 314.

No. 315, in schedule 8, page 182, line 30, at end insert—

'Insurance Services

8A. The power to provide insurance services is available only to a Building Society or its subsidiary which is for the time being registered or listed under the Insurance Brokers Registration Act 1977.'.

Government Nos. 316 to 320, 403, 428, 322 and 323.

Mr. Robert McCrindle (Brentwood and Ongar): I begin by declaring an interest as parliamentary adviser to the British Insurance Brokers Association, a body of which I hope the insurance subsidiaries likely to be set up as a result of this legislation will in due course become members. In the meantime, the purpose of amendments Nos. 106 to 110 and amendment No. 315 is to establish a basis for the insurance services likely to be provided by the insurance subsidiaries stemming from this legislation that is as fair as can reasonably be attained.

The effect of amendment No. 315 is that building societies wishing to become insurance intermediaries would have to be registered or listed under the Insurance Brokers Registration Act, which would require them to observe the standards laid down in that Act, to which those now trading under the title of insurance brokers have to subscribe.

Paragraph 4.16 of the Green Paper, Cmnd. 9316, made the following proposal:

"Any further extension of building society activities . . . would need to be subject . . . to the standards of behaviour expected of the insurance services industry."

Paragraph 4.19 stated that those new activities

"would be subject to the regulatory regime for the particular service",

which for insurance broking currently takes the form of the Insurance Brokers Registration Act 1977. Regrettably, that proposal has not been translated into the Bill. In the meantime, the conduct of insurance subsidiaries of building societies in so far as it relates to life and investment assurance is being taken care of as the Financial Services Bill proceeds through the House, but other insurance in which the building societies have traditionally dealt — for example, householders' comprehensive, buildings and contents and related forms of insurance — will remain unregulated unless amendment No. 315 or something very similar is absorbed into this Bill.

A concern that I have frequently heard expressed is that because building societies have a high reputation among the public there may be a tendency to assume that as there is undoubted expertise in house purchase and mortgage arrangement in the smallest branch office of a building society the same level of expertise will be available on insurance matters, but that does not necessarily follow. It is questionable how much training building society managers can claim in this area. From my own experience, I know that in a number of areas building society managers are not always able to assist in the way that could reasonably be expected of people registered under the Insurance Brokers Registration Act. It is a question not just of arranging an insurance and choosing the correct market, but of dealing with claims as and when they arrive. Under the present set-up, building societies cannot necessarily be expected to have that expertise.

9.30 pm

If the amendment were acceptable to the Government, the insurance subsidiaries of building societies would have to register under the 1977 Act and be prepared to conform to its standards. That would be a means of directing to the consumer an implication of competence which would greatly strengthen consumer protection.

In regard to amendment No. 106, clause 33 prohibits a building society from making the provision of a primary advance conditional on the use by a borrower of other services by the society. The effect of the amendment would be to extend that prohibition to any advance or loan. The provision in clause 33 that a building society can no longer insist on the borrower insuring his house through the society does not go far enough. The prohibition should apply also to second mortgages. For example, under the Bill as it stands, if a borrower obtained an unsecured loan of, say, £5,000 to buy a car, the society could insist that he insured that car with an insurer of its choice through its insurance department or subsidiary. This is an area of possible conflict to which the House should give attention in the discussion of this part of the Bill.

The reason for amendment No. 107 is to prevent a building society charging the borrower when he wishes to make his own arrangements rather than use the services offered by the society. Following pressure by the Office of Fair Trading, building societies permit the use of the client's own insurance intermediary, but one of the less reputable practices of many building societies over the past few years has been to charge for the privilege. Some extremely well-known societies do so. For example, the Cheltenham and Gloucester charges £25 to enable a borrower to make his own insurance arrangements. The Newcastle charges £25. The Portsmouth charges £15 per annum and if a borrower insists on making his own insurance arrangements it increases the mortgage repayment rate. The Skipton charges £25. The Town and Country charges £23. Many hon. Members will question the morality of having to pay for the privilege of seeking the best insurance market for one's personal insurance needs.

The effect of amendment No. 108 would be that a building society would have to make it clear, whether in the application form or elsewhere in its literature, that the borrower is free to make his own arrangements for insurance or other financial services, if he so wishes. No doubt some societies draw that freedom to the attention of borrowers, but a great many do not. I have with me literature from the Halifax, the Abbey National, the Nationwide and the Cheltenham and Gloucester, and none of it states clearly and specifically that there is no obligation to place the insurance relevant to a mortgage through the agency of the building society.

As we come close to the end of the consideration of this important legislation in this Chamber, the House should give its attention to these extremely important matters. The Government may have better ideas about how to achieve the same objective. I hope that the Minister will recognise that what is sought by insurance intermediaries is fair competition. It would be an exaggeration if I said that existing insurance intermediaries welcomed the prospect of building societies engaging in their sphere of commercial activity, but if there is to be such competition —as must be accepted—it should be fair.

I hope that I have been able to draw to the attention of the House a few areas in which I contend that the competition is not fair. Therefore, I hope that my hon.

[Mr. Robert McCrindle]

Friend the Minister will be able to indicate to me that he is prepared to accept the amendments or in some other way to achieve the objectives that underlie them.

Sir George Young: Before I deal with the amendments of my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) I shall deal briefly with Government amendment No. 311, which gives the building societies wider powers to set up and run personal and money purchase occupational pension schemes. The amendment gives effect to the proposals which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury outlined on 7 May, and will ensure that building societies can play a full part in the provision of personal pensions.

Amendment No. 315 requires building societies or their subsidiaries to register under the Insurance Brokers Registration Act 1977 and to become subject to regulation by the council. My hon. Friend's amendment recalls one which he tabled in Committee on the Financial Services Bill. That amendment would have required all insurance agents who sold general insurance, other than company representatives, to register with the Insurance Brokers Registration Council. I hope that my hon. Friend will not be greatly disappointed when I say that the Government are no more disposed towards amendment No. 315 than they were to that amendment, for much the same reasons.

We start from the general proposition that there should be no prohibitions restricting competition by limiting those who can take up any given area of commercial activity. Nor should we impose statutory burdens on businesses, unless there are good reasons for them. A case must be made for the sort of changes that my hon. Friend proposes, and the Government believe that the case has not been made.

As my hon. Friend recognised, in the case of life assurance, building societies, like other intermediaries, will be regulated under the legislation. I do not think that there is a point between us there. On general insurance, the original proposals in the Green Paper have not been implemented. The larger societies may well choose in future to form subsidiaries, registered with the IBRC, as the clearing banks have done, but to require such registration does not seem justified, and the Financial Services Bill Committee was not persuaded that there were problems in general insurance which could be solved only by statutory regulation. Still less am I aware that there is a real problem with the building societies. As my hon. Friend will know, we are promoting talks within the industry with a view to improving self-regulation on the basis of consensus.

We are not persuaded that all insurance intermediaries should have to register with the council, nor do we think that the building societies should be singled out and made an exception to that view. That would be to discriminate unfairly against them.

The building societies probably could not qualify. They would not necessarily have qualified or experienced insurance brokers on the board, so they would have to set up subsidiaries to register. That may be possible for larger building societies, but for smaller and medium-sized societies there would be considerable trouble and expense in dividing operations in that way. Some may simply decide not to offer insurance services, which would be disappointing, because competition would be reduced and the consumer would be deprived of a convenient outlet for an important service. Neither consequence would be welcome to the Government, which is why we are inclined to resist amendment No. 315.

Amendment No. 106 seeks to extend the prohibition on tying services from cases where the societies are making a class 1 advance to cases where they are making any category of advance. As my hon. Friend knows, clause 33(1), which prohibits services from being tied to a class 1 loan, was the subject of a great deal of debate in Committee. The provision was inserted to buttress the general competition and fair trading legislation in view of the dominant position of building societies in the first mortgage market. In Committee it was argued strongly that it was discriminatory to apply prohibitions to building societies and not to other mortgage finance institutions. My hon. Friend's amendment would extend that disparity of treatment to cover services related to any loan, not just a loan on a first mortgage.

I do not think that this extension can be justified in its sole application to building societies where they do not have the dominant position in respect of second mortgages or unsecured lending. If one went down that path, it would be discriminating against building societies entirely without grounds for doing so. For that reason, the Government are not disposed to advise the House to accept the amendment.

While it is important that first mortgage borrowers should be protected by an anti-tying provision, I can see the force of the argument that it is wrong to provide a statutory obligation of that sort only in respect of building societies. My hon. Friend has said that he is prepared not to bring into effect this provision if societies adopt an effective code of practice which contains such an obligation. In a recent speech to the annual conference, the chairman of the Building Societies Association said that the association was now prepared to consider such a code of practice if the clause were not activated. The Government welcome that statement. The terms of such a code might be a more appropriate place for these additional protections, and I hope that the societies and the BSA will now give the matter full consideration. I am sure that they will bear in mind what my hon. Friend has said.

Amendment No. 108 would require a society to point out in writing to a borrower that he can make his own arrangements to obtain a service in connection with a loan. That might be a little bureaucratic. It would impose a requirement applying, not just in connection with a first mortgage loan, but with any advance. It would involve a society in the rather cumbersome and costly process of writing to any borrower to whom it wished to provide a service. Again in Committee there was a complaint that the existing provisions unjustifiably discriminated against societies and this would be a further step in what would be regarded as discriminatory treatment. Therefore, the Government are not minded to accept this amendment either.

My hon. Friend mentioned a number of societies which imposed charges on their members where they decided to opt out. I am sure that his listing of the societies will have had a salutary effect on injecting a greater degree of competition. I do not think that it would be right to ban that sort of charge. There are cases where a society would face additional administrative costs through a borrower going elsewhere and some charge would be legitimate. For example, if a borrower insured the property with an

outside insurance company, the society, as lender, would have to check the policy to safeguard its security. That would be an extra expense for the society, and it seems legitimate for that extra cost to be reflected in the charges that it makes.

The answer to my hon. Friend lies in an increasingly competitive mortgage market where building societies have to react to competition and remove these discriminatory charges. Indeed, removal of the differential on endowment mortgages is a recent example of such competition working and of the building societies removing a differential charge. Therefore, I hope that my hon. Friend will not find it discourteous if I advise the House to reject his amendments. I feel that he may have been aware in advance that the Government were not able to go down this path.

Mr. McCrindle: It comes as no major surprise that the eloquence to which my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary paid due testimony did not persuade him to accept even one, let alone the total number, of the amendments that I tabled. At least in this respect the Government are proving consistent, because that was the response I received when I proposed a similar amendment in Committee on the Financial Services Bill. Nevertheless, I am mildly encouraged by one or two of the remarks made by my hon. Friend in asking the House to reject the amendments. I cannot but feel that when he tries to justify the imposition of a charge by a society for allowing a consumer freedom of choice to arrange his insurance in the best market available he is flying in the face of the competitive society about which I believe he and I are united in many other respects.

I hope that my hon. Friend is right that the names of the societies that I read out—by no means an exhaustive list—will be shamed into accepting that the borrower must be given a far greater freedom of choice without the imposition of a charge. I am fortified in the knowledge that when the Office of Fair Trading has turned its attentions to this matter in the past it has considered that to be an anti-competitive practice.

If I have achieved nothing more this evening, I hope that I have moved closer to the time when there will be greater freedom for a borrower to arrange his insurances in the best available market without the imposition of a charge.

9.45 pm

Before I finally accept defeat, I wonder whether my hon. Friend can say something about Government amendments Nos. 312 and 316. They are not entirely clear in their import. Can my hon. Friend say whether I am correct in suspecting that the amendments are calculated to enable building societies to move into commercial insurance, as distinct from covering domestic arrangements, such as the contents of a house, a house, and even a motor car that is purchased by way of an unsecured loan? I do not suggest that the Abbey National or the Halifax will be prone to go into the aviation or marine markets once the legislation appears on the statute book.

In the interests of achieving the fair competition to which I referred and to which my hon. Friend responded, it would be helpful if we were a little clearer in our minds that the area of insurance activity that it is envisaged the building societies will move into more forcefully than they have done in the past is that part of the insurance market that relates primarily to what I shall call domestic risks. Perhaps my hon. Friend can clarify the meaning of amendments Nos. 312 and 316, and confirm that the area of insurance activity he envisages is as I have suggested.

Sir George Young: I hope that I can give my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) the assurances that he seeks. Amendment 312 involves no change in policy. It simply clarifies what is involved. It does two things. First, it makes it clear that building societies can act as agents either for the person seeking the insurance or the person providing it. In other words, the society can act either as an independent broker or as a tied agent for a company. Under the requirements that will be imposed for financial services authorisation, it will be necessary for building societies to make it clear in which capacity they are acting.

Secondly, the amendment makes it clear that building societies can offer advice. Many society customers will be looking to the society for advice on their insurance needs, whether the society is an independent intermediary or a tied agent. Schedule 1 to the Financial Services Bill provides separately for the function of advising on investment business and arranging for its provision. It is advisable for consistency and the avoidance of doubt to make it clear that the power available to building societies extends to both.

Amendment No. 316 provides that a society's insurance services must be provided primarily, rather than exclusively, to individuals and corporate borrowers within class 2. We do not see that as a means for building societies dramatically to change the nature of the insurance business. However, a building society may acquire an insurance broking business which has some small business customers on its books. That would not be possible without the amendment.

Likewise, someone with a building society loan on his house, who arranged the insurance on it through a society, may wish to arrange insurance in respect of his business. Instead of forcing societies to turn people away, which would make little competitive sense, it would be sensible to give them the flexibility to have a small amount of corporate business on their books. That is why the Government have responded in that way. In the light of what my hon. Friend has said, I accept that we need to watch to ensure that the nature of the amendment is not abused and that the building societies do not move to commercial insurance broking in a big way.

Mr. McCrindle: My hon. Friend's comments were helpful as far as they went. My hon. Friend used the word "small" twice in his response to my concerns about amendment No. 316. He talked about small business customers and later a small amount of corporate business. I am not aware that the word "small" can be defined in legislation. Indeed, it has clearly not been defined in the Bill. What would my hon. Friend consider to be a small business? What would he consider to be a small amount of business insurance in relation to the total that a building society's insurance subsidiary might transact?

Sir George Young: In seven years as a Minister I have learnt not to give off-the-cuff advice on rather complicated legal questions. But the commission set up to monitor the building societies and the use of the powers will no doubt be interested in what my hon. Friend has said and will keep a close watch on it.

[Sir George Young]

The legislation says that the societies' insurance services must be provided primarily rather than exclusively to individuals and corporate borrowers within class 2. We want the building societies to continue to provide a personal service to people who buy their houses, but, affixed to that, those people may run small businesses and may want to take out their insurance with the building society that insures their home. Without the amendment, building societies would not be able to offer that service. It is sensible to make that exemption, and that is the object of the amendment. I am reluctant to go further than that, but the commission and the Government will be keeping a watch on this provision to ensure that it is not abused.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The House has been debating Government amendment No. 424, so there is no need for the hon. Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Mr. McCrindle) to withdraw his amendments which have been spoken to but not moved.

Amendment agreed to.

Amendment made: No. 425, in page 44, line 21, at end insert ', 1A'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 33

PROHIBITION ON LINKING SERVICES

Amendment made: No. 111, in page 45, line 27, leave out subsection (6).—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 34

POWERS IN EVENT OF BREACH OF LIMITS ON CERTAIN ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Amendments made: No. 112, in page 45, line 38, leave out 'or otherwise lent to'.

No. 113, in page 46, line 4, at end insert—

'(the limits referred to in paragraphs *(a)*, *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* above being referred to in this section as "the relevant statutory limits")'.

No. 114, in page 46, leave out lines 12 to 16 and insert—

'*(a)* that the assets and liabilities of the society will not, by the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the date of the direction, exceed the relevant statutory limits as applied at the last day of that period, and

(b) that they will not thereafter exceed the relevant statutory limits.

(3A) For the purpose of applying the relevant statutory limits as directed by subsection (3)*(a)* above—

(a) in the case of a limit which operates by reference to the end of a financial year of a society, the financial year of the society shall be treated as ending on the day as at which the limits are to be applied; and

(b) the assets and liabilities of the society shall be determined by reference to a balance sheet prepared by the directors by reference to that day and sent to the Commission within the period of three months beginning with that day;

and section 75(4) shall apply in the event of a default in complying with this provision as it applies in the event of a default in complying with subsection (2) of that section.'.

No. 115, in page 46, line 19, leave out paragraph *(a)* and insert—

'*(a)* within the period of six months beginning with the date of the direction, to submit to its members for their approval at a meeting or by ballot the requisite transfer resolutions for a transfer of the business of the society to a company under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*; and'.

No. 116, in page 46, line 23, at end insert 'or ballot'.

No. 117, in page 46, line 28, leave out paragraph *(b)* and insert—

'*(b)* within the period of six months beginning with the date of the direction, to submit to its members for their approval at a meeting or by ballot the requisite transfer resolutions for a transfer of the business of the society to a company under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*;'.

No. 118, in page 47, line 7, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(7) Where a meeting or ballot is held, in pursuance of a direction under subsection (4) or (5) above, for the purpose of voting on the requisite transfer resolutions, then—

(a) if the resolutions are agreed to and the confirmation of the transfer by the Commission is obtained, the society shall proceed under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)* to transfer its business to a successor company;

(b) if either resolution is disagreed to, the society shall notify the Commission of that fact as soon as it is practicable to do so.'.

No. 119, in page 47, line 33, leave out from 'to' to end of line 34 and insert

'submit to members the requisite transfer resolutions,'.

No. 120, in page 47, line 36, leave out from 'or' to end of line 37 and insert

'submit to members the requisite transfer resolutions,'.

No. 121, in page 47, line 41, leave out paragraph *(e)* and insert—

'*(e)* to agree to the requisite transfer resolutions submitted to the members in pursuance of subsection (4) or (5) above, or'.

No. 122, in page 48, line 1, leave out paragraph *(f)* and insert—

'*(f)* where it has agreed to the requisite transfer resolutions to proceed under section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)* to transfer its business to the successor company,'.

No. 123, in page 48, line 6, at end add—

'(11) In this section "confirmation", "the requisite transfer resolutions" and "transfer" have the same meaning as in section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 35

POWERS IN EVENT OF BREACH OF LIMITS ON ASSETS OR LIABILITIES OR ABUSE OF PURPOSE OF BUILDING SOCIETY

Amendments made: No. 124, in page 48, line 33, leave out first 'business' and insert 'action'.

No. 125, in page 48, line 34, at end insert—

'(3A) Where the High Court makes an order under subsection (2) above, the Commission shall give a copy of it to the central office and the central office shall keep the copy in the public file of the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 36

POWER TO DETERMINE BUILDING SOCIETY'S POWERS

Amendment made: No. 126, in page 50, line 32, after 'exercise', insert ', or purported exercise,'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 37

THE DETERMINATION: NOTIFICATION, EFFECT, APPEAL

Amendments made: No. 127, in page 51, line 22, leave out 'materially'.

No. 128, in page 52, line 16, leave out 'or wrong'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 38

POWER TO MAKE PROHIBITION ORDERS

Amendments made: No. 129, in page 52, line 44, leave out 'by means' and insert

'or otherwise in its possession by virtue'.

No. 130, in page 52, line 44, at end insert—

'(2A) A disposal of assets in pursuance of a prohibition order shall vest the assets in the transferee but without prejudice to any claim against the society by a person who had an interest in the assets.'.

No. 131, in page 54, line 3, at end insert—

'(10A) The requirement of subsection (10) is satisfied by serving a copy on each director whose appointment has been officially notified and the non-receipt of a copy by a director or the chief executive does not affect the validity of the direction.'.

No. 132, in page 54, line 4, after '(11)', insert

'Subject to subsection (11A) below,'.

No. 133, in page 54, line 5, at end insert—

'(11A) The Commission may suspend or revoke a prohibition order so far as it relates to an asset the disposal of which appears to it, on the application of the society, to be impracticable.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 39

POWER TO DIRECT APPLICATION TO RENEW AUTHORISATION

Amendments made: No. 134, in page 55, line 18, leave out third 'the' and insert 'any'.

No. 135, in page 55, line 43, at end insert

'except where section *(Rights of appeal)* (4) applies'.

No. 136, in page 55, line 43, at end insert—

'(7A) If the Commission refuses to grant authorisation to a building society under this section it shall inform the central office of the fact and the date on which the current authorisation of the society expires; and the central office shall record that date in the public file of the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 40

IMPOSITION OF CONDITIONS ON CURRENT AUTHORISATION

Amendments made: No. 137, in page 56, line 40, leave out '(6)' and insert '(6A)'.

No. 138, in page 57, line 26, leave out 'but it' and insert '(6A) The Commission'.

No. 139, in page 57, line 32, after second 'time' insert

'(and notwithstanding any pending appeal)'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 41

REVOCATION OF AUTHORISATION

Amendments made: No. 140, in page 58, line 3, leave out from 'raise' to end of line and insert

'funds or accept deposits of'.

No. 141, in page 58, line 8, leave out 'and annual business statement'.

No. 142, in page 58, line 28, leave out paragraph *(d)*.

No. 143, in page 59, line 18, at end insert—

'(8A) Where a society's authorisation is revoked under this section, the Commission shall inform the central office of the fact and the date on which the revocation takes effect and the central office shall record that date in the public file of the society.'. —*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 42

REAUTHORISATION

Amendments made: No. 144, in page 59, line 28, at end insert

'expired under section 39(7) or'.

No. 145, in page 59, line 29, leave out '(3)*(c)* or *(d)*' and insert 'or (3)*(c)*'.

No. 146, in page 59, line 33, leave out 'or otherwise borrow'.

No. 147, in page 60, line 1, leave out third 'the' and insert 'any'.

No. 148, in page 60, line 37, at end insert—

'(8A) On granting reauthorisation under this section, the Commission shall inform the central office and the central office shall record that fact, and the date on which the reauthorisation was granted, in the public file of the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 43

SUPPLEMENTARY: THE CRITERIA FOR PRUDENT MANAGEMENT

Amendments made: No. 149, in page 61, line 11, after '(3)', insert

'For the purposes of this Act'.

No. 150, in page 61, line 26, at end insert 'in their respective positions,'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 44

POWERS TO CONTROL ADVERTISING

Amendments made: No. 151, in page 63, line 34, leave out 'giving of the'.

No. 152, in page 64, line 16, leave out from 'and' to 'does' in line 19 and insert

'the non-receipt of a notice of the direction by a director or the chief executive.'.

No. 153, in page 64, line 27, leave out from beginning to 'and' in line 31.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 45

POWERS TO AVOID APPARENT ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER BODIES

Amendments made: No. 154, in page 65, line 5, leave out 'investment'.

No. 155, in page 66, line 3, at end insert—

'(6A) Any direction under subsection (2), (5) or (6) above shall be given by the Commission by notice served on the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 46

POWERS TO OBTAIN INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS ETC.

Amendments made: No. 156, in page 67, line 7, at end insert—

'(2A) Where the Commission has grounds under section 45(1) for giving a direction to a building society under subsection (2) of that section in relation to another body corporate this section also applies to information, documents or other material, or explanations of matters, which relate to the business of that other body'.

No. 419, in page 68, line 23, leave out from 'exceeding' to 'for' and insert '£200'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 51

INSPECTIONS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendment made: No. 157, in page 79, line 17, leave out 'forward' and insert 'send'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 53

CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND SECRETARY

Amendments made: No. 158, in page 80, line 27, at end insert—

'(2A) The offices of chief executive and secretary of a building society may be held by the same person.'.

No. 159, in page 80, line 38, leave out from first 'the' to 'in' and insert

'date on which he become, or ceased to be, chief executive; and the central office shall record the person's name and the date on which he began to hold, or, as the case may be, ceased to hold office.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 54

DIRECTORS: ELECTIONS AND RETIREMENT

Amendments made: No. 160, in page 81, line 23, at end insert

'but cannot be required to cast all or any of his votes'.

No. 161, in page 81, line 24, after 'subsections', insert '(4B),'.

No. 162, in page 81, line 26, at end insert—

'(4A) The rules of a building society may require its directors to retire at a prescribed age without eligibility for re-election or reappointment; and, if the age so prescribed is no greater than the age which is the normal retirement age for the purposes of this section, subsection (5) below shall have no application to the directors of the society.

(4B) If the rules of a building society make the provision authorised by subsection (4A) above, a person who has attained the age so prescribed shall not be eligible to be elected as a director of the society.'.

No. 163, in page 81, line 27, after '(5)', insert

'Except in a case where the operation of this subsection is excluded by subsection (4A) above,'.

No. 164, in page 81, line 33, leave out 'communicated' and insert 'notified'.

No. 165, in page 81, line 34, leave out from 'election' to end of line 35.

No. 166, in page 81, line 39, at end insert

'; and "the compulsory retirement age", for a society whose rules make the provision authorised by subsection (4A) above, means the age so prescribed in its rules.'.

No. 167, in page 81, line 42, after 'hold', insert 'beneficially'.

No. 168, in page 82, line 4, leave out subsection (8).

No. 169 in page 82, line 16, leave out 'amount' and insert 'value'.

No. 170, in page 82, line 22, leave out 'falling within paragraph *(b)* below' and insert

'provided for by paragraph (b) below or rules under section 55(9A)'.

No. 174, in page 82, line 32, after 'age', insert

'or, as the case may be, the compulsory retirement age'.

No. 413, in page 82, line 32, at end insert 'for earlier retirement'.

No. 172, in page 82, line 39, after 'attained', insert '(i)'.

No. 173, in page 82, line 39, after 'age', insert

'or

'(ii) the compulsory retirement age (where that age is less than the normal retirement age)'.

No. 174A, in page 83, line 8, after 'age', insert

'or, as the case may be, the compulsory retirement age.'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 55

DIRECTORS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS AS TO ELECTIONS, ETC.

Amendments made: No. 175, in page 84, line 2 leave out from 'require' to end of line and insert—

'*(a)* in the case of of a society with a qualifying asset holding, more than fifty members, and

(b) in the case of any other society, more than ten members,'.

No. 176, in page 84, line 4, after '54(9)*(b)*', insert 'in order to comply with this section'.

No. 177, in page 84, line 6, leave out from 'to' to 'to' in line 7 and insert

'hold, or have at any time during that period held, shares in the society'.

No. 178, in page 84, line 29, after 'above' insert—

'*(a)* includes power to make such transitional provision as the Commission considers necessary or expedient, and *(b)*'.

No. 179, in page 84, line 35, leave out 'send to' and insert 'notify'.

No. 180, in page 84, line 36, leave out 'the notice' and insert 'as'.

No. 181, in page 85, line 3, leave out 'at' and insert 'in'.

No. 182, in page 85, line 22, leave out from 'matter' to end of line 28 and insert

'or for frivolous or vexatious purposes;

and that subsection shall not be taken to confer any rights on members, or to impose any duties on a building society, in respect of an address which does not relate directly to the affairs of the society.

(8A) The Commission shall hear and determine any dispute arising under subsection (8)*(a)* above, whether on the application of the society or of any other person who claims to be aggrieved.'.

No. 183, in page 85, line 29, leave out

'Subject to subsection (10) below'.

No. 184, in page 85, line 33, at end insert

', and an election so conducted shall be void'.

No. 185, in page 85, line 33, at end insert—

'(9A) The rules of a building society, if they provide for the retirement by rotation of its directors, may provide that a person elected to fill a vacant seat on the board must retire at the annual general meeting at which, in accordance with the rules for retirement by rotation, the seat is to fall vacant.

(9B) Subsection (9A) above applies to any vacancy arising when an elected director ceases to hold office for any reason before the annual general meeting at which (disregarding his age) the seat is due to fall vacant under section 54(10)*(a)*.'.

No. 186, in page 85, line 34, leave out subsections (10) and (11).

No. 187, in page 86, line 22, leave out from first 'the' to 'in' and insert

'date on which he became, or ceased to be, a director; and the central office shall record the person's name and the date on which he began to hold, or, as the case may be, ceased to hold office.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 59

RESTRICTION ON LOANS, ETC. TO DIRECTORS AND PERSONS CONNECTED WITH THEM

Amendments made: No. 188, inppage 90, line 10 after 'which', insert

', when aggregated with any other relevant loans,'.

No. 189, in page 90, line 17 after 'which', insert

', when aggregated with any other relevant loans,'.

No 190, in page 90, line 24 after 'which', insert

', when aggregated with the value of any other relevant leases or hirings,'.

No. 191, in page 90, line 31 after 'amounting', insert

',when aggregated with any other relevant payment,'.

No. 192, in page 91, line 15 after 'provided', insert

', when aggregated with any other relevant provision of funds,'.

No. 193, in page 91, line 30 at end insert—

'(9A) In this section—

"authorising provision" and "authorised", in relation to a transaction of a description falling within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* of subsection (1) above, mean respectively any provision of subsection (2), (3) or (4) or constituted by subsection (5) above and any transaction or thing done to which that paragraph does not apply or which is not precluded from being done by virtue of that provision; "outstanding", in relation to loans, means outstanding in respect of principal and interest and, in relation to the provision of funds subject to a condition for repayment or discharge of any other liability, means unpaid or undischarged to any extent; "provision of funds" includes anything else which, by virtue of subsection (5) above, a society is not precluded from

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

doing by subsection (1) above; and "relevant", in relation to a transaction of a description falling within paragraph *(a)*, *(b)* or *(c)* of subsection (1) above, means an outstanding or, in the case of a lease or hiring, current transaction of that description (whether entered into by, or by arrangement with, the society) not being one authorised by any other authorising provision.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 61

DIRECTORS, ETC, NOT TO ACCEPT COMMISSIONS IN CONNECTION WITH LOANS

Amendments made: No. 400, in page 93, line 19 after 'and', insert 'subject to subsection (3A) below'.

No. 401, in page 93, line 29 at end insert—

'(3A) No offence under paragraph *(a)* of subsection (3) above is committed by the person who paid the commission unless he did so knowing the circumstances that constituted the offence under that paragraph on the part of the person who accepted it from him'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 62

RECORDS OF LOANS, ETC. FOR DIRECTORS FALLING WITHIN S.59

Amendments made: No 194, in page 95, line 13 leave out 'as respects' and insert 'all'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 63

DISCLOSURE AND RECORD OF INCOME OF RELATED BUSINESSES

Amendments made: No 195, in page 95, line 37 leave out from 'both' to end of line 17 on page 96 and insert

'is a director or other officer of a building society and is, or is a director of or partner in, a business associate of the society, this section shall apply, as respects that year, to that person in relation to the business of the business associate.

(2) A person is a "business associate" of a building society in any financial year of the society if that person—

(a) carries on a business which consists of or includes the provision of relevant services,

(b) provides relevant services during that year to, or to other persons in connection with advances secured on land made by, the society, and

(c) is neither a subsidiary of nor a body associated with the society (within the meaning of section 16);'.

No. 197, in page 96, line 26, leave out from first 'a' to 'provides' in line 27 and insert

'business associate of a building society'.

No. 198, in page 96, line 29, leave out 'associated body or firm' and insert 'business associate'.

No. 199, in page 96, line 39, leave out subsection (7) and insert—

'(7) Where this section applies, as respects a financial year of a building society, to a person as a director or other officer of the society in relation to the business of a business associate, that person shall furnish the society with the requisite particulars of that business.'.

No. 200, in page 97, line 1, leave out from second 'of' to 'are' in line 2 and insert

'a business associate of a building society'.

No. 420, in page 97, line 2, leave out from 'are' to end of line 6 and insert—

(a) except where an election under paragraph *(b)* below is in force, those specified in Part I of Schedule 10 to this Act;

(b) if a building society elects to adopt Part II of that Schedule for its directors as respects a financial year, those specified in Part II of that Schedule; and

(c) as regards relevant services designated by an order under subsection (6) above, such particulars as are specified in the order;

and Part III of the Schedule has effect to supplement Parts I and II and includes a definition of "the volume of the business" for the purposes of this section.'.

No. 421, in page 97, line 7, after '(9)', insert

'An election by a building society to adopt Part II of Schedule 10 as regards the requisite particulars to be furnished by its directors must be made in writing to the Commission before the beginning of the financial year as respects which it is made and'.

No. 201, in page 97, line 10, leave out subsection (10) and insert—

'(10) For the purpose of enabling him to furnish the requisite particulars of the business of a business associate of a building society the person who is under the obligation to furnish them to the society may require any person who is a member of or partner in, or holds any office or employment with, the business associate to furnish him with such information relating to its business as he may reasonably require for that purpose.'.

No. 202, in page 97, line 28, leave out 'body or firm associated with' and insert 'business associate of'.

No. 204, in page 98, line 17, leave out from first 'services"' to end of line 18 and insert

', in relation to—

(a) land in England and Wales or Northern Ireland, has the same meaning as it has in paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 17 to this Act with the modification, in relation to land in Northern Ireland, that "disposition" does not include any disposition in the case of such a lease as is excepted, by section 4 of the Landlord and Tenant Law Amendment Act (Ireland) 1860, from the requirements of that section, and

(b) heritable property in Scotland, includes drafting all writs relating to such property and negotiating and concluding missives for its purchase, sale, transfer, lease and sublease;'.

No. 205, in page 98, line 21, at end add

'that is to say, a person who holds a licence under Part II of the Administration of Justice Act 1985'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 65

ACCOUNTING RECORDS AND SYSTEMS OF BUSINESS CONTROL, ETC.

Amendment made: No. 206, in page 101, line 26, after 'place', insert 'or places'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 70

SUMMARY FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR MEMBERS AND INVESTORS

Amendment made: No. 207, in page 106, line 31, leave out 'investors' and insert 'depositors'. — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 73

AUDITORS' DUTIES AND POWERS

Amendments made: No. 208, in page 110, line 11, at end insert—

'(1A) If the auditors are of the opinion that the annual accounts are not in agreement with the accounting records they shall state that fact in their report.'.

No. 209, in page 110, line 14, after 'records', insert 'of the society'.

No. 402, in page 111, line 20, leave out 'misleading, false or deceptive' and insert 'false or misleading'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 76

AUDITORS' DUTIES TO COMMISSION AND RELATED RIGHTS

Amendment made: No. 210, in page 114, line 37, leave out 'send' and insert 'furnish'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 77

MODES OF DISSOLUTION AND WINDING UP

Amendment made: No. 211, in page 115, line 8, at end insert

' except where it is dissolved by virtue of section 82(5), 83(10) or *(Transfer of business to commercial company)* (8).'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 78

DISSOLUTION BY CONSENT

Amendments made: No. 212, in page 116, line 28, at end insert 'or to a company'.

No. 213, in page 116, line 31, after first 'in' insert 'a company or'.

No. 214, in page 116, line 36, leave out 'in accordance with' and insert 'under'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 79

VOLUNTARY WINDING UP

Amendment made: No. 215, in page 116, line 43, leave out 'forwarded' and insert 'sent by the society'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 80

WINDING UP BY COURT: GROUNDS AND PETITIONERS

Amendment made: No. 216, in page 117, line 33, leave out 'and by' and insert 'or'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 81

SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS: APPLICATION OF COMPANY INSOLVENCY LAW

Amendments made: No. 217, in page 118, line 34, leave out 'give notice' and insert 'send a copy'.

No. 218, in page 118, line 35, leave out 'notice' and insert 'copy'.

No. 219, in page 119, line 20, leave out 'those sections' and insert 'that section'.

No. 220, in page 119, line 21, leave out subsection (5).—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 82

AMALGAMATIONS

Amendments made: No. 221, in page 120, line 30, after second 'its', insert 'purpose and'.

No. 222, in page 120, line 33, leave out 'and'.

No. 223, in page 120, line 36, leave out lines 36 and 37 and insert—

'*(c)* retain and register one copy of the memorandum and of the rules,

(d) return another copy to the secretary of the successor, together with a certificate of registration, and

(e) keep another copy, together with a copy of the certificate of incorporation and of the certificate of registration of the memorandum and the rules, in the public file of the successor society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 83

TRANSFER OF ENGAGEMENTS

Amendments made: No. 224, in page 122, line 7, leave out 'the' and insert

'a copy of the instrument of'.

No. 225, in page 122, line 15, at end add—

'(9) The central office shall keep a copy of the instrument and of the registration certificate issued under subsection (8) above in the public file of the building society taking the transfer.'.

No. 226, in page 122, line 15, at end insert—

'(10) Where all its engagements have been transferred, the society shall, by virtue of this subsection, be dissolved on the date specified in the registration certificate; but the transfer effected by subsection (8) above shall be deemed to have been effected immediately before the dissolution.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 84

MERGERS: PROVISIONS SUPPLEMENTING SS. 82 AND 83

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move amendment No. 227, in page 112, line 22, leave out lines 22 to 26 and insert 'imposing requirements for notification by a building society, to its members and to the central office, of the receipt by the society of proposals for a transfer of engagements or an amalgamation'.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to take Government amendments Nos. 345 to 354.

Mr. Stewart: These amendments deal with the much debated subject of what has been described as obstructive mergers. This is where a merger approach is made to a society but is not put to the members of the society that receives the approach. During the debates on the Bill in the House and in Committee and outside, a great deal of anxiety has been expressed about the proposed provisions. In response to those anxieties, I have decided that the whole process should be greatly simplified in a way that removes all the anxieties that have been expressed by hon. Members and the BSA.

In future, if these proposals are accepted, there will be only the need for notification. There will be no special voting procedures and it will be open to members to use the general provisions of the constitution of the building society once the basic information is available to them. The paper circulated by the BSA says:

"The government has now greatly modified and simplified its proposals which are now acceptable to the Association."

I hope that they will also be acceptable to the House.

Dr. McDonald: I have received a letter from a small building society which continues to express anxieties. I know that the Economic Secretary has made plain the purpose of the amendments, but he may wish to add one or two points. The letter recognises that the Economic Secretary has considerably watered down the original provisions on proposals for mergers direct to members. The building society that wrote to me still feels that the revised provisions could prove embarrassing for small societies in particular and could be open to abuse. It says:

"For example there would be nothing to stop a predator society making a merger approach to a significant number of

[Dr. McDonald]

small societies, all of whom would be bound to report in the Notice of Annual General Meeting a statement of any merger approach received"—

unless that has specifically been requested to be kept confidential. The building society still feels that it would be preferable if the contested merger provisions could be removed from the Bill. It feels that unless this is done, the provisions will continue to place unreasonable pressure on small societies. As the Minister knows, these societies often provide for specialised or local needs.

The letter is couched in fairly general terms, but it would be useful if the Economic Secretary could respond. If any points need further reassurance, perhaps he would make them plain.

Mr. John Townend (Bridlington): I declare an interest as a director of a small building society.

My remarks are directed to amendment No. 3520. As the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) has said, schedule 13, as originally drafted, could have sounded the death knell of the small local building societies, which would have been at the mercy of the large predator societies. This point was put forcibly by hon. Members on both sides in Committee. We were pleased by the way in which my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary took our point and undertook to bring back proposals on Report. He said:

"I think that the consequences will be the opposite. But I am certainly willing to build in a further provision . . . which would restrict the obstructive mergers procedures only to cases that were not disproportionate in size. That would rule out the aggressive approaches by large societies to smaller ones."—[*Official Report, Standing Committee A*, 18 February 1986; c. 399.]

That was helpful. I am delighted that the new proposals go further and that all that the societies are now required to do is to make a statement that they have received an approach and give the name of the building society.

As the hon. Member for Thurrock said, one or two small societies are still worried, because they feel that some large societies will make an approach to 10 or 15 small societies not just once but every year so that every year, at every annual general meeting, notices will go out with the merger statement saying that the Halifax building society or the Abbey National has made an approach. Some of the small societies feel that this might lead to a war of attrition. I have some sympathy for that point of view, but I feel that they are exaggerating. My hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury has moved far towards the point of view that we put in Committee. The new provisions will allow small local building societies that offer important services in many of the regions to survive, provided that they are efficient. Therefore, I thank my——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Building Societies Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour. — *[Mr. Donald Thompson.]*

Building Societies Bill

Question again proposed, That the amendment be made.

Mr. Townend: Therefore, I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for dealing with those points.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): My hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) referred to the Abbey National building society. I want to raise with my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary to the Treasury a point on the 20 per cent. conversion issue. As it has been maintained that this will be a realistic option for building societies, will my hon. Friend say what evidence might be required before it would seem reasonable to learn about that requirement of 20 per cent., short of a building society risking loss of confidence by attempting the leap and then failing?

Mr. Ian Stewart: If my hon. Friend will consult the *Official Report* of today's proceedings he will find that I touched on that matter earlier when I was asked a similar question.

As for the substance of this group of amendments, I am happy to respond to the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald). I do not believe that the anxieties of the society whose letter she quoted will be borne out in practice. She said that it was concerned that these provisions might place unreasonable pressure on small societies. I do not think that that will be the case. Small societies are protected by the disproportionate merger procedures, so they would be less vulnerable to approaches of the kind that that society mentioned. If those two provisions are taken together, building societies will not be exposed in that damaging way.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Bridlington (Mr. Townend) for what he had to say. I do not believe that the previous provisions would have sounded anything so dramatic as the death knell of smaller societies, but I came to the conclusion, after further consideration of this matter, that the proposed remedy was out of scale to the problem. Clearly there was a problem, but I was not convinced that it was necessary to erect such an elaborate procedure to deal with it. The notification process that I have now put forward is a practical and sensible option in the circumstances. I think that the hon. Member for Thurrock can be assured that, coupled with the disproportionate merger provisions, it should not have an adverse effect on the society that she mentioned.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 85

MERGERS: COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF OFFICE AND BONUSES TO MEMBERS

Amendment made: No. 228, in page 125, line 9, leave out 'chief executive' and insert 'other officer'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 86

TRANSFER OF BUSINESS TO COMMERCIAL COMPANY

Amendment made: No. 229, in page 126, line 21, leave out Clause 86.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 87

CANCELLATION OF REGISTRATION

Amendment made: No. 230, in page 127, line 23, leave out Clause 87.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 89

RESTRICTION OF USE OF CERTAIN NAMES AND DESCRIPTIONS

Amendments made: No. 231, in page 129, line 5, leave out '(7)' and insert '(7B)'.

No. 232, in page 130, line 44, at end insert—

'(7A) Subsection (1) above does not prohibit a person from using a description (other than his name) which, or from holding himself out in a way that, indicates a connection between himself or his business and one or more building societies if and to the extent he has been authorised to do so in writing by the society or societies in question.

(7B) Subsection (1) above does not prohibit a person from using a description (other than his name) which, or from holding himself out in a way that, indicates a connection between himself or his business and building societies generally where the connection indicated is not misleading.'.

No. 233, in page 131, line 10, leave out 'for Northern Ireland'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 90

POWER TO REQUIRE BUILDING SOCIETY TO CHANGE MISLEADING NAME

Amendment made: No. 234, in page 131, line 37, after 'may', insert

', by notice served on the society,'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 93

OFFENCES: LIABILITY OF OFFICERS AND DEFENCE OF DUE DILIGENCE

Amendments made: No. 235, in page 133, line 22, after '9(10)' insert

'section *(Costs, procedure and evidence)* (5)'.

No. 236, in page 133, line 32, leave out 'an' and insert 'that'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 98

INTERPRETATION

Amendments made: No. 237, in page 135, line 36, at end insert

'and references to class 1 or class 2 advances are to be construed in accordance with sections 11 and 12;'.

No. 238, in page 136, leave out lines 20 to 24.

No. 239, in page 136, line 44, at end insert—

'"deposit" includes loan, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;'.

No. 240, in page 137, line 26, at end insert—

'"mobile home loan" means a loan under section *(Loans for mobile homes)*;'.

No. 241, in page 137, line 32, at end insert

'and "notice to" a person means notice given to that person, and "notify" shall be construed accordingly;'.

No. 242, in page 137, line 39, at end insert—

'"officially notified", in relation to the appointment or address of a director or the chief executive of a building society, means respectively notified to, and the last address notified to, the central office under section 55(13) or 53(5), as the case may be;'.

No. 243, in page 137, line 47, leave out 'section 14(10)*(a)*' and insert

'section *(Qualifying asset holding for certain powers)*'.

No. 244, in page 138, line 2, leave out '32(4)' and insert '13'.

No. 245, in page 138, line 10, at end insert—

'"special resolution" has the meaning given by paragraph 26 of Schedule 2 to this act;'.

No. 246, in page 138, leave out line 16 and insert

'means the aggregate of its class 1 assets, its class 2 assets and its class 3 assets;'.

No. 247, in page 138, line 21, at end insert—

'(2A) The value in sterling of any transaction effected by or with a building society in another currency shall be determined for any purpose of this Act in accordance with directions given by the Commission under this subsection.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 99

AMENDMENTS, REPEALS AND TRANSITIONAL AND SAVING PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 248, in page 138, line 30, after 'repealed', insert 'or revoked'.

No. 249, in page 138, in line 32, after 'repealed', insert 'or revoked'.

No. 250, in page 138, line 34, after 'repeal', insert 'or revocation'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Clause 102

PROVISION OF CONVEYANCING SERVICES BY BUILDING SOCIETIES AND OTHER RECOGNISED INSTITUTIONS

Amendment made: No. 409, in page 139, line 10, leave out 'and other institutions' and insert ', other institutions and individuals'.

Amendments made: No. 251, New Schedule—

'SCHEMES FOR INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS

PART I

MATTERS TO BE PROVIDED FOR IN SCHEMES

The matters for which provision is, subject to Parts II and III of this Schedule, to be made are the following:

Administration

1. The establishment and functioning of an independent body (whether corporate or unincorporate) which is to administer the scheme.

2. The identity of the members.

3. The manner in which the expenses of the scheme are to be met by the members.

The adjudicator

4. The appointment of an independent adjudicator to conduct investigations under the scheme and his tenure of office and remuneration.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

Scope of scheme

5. The matters action in relation to which is to be subject to investigation under the scheme and the grounds for making it subject to investigation.

Functions of adjudicator

6. The duty of the adjudicator to investigate, and make determinations on, actions duly referred for investigation.

7. The powers of, and procedure to be followed in the conduct of investigations by, the adjudicator.

8. The powers of the adjudicator on the making of determinations.

Determinations and their effects

9. The extent to which determinations are binding.

10. The manner in which determinations are to be communicated and published.

Reports by investigators to administering body

11. The making to the body administering the scheme of regular reports by the adjudicator as to the discharge of his functions, and their publication.

Amendment or revocation of scheme

12. The manner of amending or revoking the scheme.

Accession to membership

13. Accession to membership of other societies.

Withdrawal from membership

14. Withdrawal from membership.

PART II

REQUIREMENTS FOR RECOGNISED SCHEMES: MATTERS OF COMPLAINT

Share accounts

1. The operation or termination of a share account and the grant or refusal to grant a shareholder other facilities normally available to shareholders of his description.

Note: The operation or termination of a share account includes any aspect of the relationship or termination of the relationship between the society and a shareholder as such and in particular the operation or termination of any services incidental to such accounts.

Note: The grant of facilities includes the terms on which they are granted.

Deposit accounts

2. The operation or termination of a deposit account and the grant or refusal to grant a depositor other facilities normally available to depositors of his description.

Note: The operation or termination of a deposit account includes any aspect of the relationship or the termination of the relationship between the society and a depositor as such, including in particular the operation or termination of any services incidental to such accounts.

Note: The grant of facilities includes the terms on which they are granted.

Borrowing members: class 1 or class 2 advances

3. The operation or termination of the account of a member borrowing on a class 1 or class 2 advance and the grant or refusal to grant a borrowing member of that description other or further class 1, or as the case may be, class 2 advances secured on the same or different land or other facilities normally available to borrowing members of his description.

Note: The operation or termination of the account of a borrowing member includes any aspect of the relationship or the termination of the relationship between the society and a borrowing member as such, including in particular the exertise of the right of foreclosure or any other power over the land by virtue of the mortgage.

Note: The grant of advances includes the terms on which they are granted.

Borrowers: mobile home loans

4. The operation or termination of the account of a borrower under section *(Loans for mobile homes)* and the grant or refusal to grant to a borrower under that section other facilities normally available to borrowers of his description.

Note: The operation or termination of the account of a borrower under section *(Loans for mobile homes)* includes any aspect of the relationship or the termination of the relationship between the lender and such a borrower, including in particular the exercise of any power over the security.

Note: The grant of facilities includes the terms on which they are granted.

Borrowers: other loans

5. The operation or termination of the account of a borrower under section 14 and the grant or refusal to grant a borrower under that section other facilities normally available to borrowers of his description.

Note: The operation or termination of the account of a borrower under section 14 includes any aspect of the relationship or the termination of the relationship between the lender and such a borrower including in particular, in the case of a secured loan, the exercise of any power over the security.

Note: The grant of facilities includes the terms on which they are granted.

Money transmission services

6. The terms on which they are provided, the operation of or the withdrawal of money transmission services.

Note: "Money transmission services" means the services of that description provided in accordance with Schedule 8 to this Act.

Foreign exchange facilities

7. The terms on which are provided, the operation of or the withdrawal of foreign exchange services.

Note: "Foreign exchange services" means services of that description provided in accordance with Schedule 8 to this Act.

Agency payments and receipts

8. The terms on which payments are made or received as agents or the operation or withdrawal of the service.

Note: The payments made or received as agents are those made or received in accordance with Schedule 8 to this Act.

Provision of credit

9. The operation or termination of the account of a borrower with the person providing the credit.

Note: The credit provided is credit provided under arrangements for the provision of credit in accordance with Schedule 8 to this Act.'.

PART III

MINIMUM REQUIREMENT FOR RECOGNISED SCHEMES: OTHER PROVISIONS

Grounds of complaint

1. The grounds for making action by a building society or associated body subject to investigation under the scheme must be that the action constitutes—

(a) in the case of a building society, a breach of the society's obligations under this Act, the rules or any other contract, or

(b) in the case of an associated body, a breach of the associated body's obligations under its rules (if any) or any contract, or

(c) unfair treatment, or

(d) maladministration,

in relation to the complainant and has caused him pecuniary loss or expense or inconvenience.

Permissible exclusions from investigation

2. A scheme must not exclude action from investigation on any other than the following grounds, that is to say—

(a) that the complaint is frivolous or vexatious;

(b) that the action is the subject of proceedings in a court of law or was the subject of such proceedings in which a judgment on the merits was given;

(c) that, where the society or associated body has a procedure for the resolution of complaints by it (an "internal procedure"), the procedure has not been invoked or has not been exhausted;

(d) that there has been undue delay in having the matter investigated under the scheme; or

(e) that the action in question occurred outside the United Kingdom.

Note: An internal procedure for resolution of complaints is not to be treated as having been invoked unless the complainant has made his complaint to the principal office of the society or, as the case may be, the registered office of the associated body and is not to be treated as having been exhausted unless more than three months has elapsed since the complainant invoked it without any decision on his complaint having been communicated to him.

Note: Delay in having a matter investigated under the scheme is not "undue delay" unless at least six months (disregarding the period for exhausting the society's or associated body's internal procedure) has expired since the matter came to the knowledge of the complainant; and a person is not, for this

purpose, to be presumed to have knowledge of the contents of a document which contains or relates to the terms or proposed terms of any transaction between him and the society.

Functions of adjudicator

3. A scheme must, as regards the duties and powers attached to the investigation of complaints under the scheme—

(a) impose on the adjudicator a duty, subject to any provision made in pursuance of sub-paragraph *(c)* below, to investigate and determine any complaint duly made;

(b) impose on the adjudicator a duty to afford the complainant and the society or associated body an opportunity to make representations (whether orally or in writing) in relation to the action complained of;

(c) confer power on the adjudicator to advise, mediate or act as conciliator before proceeding further with an investigation;

(d) confer power on the adjudicator to extend the scope of his investigation to other matters related to the action complained of; and

(e) confer on an adjudicator such powers to require information and documents relevant to the matter to be furnished to him as are necessary for the purposes of the investigation.

4.—(1) Subject to any provision made in pursuance of sub-paragraph (3) below, a scheme must authorise the adjudicator, in reaching his decision, to have regard to, but not to be bound by, any matter (whether or not of obligation) relevant to the action complained of and to question any decision.

(2) A scheme must impose on the adjudicator a duty, in reaching his decision, to have regard to—

(a) the rules (if any) of the society or associated body;

(b) the provisions of any deed or contract binding the society and the complainant or, as the case may be, the associated body and the complainant;

(c) the provisions of any code of conduct applicable to the conduct by the society or associated body of its affairs or business;

(d) any advertisement issued by the society or associated body in connection with any aspect of its activities and any communication with the complainant.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (4) below, a scheme may preclude the adjudicator, in his determination, from questioning the merits of any decision taken by the society or associated body with reference to—

(a) the taking or conduct of legal proceedings to enforce any right of the society or associated body; or

(b) the creditworthiness, for the purposes of any advance or other service or facility, of the complainant;

but not otherwise.

(4) Where investigation of a complaint on the ground of maladministration involves consideration by the adjudicator of any decision taken with reference to the creditworthiness of the complainant the scheme must confer power on the adjudicator to direct the society or associated body to take its decision again and reach it by proper procedures.

5.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, a scheme must confer power on the adjudicator, by his determination, to do either or both of the following, that is to say—

(a) direct the society or associated body whose action is complained of to take such steps as are specified in the determination;

(b) order the society or associated body whose action is complained of to pay the complainant a sum by way of compensation for the loss, expense or inconvenience caused by the action.

(2) A scheme may impose a limit on the amount of compensation that a society or associated body may be ordered to pay a complainant, but the limit must not be less than £100,000.

Effect of determinations and their communication

6.—(1) Subject to any provision made in pursuance of sub-paragraph (2) or (3) below, a scheme must provide that, if the complainant, by notice to the adjudicator within the period specified in the scheme, accepts his determination the society or associated body is under an obligation to take the steps it is directed to take or pay the compensation awarded or both.

(2) A scheme may relieve a society of the obligations imposed by a determination if, but only if, the society undertakes an obligation to give notice to its members of the reasons for its non-fulfilment of the obligations imposed by the determination in the next directors' report under section 69 and to give notice of those reasons to the public in such manner as the adjudicator requires.

(3) A scheme may relieve an associated body of the obligations imposed by a determination if, but only if, each of the building societies with which it is associated undertakes an obligation to give notice to its members of the reasons for the non-fulfilment of the obligations imposed by the determination in the next directors' report under section 69 and to give notice of those reasons to the public in such a manner as the adjudicator requires.

7. A scheme must impose on the adjudicator an obligation not to disclose, whether in his determination or otherwise, any information or opinion furnished in confidence to the society or, as the case may be, to the associated body for the purpose of any action on its part.

Reports by adjudicator to administering body

8. A scheme must require reports by the adjudicator as to the discharge of his functions to be made to the body administering the scheme not less frequently than once in every year.

Publication

9.—(1) A scheme must permit the body administering the scheme to publish the whole or any parts of the reports made to them by the adjudicator.

(2) A scheme, if it makes the provision authorised by paragraph 6(2) or (3) above, must require the body administering the scheme to send to the Commission, not less frequently than once in every year, particulars of the cases in which building societies have undertaken the alternative obligation authorised by either or both of those sub-paragraphs." — *[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Amendment made: No. 252, New Schedule—

'SCHEMES FOR INVESTIGATION OF COMPLAINTS: RECOGNITION, ACCESSION, ETC.

Preliminary

1. For the purposes of this Schedule, a scheme—

"qualifies for recognition" if it makes provision for the matters specified in Part I of Schedule *(Schemes for investigation of complaints)* and the matters action in relation to which is subject to investigation under the scheme consist of or include one or more of the prescribed matters of complaint; and

"conforms to the relevant requirements" if, in relation to a prescribed matter of complaint it makes action in relation to that matter subject to investigation in accordance with Part III of that Schedule;

and any reference to a scheme qualifying for recognition, or being recognised, to any "extent" indicates recognition of it for the purpose of investigations of action in relation to one or more prescribed matters of complaint.

(2) — (1) The function of the Commission of granting recognition of schemes is exercisable, in accordance with paragraph 4 or 5 below, on the Commission's own motion or on a submission for its approval made by or on behalf of any building societies.

(2) In this Part of this Schedule, in relation to a scheme recognised by the Commission to any extent, a "direction for its recognition" means a direction that the scheme is, to the extent specified in the direction, a scheme recognised by the Commission.

The register of recognised schemes

3. — (1) The central office shall maintain a register of recognised schemes for the investigation of complaints ("the register"), and the register shall—

(a) contain a copy of every scheme and the direction for its recognition a copy of which is directed to be kept in it by any provision of this Part of this Schedule; and

(b) be available for inspection on reasonable notice by members of the public on payment of the prescribed fee.

(2) Any member of the public shall be entitled, on payment of the prescribed fee, to be furnished with a copy of any scheme and the direction for its recognition kept in the register.

Procedure for recognition: Commission's initiative

4. — (1) If it appears to the Commission, from its own enquiries or from information made available to it, that a scheme has been made or is in operation which qualifies for recognition the Commission shall consider the scheme and the extent to which it qualifies for recognition.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

(2) If, on consideration of a scheme, the Commission is satisfied that the scheme qualifies for recognition and conforms to the relevant requirements in relation to one or more prescribed matters of complaint, the Commission shall approve the scheme as a recognised scheme to such extent as it considers appropriate.

(3) The Commission shall, on approving a scheme under this paragraph, give a direction for its recognition.

(4) On giving a direction for the recognition of a scheme, the Commission shall send a copy of the scheme and of the direction to the central office; and the central office shall keep the copy of the scheme and of the direction in the register.

Procedure for recognition: submission by societies

5.—(1) Submission by or on behalf of building societies of a scheme for approval by the Commission as a recognised scheme shall be made by an application for recognition which shall be—

(a) made in such manner as the Commission specifies, either generally or in any particular case; and

(b) accompanied by such information as the Commission may reasonably require, either generally or in any particular case, in order to make its decision on the application;

and in this paragraph "the applicants" means those societies or the person acting on their behalf for the purposes of the application.

(2) Where an application is made to the Commission for recognition of a scheme then—

(a) if it appears to the Commission that the scheme qualifies for recognition and conforms to the relevant requirements in respect of one or more of the prescribed matters of complaint, the Commission shall approve the scheme as a recognised scheme to such extent as it considers appropriate;

(b) if it appears to the Commission that the scheme, with modifications, will, in addition to qualifying for recognition, conform to the relevant requirements in respect of one or more of the prescribed matters of complaint, and the applicants agree on appropriate modifications within the period of 21 days from the date on which the Commission notifies the applicants of the modifications it proposes for their agreement, the Commission shall approve the scheme as modified as a recognised scheme to such extent as it considers appropriate;

but otherwise it shall withhold its approval.

(3) The Commission shall, on approving a scheme, give a direction for its recognition and send copies of the direction to the applicants.

(4) On giving a direction for the recognition of a scheme, the Commission shall also send a copy of the scheme and of the direction to the central office; and the central office shall keep the copy of the scheme and of the direction in the register.

Procedure on accession to schemes

6.—(1) A building society which accedes to a recognised scheme or has acceded to a scheme which becomes a recognised scheme shall, within the period of 21 days beginning with the date of its accession or on which it received a copy of the direction for its recognition, as the case may be, send a notice of that fact to the central office and to the Commission.

(2) A notice by a society under paragraph (1) above shall specify the prescribed matters of complaint action in relation to which by the society is subject to investigation under the scheme.

(3) The central office, on receiving such a notice from a society, shall, if satisfied that the scheme is a recognised scheme to the extent required to enable the society to comply with its duty under section *(schemes for the investigation of complaints)* (3) in relation to the prescribed matters of complaint specified in the notice, record the accession of the society to the scheme in the public file of the society.

(4) If a building society fails to comply with sub-paragraph (1) above, the society shall be liable on summary conviction—

(a) to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale; and

(b) in the case of a continuing offence, to an additional fine not exceeding £100 for every day during which the offence continues;

and so shall any director of the society who is also guilty of the offence.

Withdrawal of recognition

7.—(1) The Commission may withdraw its recognition of a scheme if it appears to the Commission that—

(a) the scheme does not conform to the relevant requirements; or

(b) the scheme is so operated as not to conform to those requirements.

(2) Withdrawal of recognition of a scheme under this paragraph may operate in relation to the scheme as a whole or to the extent to which the scheme makes one or more prescribed matters of complaint subject to investigation under it.

8.—(1) If the Commission proposes at any time to withdraw recognition of a scheme to any extent, it shall serve on each member, on the body administering the scheme and on the adjudicator under the scheme, a notice stating—

(a) that the Commission proposes to withdraw recognition and to what extent;

(b) the grounds for the proposed withdrawal of recognition; and

(c) that the person receiving the notice may make representations with respect to the proposed withdrawal within such period of not less than 14 days as may be specified in the notice.

(2) The Commission shall, before reaching a decision on whether to withdraw recognition, consider any representations made to it in accordance with sub-paragraph (1) above and shall serve on every person on whom it served a notice under that sub-paragraph a notice stating its decision and the grounds for it.

9. Withdrawal of recognition by the Commission shall take effect as from such date as is specified in the notice of its decision, being a date not less than one year nor more than two years after the date of the notice.

Withdrawal from membership

10.—(1) A building society wishing to withdraw from membership of a recognised scheme shall send notices of its proposed withdrawal to the central office and to the Commission.

(2) A notice by a society under subparagraph (1) above shall specify the prescribed matters of complaint action in relation to which by the society is subject to investigation, or on its withdrawal, will become a member under, which, as regards each of the prescribed matters of complaint specified in the notice, action by the society is or will be subject to investigation.

(3) The central office, on receiving such a notice from a society, if satisfied that its withdrawal from the scheme will not result in a failure by it to comply with the duty imposed on it by section *(schemes for the investigation of complaints)* (3), shall confirm the withdrawal of the society from the scheme; but, if the central office is not so satisfied, the central office shall withhold its confirmation.

(4) If the central office withholds its confirmation of a society's withdrawal from a scheme, the society shall continue to be a member of the scheme and bound and entitled under the scheme accordingly.

(5) On confirming the withdrawal of a society from a scheme the central office shall send to the society and to the Commission notice of its decision and the central office shall record the decision in the public file of the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Amendment made: No. 253, New Schedule—

'SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

Part I

PROCEEDINGS IN COURT

Jurisdiction of the court

1.—(1) No court other than the High Court or, in the case of a building society whose principal office is in Scotland the Court of Session, shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine disputes to which the paragraph applies; and, in this Part of the Schedule, "the court" means the High Court or, as the case may be, the Court of Session.

(2) This paragraph applies to any dispute—

(a) between a building society and a member of the society in his capacity as a member, or

(b) between a building society and a representative of such a member in that capacity.

in respect of any rights or obligations arising from the rules of the society or any provision of this Act or any statutory instrument under it.

(3) Except in the cases referred to in sub-paragraph (5) below, no disputes to which this paragraph applies may be referred to arbitration.

(4) The court shall not hear and determine any dispute arising out of section 55(8)*(a)* or paragraph 28(4)*(a)* of Schedule 2 to this Act.

(5) The court shall not hear and determine any dispute which is required to be referred to arbitration under paragraph 4 below or which is referred to the Commission under paragraph 6 or to an adjudicator under paragraph 7 below except as provided in paragraph 2 below.

2. The court may hear and determine a dispute falling within paragraph 1(5) above in any case where, on the application of any person concerned, it appears to the court—

(a) that application has been made by either party to the dispute to the other party for the purpose of having the dispute settled by arbitration, and

(b) that either arbitrators have not been appointed within 40 days of that application or the arbitrators have refused, or have neglected for a period of 21 days, to proceed with the reference or make an award.

Right of central office to be heard

3.—(1) Any person who institutes proceedings in the court in relation to a dispute to which paragraph 1 above applies shall give notice of the fact and of the matter in dispute to the central office.

(2) The court shall not proceed to hear a dispute to which paragraph 1 applies until the court is satisfied that the notice required by sub-paragraph (1) above has been given.

(3) The central office shall be entitled, with the leave of the court, to attend and to be heard at any hearing of a dispute to which paragraph 1 applies.

PART II

ARBITRATION

Circulation of election addresses, resolutions and statements

4.—(1) If the rules of the society so provide, any dispute in respect of a refusal by a building society to send to its members—

(a) copies of an election address, in accordance with section 55(7), or

(b) any document required to be sent under paragraph 28(1) of Schedule 2 to this Act,

shall, unless the refusal is on one of the grounds specified in sub-paragraph (2) below be referred to arbitration.

(2) Those grounds are—

(a) that publicity for the document in question would be likely to diminish substantially the confidence in the society of investing members of the public, or

(b) that the rights conferred by section 55(7) or paragraph 28(1) are being abused to seek needless publicity for defamatory matter.

Procedure on a reference to arbitration

5.—(1) This paragraph has effect in relation to an arbitration under paragraph 4(1) above.

(2) One or more arbitrators shall be appointed in the manner provided for by the rules of the building society; and so shall another arbitrator if an appointed arbitrator dies or refuses to act.

(3) No arbitrator acting on a reference shall be benefically interested (whether directly of indirectly) in the funds of the society.

(4) The rules of the society may provide for the procedure to be followed on a reference to arbitration.

(5) An award made by arbitrators, or the majority of them, shall be final and binding.

(6) For the purposes of the Arbitration Act 1950 and the Arbitration Act 1979 or, in Northern Ireland, the Arbitration Act (Northern Ireland) 1937 the rules of the society shall be treated as an arbitration agreement.

(7) In relation to Scotland, sub-paragraph (6) above shall be omitted.

Access to register of members

6.—(1) Any dispute as to the rights of a member of a building society under paragraph 14 of Schedule 2 to this Act shall be referred to the Commission.

(2) The reference of a dispute to the Commission under this paragraph shall be treated as a reference to arbitration; and its award shall have the same effect as that of an arbitrator acting in a reference under paragraph 4(1) above.

Disputes cognizable under a scheme

7.—(1) Any dispute relating to a prescribed matter of complaint action in relation to which is subject to investigation under a scheme under section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)* may, if the complainant and the society or, as the case may be, the complainant and the associated body agree, instead of being determined by the adjudicator under the scheme, be referred to him as arbitrator.

(2) The reference of a dispute to an adjudicator under sub-paragraph (1) above shall be treated as a reference to arbitration; and his award shall have the same effect as that of an arbitrator acting in a reference under paragraph 5(1) above.

(3) Any expression used in this paragraph and section *(Schemes for the investigation of complaints)* has the same meaning in this paragraph as in that section.

General

8. In this Part of this Schedule, in relation to an arbitration in Scotland, references to an arbitrator shall be read as references to an arbiter."—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Amendment made: No. 254, New Schedule—

"TRANSFERS OF BUSINESS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

PART I

ISSUE OF STATEMENT TO MEMBERS

Preliminary

1. In this Part of this Schedule—

"prescribed matters" in relation to any transfer of the business of a building society to its successor, means the matters relating to the transfer, the society, its officers, members or depositors, or the successor which are prescribed in regulations made under paragraph 5 below; and

"transfer statement", in relation to a transfer of business by a building society, means the statement with respect to the transfer to be sent to members of the society under paragraph 2 below.

Duty to send transfer statements to members

2. A building society which desires to transfer its business shall, in accordance with this Part of the Schedule, send a transfer statement to every member entitled to notice of a meeting of the society.

3. A transfer statement, in relation to a transfer of business by a building society, shall contain—

(a) the particulars required, in relation to the prescribed matters, by the regulations made under paragraph 5 below, and

(b) particulars of any other matters required by the Commission in the case of the particular transfer,

with or without other particulars regarding the transfer.

4.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, a building society shall, in relation to a transfer of business, include a transfer statement in or with the notice to be sent to its members of the meeting of the society at which the requisite transfer resolutions are to be moved.

(2) No transfer statement shall be sent unless its contents, so far as they concern the prescribed matters or any matter of which particulars are required to be given under paragraph 3*(b)* above, have been approved by the Commission.

5.—(1) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may make regulations for the purpose of specifying, as prescribed matters, the matters of which transfer statements are to give particulars; and the regulations may also require particulars to be given of any alternatives to the particular transfer which were available to the society making the transfer.

(2) The power to make regulations under this paragraph is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

PART II

CONFIRMATION BY COMMISSION: PROCEDURE

6. An application by a building society for confirmation by the Commission of a transfer of its business to a company shall be made in such manner as the Commission may prescribe.

7.—(1) Where a building society applies for confirmation of a transfer of its business, the society shall publish a notice of the application in any one or more of the London Gazette, the Edinburgh Gazette or the Belfast Gazette, as the Commission directs and, if it so directs, in one or more newspapers.

(2) A notice published in pursuance of sub-paragraph (1) above shall—

(a) state that any interested party has the right to make representations to the Commission with respect to the application;

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

(b) specify a date determined by the Commission before which any written representations or notice of a person's intention to make oral representations must be received by the Commission; and

(c) specify a date determined by the Commission as the day on which it intends to hear any oral representations.

8.—(1) After the date specified in the notice in pursuance of paragraph 7(2)*(b)* above, the Commission shall—

(a) determine the time and place at which oral representations may be made;

(b) give notice of that determination to the building society making the transfer and any persons who have given notice of their intention to make oral representations; and

(c) send copies of the written representations received by the Commission to the building society making the transfer.

(2) The Commission shall allow the building society making the transfer an opportunity to comment on the written representations, whether at a hearing or in writing, before the expiration of such period as the Commission specifies in a notice to the society.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 1

The Building Societies Commission

Amendments made: No. 255, in page 140, line 18, leave out 'in writing'.

No. 256, in line 36, at end insert—

'3A. No person who has attained the age of 70 years is eligible to be or to remain a part-time member of the Commission.'.

No. 257, in page 141, line 38, at end insert—

'11A. In Schedule 2 to the Parliamentary Commissioner Act 1967 (which lists the authorities subject to investigation under that Act) there shall be inserted in the appropriate place in alphabetical order the words "Building Societies Commission".'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 2

Establishment, Incorporation and Constitution of Societies

Amendments made: No. 258, in page 142, line 32, leave out from 'society' to end of line 33.

No. 259, in page 142, line 34, leave out 'the society with the' and insert 'it with a'.

No. 260, in page 142, line 35, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

'(3) On registering a building society under sub-paragraph (2) above, the central office shall—

(a) retain and register one copy of the memorandum and of the rules,

(b) return another copy to the secretary of the society, together with a certificate of registration, and

(c) keep another copy, together with a copy of the certificate of incorporation, and of the certificate of registration of the memorandum and the rules, in the public file of the society.'.

No. 261, in page 144, leave out lines 31 to 34.

No. 262, in page 145, line 39, after 'copy', insert ', together with a copy of the certificate of registration of the alteration,'.

No. 263, in page 149, line 34, leave out 'supply' and insert 'give'.

No. 264, in page 149, line 37, leave out 'supplied' and insert 'given'.

No. 265, in page 150, line 18, at end insert—

'(4) For the purposes of this Act "registered address", in relation to a member of a building society, means—

(a) the address shown in the register maintained under this paragraph, except in a case where paragraph *(b)* below applies;

(b) where the member has requested that communications from the society be sent to some other address, that other address.

Exception to duties to send documents

13A.—(1) A building society is not obliged by any provision of this Act or its rules to send a notice or other document to a member in whose case the society has reason to believe that communications sent to him at his registered address are unlikely to be received by him.

(2) Where the requirement relates to notice of a meeting or postal ballot of the society, the society must, instead, comply with the advertising requirements of paragraph 32 below.'.

No. 266, in page 154, line 37, leave out 'sent', and insert 'given'.

No. 267, in page 154, line 42, leave out 'sent' and insert 'given'.

No. 268, in page 155, line 34, leave out from '*(b)*' to 'in' in line 35.

No. 269, in page 155, line 38, at end insert

', at the beginning of the period of 56 days immediately preceding the voting date for members voting in person at a meeting or, as the case may be, on a postal ballot.'.

No. 270, in page 155, line 41, leave out from beginning to end of line 46 and insert

'he holds shares in the society to a value not less than the prescribed amount or such lesser amount as may be specified in the rules.'.

No. 271, in page 157, line 35, at end insert—

'. No resolution of a building society shall be passed as a borrowing members' resolution unless it is required to be so passed by or under any provision of this Act or by the rules of the society.'.

No. 272, in page 158, line 11, at end insert—

'Transfer resolutions

27A.—(1) The transfer resolutions required for the purposes of section *(Transfer of business to commercial company)*, for the approval by members of a building society of a transfer of its business are two resolutions, of which—

(a) one is passed as a borrowing members' resolution, and

(b) the other ("the requisite shareholders' resolution") is passed in accordance with sub-paragraphs (2) to (5) below.

(2) In a case where the successor is to be a specially formed company, the requisite shareholders' resolution—

(a) must be passed as a special resolution, and

(b) must be passed on a poll on which not less than 20 per cent. of the members of the society qualified to vote on a special resolution voted;

and the notice of the resolution required by sub-paragraph *(a)* or sub-paragraph *(b)* of paragraph 26(1) above, as the case may be, must specify that the resolution will not be effective unless both of the requirements specified in this sub-paragraph are fulfilled.

(3) Subject to any direction under sub-paragraph (5) below, in a case where the successor is to be an existing company, the requisite shareholders' resolution must be passed as a special resolution and either—

(a) must be passed by not less than 50 per cent. of the members qualified to vote on a special resolution, or

(b) must be passed by the holders, being members qualified to vote on a special resolution, of shares in the society to a value, on the voting date, representing not less than 90 per cent. of the total value of the shares held on that date by the members so qualified to vote;

and, in either case, the resolution must be a resolution in relation to which the notice required by paragraph 26 above includes a statement specifying that the resolution will not be effective unless either of the above requirements is fulfilled has been duly given.

(4) If the Commission considers it expedient, in relation to a transfer of the business of a building society to an existing company, to do so for the purpose of protecting the investments of the shareholders of or depositors with the society, the Commission may give a direction under sub-paragraph (5) below.

(5) A direction under this sub-paragraph is a direction that, for the purposes of the transfer of business specified in the direction, the requisite shareholders' resolution is to be effective if it is passed as a special resolution.

(6) The Treasury, after consultation with the Commission may by order amend sub-paragraph (2)*(b)*, (3)*(a)* or (3)*(b)* above so as to substitute for the percentage for the time being specified in the sub-paragraph such other percentage as it thinks appropriate.

(7) The power to make orders under sub-paragraph (6) above is exercisable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

(8) In this paragraph "voting date", with reference to a requisite shareholders' resolution, has the same meaning as in paragraph 22(7) above.'.

No. 273, in page 158, line 18, leave out 'and (5)' and insert '(4A) and (4B)'.

No. 274, in page 158, line 23, leave out sub-paragraph *(b)*.

No. 275, in page 158, in line 26, leave out 'circulate' and insert 'send'.

No. 276, in page 158, line 27, after 'meeting', insert 'a copy of'.

No. 277, in page 158, line 28, leave out '200' and insert '100'.

No. 278, in page 158, line 31, after first 'number' insert—

'(i) in the case of a society with a qualifying asset holding, is fifty or such lesser number as is specified for the purpose in the rules of the society, and

(ii) in the case of any other society'.

No. 279, in page 159, line 2, leave out from 'send' to second 'a' and insert

'notices of a resolution or copies of'.

No. 280, in page 159, line 4, after 'or', insert

', as the case may be,'.

No. 281, in page 159, line 8, at end insert

'or for frivolous or vexatious purposes.'.

No. 282, in page 159, line 12, at end insert—

'(4A) If the rules of a building society so provide, sub-paragraph (1) above does not require notice of a resolution to be given to members of the society if the resolution is in substantially the same terms as any resolution which has been defeated at a meeting or on a postal ballot during the period beginning with the third annual general meeting before the date on which notice of the resolution is given to the society.

(4B) No copies of a statement with respect to a resolution shall be sent to members of a building society if, on any of the grounds in sub-paragraph (4) or (4A) above, the society does not give the notice of the resolution to them required by sub-paragraph (1)*(a)* above.'.

No. 283, in page 159, line 13, leave out from beginning to end of line 26 and insert—

'(5) The Commission shall hear and determine any dispute arising under sub-paragraph (4)*(a)* above,'.

No. 284, in line 40, leave out from 'The' to 'statement' and insert

'notices of a resolution and the copies of a'.

No. 285, in line 41, leave out '28(1)*(b)*' and insert '28(1)*(a)*'.

No. 286, in line 44, leave out 'copies' and insert 'them'.

No. 287, in line 47, leave out from 'Where', to second 'of' and insert

'notices of a resolution or copies'.

No. 288, in page 160, line 4, after first 'a', insert 'notice or'.

No. 289, in page 160, line 6, after first 'a', insert 'notice or'.

No. 290, in page 162, line 7, leave out from beginning to 'For' in line 1 on page 163 and insert—

'Advertising requirements in lieu of notice of meetings, etc.

32.—(1) The advertising requirements referred to, in relation to notices of meetings or postal ballots of building societies, are as follows.

(2) Notice of the holding of the meeting or of the postal ballot must be given either—

(a) by displaying a notice in a prominent position in every branch office, or

(b) by advertisement in one or more newspapers circulating in the areas in which the members of the society reside,

according as the rules of the society provide.

(3) The notice must be so given not later than 21 days before the date of the proposed meeting or, as the case may be, the final date for the receipt of completed ballot papers.

(4) The notice shall state where members may obtain copies of the resolutions and any statements with respect to the matter referred to in a resolution, forms relating to voting by proxy and, in the case of a postal ballot, the ballot papers.

The prescribed amount

33.—(1).'.

No. 291, in page 163, line 10, leave out Part IV.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 3

AUTHORISATION: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 292, in page 166, line 37, leave out 'in writing'.

No. 293, in page 167, line 13, at end insert—

'(4A) If the grounds for the proposed refusal include the ground that any officer of the society is not a fit and proper person to hold office in the society the Commission shall also serve the notice specified in sub-paragraph (4) above on the officer concerned giving him the like right to make representations and to be heard with respect to his fitness and propriety for office.'.

No. 294, in line 16, after '(4)', insert 'or (4A)'.

No. 295, in line 20 after 'society', insert

'and every other person on whom a notice was served under sub-paragraph (4A) above.'.

No. 296, in line 34, leave out sub-paragraph (8).

No. 297, in page 168, line 12, leave out paragraph 4.

No. 298, in page 172, line 5, leave out paragraph 10.

No. 299, in line 11, leave out from '11' to end of line 25 and insert—

'(1) The modifications of the provisions of Part III of this Schedule in their application to the imposition of conditions by the Commission in pursuance of a direction of an appeal tribunal under section *(Determination of appeal)* (6) or (7) are as follows.

(2) The notice under paragraph 5(1) shall be served on the society and the other persons there specified within the period of 14 days beginning with the date on which the Commission received notice of the tribunal's decision under subsection (8) of that section; and a copy shall also be sent within that period to the tribunal.

(3) The notice under paragraph 5(1) may specify, as the period within which representations may be made, a period of now less than 7 days.

(4) If the Commission serves a notice under paragraph 6(2) on the society and the other persons there specified it shall also send a copy of the notice to the tribunal.

No. 300, in line 27, leave out paragraph 12 and insert—

'12. Where any provision of this Schedule requires notice of any matter to be served on every director of a building society that requirement is satisfied by serving notice on each director whose appointment has been officially notified and the non-receipt of a notice of a matter by a director or the chief executive does not affect the validity of any action on the part of the Commission.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 4

ADVANCES: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 301, in page 173, line 3, leave out Part I.

No. 302, in page 174, line 42, after 'society', insert 'or any other person'.

No. 303, in page 174, line 43, leave out from 'excuse' to end of line 5 on page 175 and insert 'shall be an offence'.

No. 304, in page 175, line 10, at end insert—

'and in relation of such an offence on the part of a building society, so shall any officer who is also guilty of the offence.'.

No. 305, in page 176, line 41, at end add—

'Power to prescribe form of documents

5.—(1) The Chief Registrar may make rules for prescribing anything authorised or required by any provision of this Schedule to be prescribed; and in this Schedule "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this paragraph.

(2) The power to make rules under this paragraph shall be exercisable by statutory instrument.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 5

THE BUILDING SOCIETIES INVESTOR PROTECTION BOARD

Amendment made: No. 306, in page 177, line 41, leave out 'in writing'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 6

INSOLVENCY PAYMENTS: TRUSTS AND JOINT HOLDINGS

Amendments made: No. 307, in page 179, line 7, leave out 'or loan'.

No. 308, in page 179, line 7, leave out 'or to'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 7

INVESTORS: SPECIAL PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 309, in page 180, line 42, at end add—

'(4) The Treasury may from time to time by order direct that this paragraph shall have effect as if for the reference in sub-paragraph (1) above to £5,000 there were substituted a reference to such higher amount as may be specified in the order.

(5) An order under sub-paragraph (4) above shall apply in relation to deaths occurring after the expiraton of a period of one month beginning with the date on which the order comes into force.

(6) The power to make an order under sub-paragraph (4) above is exercisable by statutory instrument but no such order shall be made unless a draft of it has been laid before and approved by a resolution of each House of Parliament.'.

No.310, in page 181, line 1, leave out from first 'of' to first 'the' in line 2 and insert

'a deposit made by him with'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 8

POWERS TO PROVIDE SERVICES

Amendments made: No. 311, in page 181, leave out line 20 and insert—

'8. Establishment and management of unit trust schemes for the provision of pensions.

8A. Establishment and, as regards the contributions and benefits, administration, of pension schemes.'.

No. 312, in page 181, line 21, at end insert

', whether on behalf of the person effecting or the person providing the insurance.

9A. Giving advice as to insurance of any description.'.

No. 426, in page 181, line 24, at end insert—

'PART 1A

GENERAL RESTRICTION ON SERVICES ABROAD

(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, no power to provide a service of a description specified in Part I of this Schedule includes power to maintain a place of business in a country or territory outside the United Kingdom for that purpose unless the society also conducts the principal business of a building society in that country or territory.

(2) This paragraph does not apply to the power to provide estate agency services.'.

No. 313, in page 182, line 10, leave out paragraph 5

No. 314, in page 182, line 30, at end insert—

'Pensions management etc.

8A. The power to establish and manage unit trust schemes is available only to a subsidiary of the society.'.

No. 316, in page 182, line 33, leave out from 'provision' to end of line 34 and insert

'primarily to individuals; but this restriction does not apply to, nor in determining whether over any period insurance is being provided primarily to individuals is any account to be taken of income derived from, insurance relating to land which is to secure advances by the society.'.

No. 317, in page 182, line 41, leave out paragraph 12.

No. 318, in page 183, line 25, at end insert—

'Status as bankers

2A.—(1) So far as regards the provision by it of a service which is a qualifying banking service for the purposes of this paragraph a building society shall be treated for all purposes as a bank and a banker and as carrying on the business of banking or a banking undertaking whether or not it would be so treated apart from this paragraph.

(2) A building society provides a qualifying banking service for the purposes of this paragraph if, with or without any restriction, it provides either or both of the services falling within paragraph 1 or 3 of Part I.

(3) This paragraph does not affect the determination of any question as to the status of a building society as a bank or banker for other purposes.

Foreign exchange services to individuals

2B. — (1) For the purpose of determining whether a transaction consists in the provision of foreign exchange services to an individual it shall be presumed that a transaction does so consist if the value of the transaction is less than the standard amount.

(2) The standard amount is, subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, £5,000.

(3) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by order amend sub-paragraph (2) above so as to substitute for the amount for the time being specified in that sub-paragraph such other amount as it considers appropriate for the purposes of this paragraph.

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) above the value of a transaction consisting in the provision of foreign exchange services is, where the society is selling the foreign currency, the sum paid to it and, where the society is purchasing the foreign currency, the sum paid by it.'

No. 319, in page 183, line 30, at end insert—

'3A. This Schedule is to be construed as relating only to the capacity of building societies or their subsidiaries to provide the services for the time being specified in it and not as making lawful any activity which would not be lawful apart from this Schedule.'.

No. 320, in page 183, in line 32, leave out from '"services"' to 'Schedule' in line 33 and insert

'has the same meaning as in'.

No. 403, in page 183, line 37, at end insert

'"pension scheme" means a personal pension scheme (within the meaning of the Social Security Act 1986) or an occupational pension scheme (as defined in section 66(1) of the Social Security Pensions Act 1975 or in relation to Northern Ireland, Article 2(2) of the Social Security Pensions (Northern Ireland) order 1975) and the "provision of pensions" means the provision of benefits which are "money purchase benefits" within the meaning of that Act of 1986;'

No. 428, in page 183, line 37, at end insert—

'"the principal business of a building society" means the business of raising funds (whether by the issue of shares or receiving deposits) for the purposes of the society or of making advances secured on land;'.

No. 322, in page 183, line 38, after 'limit"', insert ', in relation to guarantees'.

No. 323, in page 183, line 41, at end add

'; and "unit trust scheme" has the same meaning as in the Financial Services Act 1986.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 10

Requisite Particulars of Income of Related Businesses

Amendments made: No. 422, in page 185, leave out lines 13 to 27 and insert—

'Part I

Requisite Particulars Where no Adoption of Part II'.

No. 326, in page 185, line 29, leave out

'body or firm associated with'

and insert 'business associate of'.

No. 327, in page 186, line 9, leave out

'body or firm associated with'

and insert 'business associate of'.

No. 328, in page 186, line 34, leave out

'body or firm associated with'

and insert 'business associate of'.

No. 329, in page 186, line 43, leave out

'body or firm associated with'

and insert 'business associate of'.

No. 423, in page 187, line 6, at end insert—

'Part II

Requisite Particulars on Adoption of This Part

Conveyancers

6. Where the business associate of the building society provides conveyancing services the requisite particulars of its business in any financial year are the following—

(a) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated number of cases in which it has provided conveyancing services in respect of an advance secured on land and the purchase of the land both to the society and to the borrower;

(b) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated number of cases in which it has provided the society (but not the borrower) with conveyancing services in respect of an advance secured on land;

(c) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of the fees paid to it by the society or by or on behalf of the borrower for the provision of conveyancing services falling within sub-paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* above;

(d) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate of the amounts paid to it by the society by way of commission for its having introduced investment business to the society;

(e) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of conveyancing services in respect of any land held by the society under section 6, 10, 15 or 17;

(f) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of management services to the society.

Valuers and surveyors

7. Where the business associate of the building society provides the services of surveying and valuing property the requisite particulars of its business in any financial year are the following—

(a) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated number of cases in which it has, in respect of any land which is to secure an advance, surveyed the land or provided a valuation of it on behalf of the society or the borrower or both;

(b) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated number of cases in which it has, on behalf of the society (but not the borrower), surveyed any land which is to secure an advance or provided the society with a valuation of it;

(c) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of the fees paid to it by the society or by or on behalf of the borrower for the provision of the services falling within sub-paragraphs *(a)* and *(b)* above;

(d) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate of the amounts paid to it by the society by way of commission for its having introduced investment business to the society;

(e) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of surveying or valuing services in respect of any property held by the society under section 6, 10, 15 or 17;

(f) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amounts of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of management services to the society.

Accountants

8. Where the business associate of the building society provides accountancy services the requisite particulars of its business in any financial year are the following—

(a) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of the fees paid to it by the society for the provision of accountancy services; and

(b) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of management services to the society.

Insurance agents, etc.

9. Where the business associate of the building society arranges for the provision of relevant insurance the requisite particulars of its business in any financial year are the following—

(a) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate of the amounts paid to it by the society or by way of commission by insurers in respect of relevant insurance effected by the society or by borrowers in compliance with the terms on which advances secured on land are made by the society; and

(b) the prescribed band within which falls the estimated aggregate amount of any fees paid to it by the society in consideration of the provision of management services to the society.

Part III

Supplementary

Power to prescribe bands for Part II particulars

10. — (1) The Commission, with the consent of the Treasury, may by order prescribe, for the purposes of the provisions of Part II of this Schedule,—

(a) series of numbers by reference to limits specified in the order, or

(b) series of monetary amounts by reference to limits so specified;

and, in any provision of Part II, "prescribed band" means, in realtion to cases, any series of numbers so prescribed for the purposes of that provision and, in relation to monetary amounts, any series of monetary amounts so prescribed for the purposes of that provision.

(2) The power conferred by this paragraph includes power—

(a) to prescribe different series of numbers or of monetary amounts for the purposes of different provisions, and

(b) to prescribe series of numbers or of monetary amounts such that the same number or amount is included in more than one series.

(3) The power to make an order under this paragraph is exerciseable by statutory instrument which shall be subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of either House of Parliament.

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

Interpretation

11.—(1) In this Schedule—

"administrative services" means services falling within section 63(5);

"business associate" and "associated", in relation to a building society, have the same meaning as in section 63;

"financial year" means a financial year of the society with which the business associate is associated;

"prescribed band" has the meaning given by paragraph 10(1) above; and

"relevant insurance" means insurance falling within section 63(4)*(d)*.

(2) In section 63 "the volume of the business", in relation to any business constituted by the provision of any services referred to in any provision of Part I or Part II of this Schedule means—

(a) in the case of a paragraph of Part I, the aggregate of all the fees and commissions which are the subject of the requisite particulars under that paragraph; and

(b) in the case of a paragraph of Part II, the aggregate of the amounts which are specified in orders under paragraph 10 above as the upper limits of the prescribed bands within which fall the estimated aggregates of the fees or commissions which are the subject of the requisite particulars under the provisions of that paragraph.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 11

AUDITORS: APPOINTMENT, TENURE, QUALIFICATIONS

Amendments made: No. 330, in line 40, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 331, in page 188, line 46, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 332, in page 189, line 16, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 333, in page 191, line 2, leave out 'in writing'.

No. 334, in line 25, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 335, in line 30, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 336, in line 44, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 337, in page 192, line 22, leave out 'circulate' and insert 'send to'.

No. 338, in page 193, line 3, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 339, in line 12, leave out 'court' and insert 'High Court'.

No. 340, in line 21, at end add—

'9. In the application of this Schedule to Scotland, references to the High Court shall be read as references to the Court of Session.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 12

WINDING UP: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 341, in page 194, line 29, after 'be', insert 'given or'.

No. 405, in page 195, line 16, after '26', insert 'or 29'.

No. 406, in line 18, at end insert—

'6B. Section 605 (saving for rights of creditors and contributories) shall have the same effect in relation to a building society in the course of dissolution by consent as it has in relation to a society being wound up voluntarily;'.

No. 407, in line 28, at end insert—

'(2A) Section 519(7) shall have the same effect in relation to a building society in the course of dissolution by consent as it has in relation to a society being wound up voluntarily.'.

No. 408, line 35, leave out '(5)' and insert—

'7A. Section 524 (commencement of winding up by the court) shall have effect as if the following subsection were inserted in it, after subsection (1),—

"(1A) If, before the presentation of a petition for the winding up of a building society by the court, an instrument for the dissolution by consent of the society as been placed in the public file of the society, the winding up of the society shall be deemed to have commenced on the date on which a copy of the instrument was placed on the file; and unless the court, on proof of fraud or mistake directs otherwise, all proceedings taken in the course of the dissolution shall be deemed to have been validly taken.".

7B.'.

No. 342, in page 197, line 33, leave out '242' and insert '241'.

No. 343, in page 198, line 1, leave out '*(e)*' and insert '*(d)*'.

No. 344, in page 198, line 22, leave out '6(6)' and insert '(6)'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 13

MERGERS: SUPPLEMENTARY PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 345, in page 199, line 5 leave out

'Subject to paragraph 3 below,'.

No. 346, in line 11, leave out from 'Commission' to 'in' in line 12.

No. 347, in line 15, leave out from 'to' to end of line 16 and insert

'every member entitled to notice of a meeting of the society a statement'.

No. 348, in line 17, at end insert—

'(1A) A building society shall include the statement referred to in sub-paragraph (1) above in or with the notice to be sent to its members of the meeting of the society at which the resolutions required for the approval of the amalgamation or, as the case may be, the transfer are to be moved.

(1B) No statement shall be sent unless its contents, so far as they concern the matters specified in sub-paragraph (2) below, have been approved by the Commission.'.

No. 349, in page 199, line 31, leave out 'merger' and insert 'amalgamation'.

No. 350, in page 199, line 39, at end insert—

'(2A) The statement shall be sent so that any member to whom the building society sends notice of the meeting at which the resolutions to approve the amalgamation or transfer are to be considered will receive the statement not later than he receives the notice.'.

No. 351, in page 199, line 42, leave out from beginning to end of line 11 on page 200.

No. 352, in page 200, line 12, leave out Part II and insert—

'PART II

NOTIFICATION OF PROPOSALS FOR MERGER

Preliminary

'4. In this Part of this Schedule—

"merger" means an amalgamation of building societies under section 82 or a transfer of all the engagements of one building society to another under section 83; and "merge" has a corresponding meaning;

"merger proposal", in relation to a building society, means a proposal in writing, by another building society desiring to merge with it, for the societies to merge, with or without terms for the merger; and "proposer" has a corresponding meaning;

"merger resolutions", in relation to a building society, means the resolutions required for the approval of a merger of the society with another building society under section 82(2) or 83(2);

"merger statement" means a statement containing the requisite particulars of a merger proposal; and

"requisite particulars", in relation to a merger proposal, means the particulars required by paragraph 5(2) below to be given in a merger statement.

Duty to notify members

5.—(1) Subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, it shall be the duty of a building society receiving a merger proposal to send, in accordance with this Part of this Schedule, a merger statement in respect of the proposal to every member entitled to notice of a meeting of the society.

(2) A merger statement must contain the following particulars—

(a) the fact that a merger proposal has been made, and

(b) the identity of the proposer;

with or without other particulars regarding the proposal.

(3) Sub-paragraph (1) above does not require a merger statement to be sent to members if the proposer has requested in writing that the requisite particulars are to be treated as confidential; and, where such a request is made and is at a later date withdrawn in writing, the society receiving the proposal shall, for the purposes of this Part of this Schedule, treat the proposal as having been received on that date instead of any earlier date.

6.—(1) A building society shall include in or with every notice of its annual general meeting a merger statement with respect to any merger proposal, other than a proposal of which notice has already been given under this paragraph—

(a) received by it during the period of 12 months ending with the ninth month of last financial year of the society before that meeting; or

(b) treated by paragraph 5(3) above as having been received by it during the last three months of that financial year;

and the society may also include, under this sub-paragraph, a merger statement with respect to any proposal received, or treated as received, by it after the end of either period.

(2) In any case where merger resolutions are to be moved at any meeting of a building society, every notice of the meeting shall have included in or with it a merger statement with respect to any merger proposal, other than a proposal of which notice has already been given under this paragraph, received by it more than 42 days before the date of the meeting.

Duty to notify the central office

7.—(1) Where a building society sends a merger statement to its members under paragraph 6 above in connection with a meeting of the society, it shall send a copy of the statement to the central office at least 14 days before the date of the meeting.

(2) The central office shall keep the copy of a merger statement received by it from a building society in the public file of that society.

Penalty

8. If default is made by a building society in complying with paragraph 6(1), 6(2) or 7 above, the society shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale; and so shall any officer who is also guilty of the offence.'.

No. 353, in page 203, line 11, leave out 'will' and insert 'intends to'.

No 354, in page 203, line 26, leave out 'he' and insert 'the Commission'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 14

AMENDMENTS OF ACTS

Amendments made: No. 355, in page 203, line 28, at end insert—

'PART I

UNITED KINGDOM

Land Registration Act 1925 (c. 21)

In section 25(1) (proprietor's power to create charges) of the Land Registration Act 1925, in paragraph *(b)*, for the words from "under" to "with" there shall be inserted "(within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986), in accordance with".'

No. 356, in page 204, line 22, at end insert—

'Stock Transfer Act 1963 (c. 18)

In section 1(4) of the Stock Transfer Act 1963 (simplified transfer of certain securities, not to apply to building society securities), for "1962" there shall be substituted "1986".

Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (c. 12)

In section 31*(b)* of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965 (authorised investments), for "society registered under the Building Societies Acts" there shall be substituted "building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986".'.

No. 357, in line 24, leave out paragraph 3.

No. 358, in line 28, at end insert—

'Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 (c. 10)

(1) This paragraph amends the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970 as follows.

(2) In section 343(8) (arrangements for payment of tax by building societies) for "Building Societies Act 1962 or the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967" there shall be substituted "Building Societies Act 1986".

(3) In section 415(5) (contractual savings schemes) for "Building Societies Act 1962 or the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967" there shall be substituted "Building Societies Act 1986".'.

No. 359, in line 43, at end insert—

'Banking Act 1979 (c. 37)

. —This paragraph amends the Banking Act 1979 as follows.

(2) In section 34(1) (Treasury regulations controlling advertisements for deposits), after the word "Bank" there shall be inserted the words "and, in so far as they relate to building societies, the Building Societies Commission".

(3) In section 36(4) (exemption from restriction on use of description "banking services") there shall be inserted—

(a) after the word "Act", the words "or an authorised building society,", and

(b) after the words "the institution", the words "or society, as the case may be".

(4) In section 41(5) (consents for prosecutions), in paragraph *(a)* after the words "Public Prosecutions or", and in paragraph *(b)* after the words "Ireland or", there shall be inserted the words ", in the case of proceedings against a building society, the Building Societies Commission or, in any other case".

(5) In section 50(1) (definitions), after the definition of "the Bank" there shall be inserted the following definition—

"building society" means a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986 and, in that context, "authorised" has the meaning given by section 98(1) of that Act;".'.

No. 360, in line 43, at end insert—

'Consumer Credit Act 1974 (c. 39)

. —(1) This paragraph amends the Consumer Credit Act 1974 as follows.

(2) In section 16(1) (consumer credit agreement with certain bodies exempt from regulation) the words "or building society" shall be omitted and, after paragraph *(f)*, there shall be inserted the words ", or

(g) a building society.".

(3) In section 16(3) (Secretary of State's duty to consult before making orders), after paragraph *(d)* there shall be inserted the words "or

(e) under subsection (1)*(g)* without consulting the Building Societies Commission and the Treasury.".

(4) In section 189(1) (definitions), for the definition of "building society" there shall be substituted the following definition—

""building society" means a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986;".'

No. 361, in page 204, line 43, at end insert—

'Local Government Act 1972 (c. 70)

In Schedule 12A (access to information: exempt information) to the Local Government Act 1972—

(a) in Part II, in paragraph 2*(d)* for "1962" there shall be substituted "1986"; and

(b) in Part III, in paragraph 1(1), after the definition of 'protected informant' there shall be inserted the following definition—

"'registered', in relation to information required to be registered under the Building Societies Act 1986, means recorded in the public file of any building society (within the meaning of that Act);".

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

Charging Orders Act 1979 (c. 53)

In section 6(1) (interpretation) of the Charging Orders Act 1979, in the definition of "building society" for "1962" there shall be substituted "1986".

Finance Act 1982 (c. 39)

. —(1) This paragraph amends the Finance Act 1982 as follows.

(2) In section 28(5) (variation of terms of repayment of certain loans), for "Building Societies Act 1962 or the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967" there shall be substituted "Building Societies Act 1986".

(3) In paragraph 2(4), 4(1) and 14(1) of Schedule 7 (deduction of tax from certain loan interest), for "Building Societies Act 1962 or the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967" there shall be substituted "Building Societies Act 1986".

Companies Act 1985 (c. 6)

(1) This paragraph amends the Companies Act 1985 as follows.

(2) In section 295(3) (disqualification orders against directors of companies; meaning of "company"), after "Part XXI" there shall be inserted "and a building society (within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986).".

(3) In section 302(4) (provision against undischarged bankrupt acting as director, etc.; meaning of "company"), after "unregistered company" there shall be inserted ", a building society (within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986)".'.

No. 362, in page 205, line 39, at end add—

'PART II

NORTHERN IRELAND

Payment of Wages Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 (c.12 N.I.)

.—(1) This paragraph amends the Payment of Wages Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 as follows.

(2) In section 1(3) (authorised means of payment of wages), after paragraph *(a)* there shall be inserted—

"*(aa)* payment into an account at a building society, being an account standing in the name of the person to whom the payment is due, or an account standing in the name of that person jointly with one or more persons,".

(3) In section 2(1) (requirements applicable to authorised payments), after "bank" there shall be inserted "or building society".

(4) In section 7(1) (interpretation)—

(a) in the definition of "account", after "way)" there shall be inserted "and, in relation to a building society, includes a share account and a deposit account (however described)",

(b) after the definition of "bank" there shall be inserted—

"building society" means a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986;", and

(c) in the definition of "branch", after "head office of the bank" there shall be inserted " and, in relation to a building society, includes the principal office of the society;".

Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 (S.I. 1980/1086 (N.I.12))

. In Article 33 (security not to be deemed prior mortgage under Building Societies Acts) of the Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 for the words from "section 32" where they first occur onwards there shall be substituted "section 11(2)*(d)* or (4)*(d)* of the Building Societies Act 1986".

Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 (S.I. 1981/156 (N.I.3))

. —(1) This paragraph amends the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 as follows.

(2) In Article 2(2) (interpretation) after the definition of "building regulations" there shall be inserted—

" "building society" means a building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986.".

(3) In Article 156(5)*(b)* (consultations by the Department regarding forms of indemnity agreements) for "Registrar of Friendly Societies for Northern Ireland" there shall be substituted "Building Societies Commission".

(4) For paragraph 1 of Schedule 10 there shall be substituted—

"1. Building Societies.".

Property (Discharge of Mortgage by Receipt) (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (S.I. 1983/766 (N.I. 9))

. In Article 3(10) of the Property (Discharge of Mortgage by Receipt) (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, after "applies" in the definition of "mortgage" there shall be inserted "and, subject to paragraph 4(7) of Schedule 4 to the Building Societies Act 1986, does not include a mortgage to which that paragraph 4 applies.".

Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 (S.I. 1983/1118 (N.I. 15))

. In Article 3(4) of the Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, in the definition of "building society" for the words from "1962" onwards there shall be substituted "1986".

No. 363, in line 39, at end add—

'Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 (c. 22 N.I.)

In section 178(3) of the Companies Act (Northern Ireland) 1960 (provision against undischarged bankrupt acting as director, etc.; meaning of "company"), after "unregistered company" there shall be inserted ", a building society (within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986).".

Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 (c. 24 N.I.)

In section 31*(b)* of the Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969 (authorised investments) for "society registered under the Building Societies Acts" there shall be substituted "building society within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986.".

Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (S.I. 1978/1096 (N.I. 12))

In Article 55(4) of the Companies (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 (disqualification orders against directors of companies), in the definition of "company" at the end there shall be inserted "and a building society (within the meaning of the Building Societies Act 1986).".'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 15

REPEALS

Amendments made: No. 364, in page 206, leave out lines 4 and 5 and insert—

'REPEALS: GENERAL'.

No. 365, in line 20, leave out 'paragraph 3A' and insert 'paragraphs 3A and 7'.

No. 366, in page 206, line 22, at end insert—

'1974 c.39.	The Consumer Credit Act 1974	In section 16 in subsection (1) the words "or building society," and, in subsections (1)*(e)* and (3)*(c)*, the word "or",'.

No. 367, in page 206, line 22, at end insert—

'1965 c.32.	The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) Act 1965.	In Schedules 1 and 3, the entries relating to the Building Societies Act 1962.
1969 c.46.	The Family Law Reform Act 1969.	In Schedule 1, the entry relating to the Building Societies Act 1962.
1970 c.10.	The Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970.	In section 343(5), the words 'union or'.
1974 c.46.	The Friendly Societies Act 1974.	In Schedule 10, paragraph 9.
1974 c.49.	The Insurance Companies Act 1974.	In Schedule 1, the entries relating to the Building Societies Act 1962.
1979 c.37.	The Banking Act 1979.	In paragraph 6 of Schedule 1, the words from "within" to the end. In Schedule 6, paragraphs 6, 7, 16 and 17.
1982 c50.	The Insurance Companies Act 1982.	In Schedule 5, paragraphs 3, and 5.
1984 c.28.	The County Courts Act 1984.	In Schedule 2, paragraph 26.

1985 c.9.	The Companies Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1985.	In Schedule 2, the entries relating to the Building Societies act 1962.
1985 c.58.	The Trustee Savings Banks Act 1985.	In Schedule 1, paragraph 11(2)(*a*) and so much of that sub-paragraph as relates to the sections 59 specified therein.'.

No. 368, in page 206, line 29, at end insert—

'PART II
REVOCATION EXTENDING TO GREAT BRITAIN

Number	*Title*	*Extend of revocation*
S.I. 1981/1488.	The Building Societies (Authorisation) Regulations 1981.	The whole Regulations.'

No. 369, in page 207, line 1, leave out 'II' and insert 'III'.

No. 370, in page 207, line 8, at end insert—

'1967 c. 5 (N.I.).	The Administration of Estates (Small Payments) Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.	In Schedule 1, the entry relating to the Building Societies Act 1874.
1969 c. 24 (N.I.).	The Industrial and Provident Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1969.	In section 101(1), the definition of "Building Societies Acts".
1969 c. 28 (N.I.)	The Age of Majority Act (Northern Ireland) 1969.	In Schedule 1, the entry relating to the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.'.

No. 371, in page 207, line 28, at end insert—

'S.I. 1981/156 (N.I.3.).	The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.'	Article 156(6) In Part II of Schedule 2, the entry relating to the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.'.

No. 372, in page 207, line 28, at end insert—

'S.R.1982/155 (N.I.).	The Building Societies (Authorisation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1982.	The whole Regulations.'.

No. 373, in page 207, line 33, at end insert—

'S.I.1983/1118 (N.I.15).	The Housing (Northern Ireland) Order 1983.	In Schedule 10, the entry relating to the Building Societies Act (Northern Ireland) 1967.'.

No. 404, in page 207, in line 34, leave out '14' and insert '13'—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

Schedule 16

TRANSITIONAL AND SAVING PROVISIONS

Amendments made: No. 374, in page 208, line 41, leave out lines 41 and 42 and insert—

'(*a*) retain and register one copy of the memorandum and of the altered rules,

(*b*) return another copy to the secretary of the society, together with a certificate of registration, and

(*c*) keep another copy, together with the record of the specified date sent to it under sub-paragraph (3) above and a copy of that registration certificate, in the public file of the society.'.

No. 375, in page 209, line 33, leave out from 'shall' to end of line 34 and insert

'retain and register a copy of the memorandum and of the altered rules'.

No. 376, in line 34, at end insert—

'(4A) On registering a copy of the memorandum and of the altered rules under sub-paragraph (4) above, the central office shall—

(*a*) return another copy to the secretary of the society, together with a certificate of registration, and

(*b*) keep another copy, together with the record of the specified date sent to it under sub-paragraph (2) above and a copy of that certificate, in the public file of the society.'.

No. 377, in page 210, line 2, leave out from 'If' to 'copies' in line 3 and insert

'the central office has not, before the end of the transitional period, received from an existing building society'.

No. 378, in line 9, leave out from 'If' to 'copies' in line 10 and insert

'the central office has not, before the end of the transitional period, received from an existing building society'.

No. 379, in line 20, leave out from 'prepare' to end of line 22 and insert

'three copies of a memorandum and of rules for the society and shall—

(*a*) retain and register one copy,

(*b*) return another to the secretary of the society, together with a certificate of registration, and

(*c*) keep another copy, together with a copy of that certificate, in the public file of the society.'.

No. 380, in line 41, after '6.', insert '—(1).'.

No. 381, in line 42, leave out 'or loans'.

No. 382, in page 211, line 4, at end insert—

'(2) The central office shall record in the public file of each building society to which sub-paragraph (1) above applies the fact that, by virtue of that sub-paragraph, the society is to be treated as authorised for the purposes of this Act.'.

No. 383, in line 4, at end insert—

'Anticipation of powers: declaratory provision

.—(1) It is hereby declared that building society has had, as from 19th December 1985, power, for the purposes of any power conferred by this Act on building societies or building societies of its description, to do such things, subject to sub-paragraph (2) below, as are reasonably necessary to enable it—

(*a*) to decide whether or not, and to what extent, to exercise (and in the case of an adoptable power to adopt) the power, and

(*b*) if it decides to exercise the power, to exercise it as from the date when it becomes exercisable by the society.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1)(*b*) above does not authorise a society—

(*a*) to make contracts, other than conditional contracts, for the acquisition of land, the acquisition of a business or the acquisition of shares in any company if that company offers the public any service or facility within the power

(*b*) to issue invitations to members of the society or the public to apply for any power to be exercised for their benefit, or

(*c*) to retain shares in a company which offers the public any service or facility within the power;

and, in this sub-paragraph, "conditional", in relation to contracts with respect to the exercise of a power, means conditional on the power's becoming exercisable by the society.

(3) The power conferred by this paragraph, and activities carried on under it, for the purposes of an adoptable power are not to be treated a included in, or in activities comprised in, that adoptable power for the purposes of paragraph 7 of Schedule 16 to this Act.'

No. 384, in page 213, line 20, at end insert—

'(6A) Nothing in the foregoing provisions of this Schedule implies that it is improper for any of the following, that is to say—

(*a*) the Chief Registrar or any assistant registrar of the central office,

(*b*) the assistant registrar of friendly societies for Scotland,

(*c*) the registrar of building societies for Northern Ireland, or

(*d*) the Commission,

to give to a building society or building societies generally an indication of the action the Commission might or might not take

[Mr. Ian Stewart]

in exercising its functions under this paragraph; and no decision of the Commission under this paragraph shall be liable to be set aside by reason of the indication having been given.'.

No. 385, in page 214, line 4, after 'age', insert

', or the compulsory retirement age (if any), as the case may be,'.

No. 386, in line 18, leave out from beginning to 'given' and insert

'"the compulsory retirement age" and "the normal retirement age" have the meanings'.

No. 387, in page 215, line 27, after 'copy', insert

', together with a copy of that certificate,'.

No. 388, in line 39, leave out sub-paragraph (7).—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

SCHEDULE 17

Provision of Conveyancing Services by Recognised Institutions

Amendments made: No. 410, in page 216, line 15, at end insert—

'"recognised practitioner" means a sole practitioner for the time being recognised under this Schedule;'.

No. 411, in line 17, at end insert—

'"sole practitioner" means an individual carrying on a business or profession otherwise than as a member of an unincorporated association;'.

No. 412, in page 220, line 43, at end insert—

'Power of Lord Chancellor to make recognition rules in the case of sole practitioners

12.—(1) The Lord Chancellor may, in accordance with the provisions of this paragraph, make rules with respect to the recognition by him of sole practitioners as being suitable to undertake the provision of conveyancing services.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3) below, paragraphs 2 to 6 and 8 and 9 above shall apply in relation to the recognition of sole practitioners as they apply in relation to the recognition of institutions, and accordingly, in the application of those paragraphs in accordance with this sub-paragraph, any reference to an institution shall have effect as if it were a reference to a sole practioner and any reference to a recognised institution shall have effect as if it were a reference to a recognised practitioner.

(3) In the application of those paragraphs in accordance with sub-paragraph (2) above—

(a) the reference in paragraph 2(2)*(b)* to negligence, fraud or other dishonesty on the part of officers or employees of recognised institutions shall have effect as if it were a reference to negligence, fraud or other dishonesty on the part of recognised practitioners or their employees; and

(b) paragraph 6(3)*(a)* shall be omitted.

Restrictions on conveyancing by unqualified persons not to apply to recognised practitioners in relation to acts done by their employees

13. Section 22(1) of the Solicitors Act 1974 shall not apply to an individual by reason of any act done by any employee of his, if at the time it was done, the individual was a recognised practitioner.

Penalty for pretending to be a recognised practitioner

14.—(1) A person shall not describe himself or hold himself out as a sole practitioner for the time being recognised under this Schedule unless he is so recognised.

(2) Any person who contravenes sub-paragraph (1) above shall be guilty of an offence and liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 4 on the standard scale.'.—*[Mr. Ian Stewart.]*

10.3 pm

Mr. Ian Stewart: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Now that we have reached the end of the proceedings in this House on the Building Societies Bill, I should like to express my thanks to all those who have been involved in its passage through the House for the constructive and good humoured way in which the proceedings have been conducted. It has been greatly to the advantage of the legislation.

I do not apologise for the fact that the Government have introduced more than 1,000 amendments to the Bill. It is an exceedingly complicated piece of legislation which completely recasts the law for building societies which has been on the statute book, in generally the same condition, for over 100 years. The number of amendments is testimony to the care that we have tried to take in order to respond to all the points that have been raised in the process of consultation and discussion and, indeed, in response to the many points that were put forward by hon. Members in Committee. We have gone rather rapidly through a number of groups of Government amendments, and we have been able to do so because the matters were fully debated in Committee and the amendments meet undertakings that we gave.

I want to thank my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), for the enormous amount of work that he has done and for his help in taking the Bill through the House. I greatly appreciate his support, both professional and personal. I also want to thank my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General for coming in at one or two crucial moments in our proceedings to deal with subjects on which I do not profess to have any skill or expert knowledge.

My hon. Friends and other members of the Committee all approached the legislation in a most helpful way. I do not at all take it in bad part that they were sometimes fairly rough with me. I only hope and believe that the Bill is in better shape as a result of the process of give and take that we have been through.

I thank the hon. Member for Thurrock (Dr. McDonald) for the way in which she has handled the Bill on behalf of the Opposition. Like myself, she had difficult clauses of the Finance Bill to deal with last night, and we shall be doing so again tomorrow night. Dealing with the Building Societies Bill in between has not been an easy matter. I compliment her on the way in which she has done so.

I also want to mention the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who has taken up temporary residence on the Opposition Front Bench for the purposes of this Bill. His interest in the subject over many years is well known to the House and he has acquitted himself with considerable distinction. I hope that he will continue to occupy his present position in some other capacity.

I want in particular to express my gratitude to the chief registrar and the staff of the registry, who, in addition to their routine work, which is an important range of duties, have devoted an enormous amount of time during the past three years to preparing details of this legislation. Without their ready assistance, which I know has placed a great strain on their resources, it would not have been possible to get the Bill into this sort of shape.

On 21 January I announced that Mr. Herbert Walden had agreed to serve as a part-time member of the Building Societies Commission. I am glad to be able to announce today that Mr. Sidney Procter and Mr. Geoffrey Sammons

have also accepted invitations from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer to be part-time members of the Building Societies Commission.

Mr. Sammons retired as senior partner of the firm of Allen and Overy in May this year, and his long experience of legal matters should be of considerable value to the commission. Mr. Procter retired as chief executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group in 1985. He is currently acting as adviser to the Governor of the Bank of England on banking supervision and will continue to do so in future, providing an important link between building society supervision and banking supervision. The Royal Bank of Scotland has agreed to allow him to relinquish his post as vice chairman with effect from 1 January 1987 to enable him to take up that appointment, and I am grateful to it for doing so.

I can also announce that Mr. Ronald Devlin, currently assistant registrar of friendly societies, will be a full-time member of the Building Societies Commission when it is established. Clearly the commission will have a most important part to play in the implementation of this legislation.

Finally, I should like to thank the parliamentary draftsmen for really heroic efforts in completing the Bill, and also the officials in the Treasury, who, during nearly three years of intensive work, have had to contend with an awkward Minister who questioned every proposal that they put forward. It was an enormous labour for them and they have done an outstanding job. In that tribute I include also the Building Societies Association, whose representatives and advisers have made themselves readily available to members of the Committee and other hon. Members, and I am sure that the Bill is in a much better shape as a result.

This is the most fundamental legislation on building societies for over a century. It gives them new powers and will enable them to compete more effectively in a changing marketplace. The emphasis will still be placed firmly on the provision of services for savers for house purchase, but I hope that the Bill will also enable building societies to face the future in the confidence that they will be able to continue to serve the public as effectively as they have done for many generations. I am sure that they have the best wishes of us all in meeting the new challenges that they face.

I think that the Bill leaves the House with the united support of hon. Members on both sides of the Chamber and of the building societies themselves, and I hope that it will not be too long before it reaches the statute book.

10.10 pm

Dr. McDonald: First, I echo the Minister's words, because I believe that the Bill provides a framework for the building societies in a competitive market. As the Economic Secretary to the Treasury knows, we still have certain reservations about the Bill, but we wish the building societies well. We have emphasised during our debates the importance of their commitment to housing and their meeting of that social need in the past. We hope that in future the societies will remain as mutual organisations and will continue primarily to meet the housing need.

I thank the Minister for his kind remarks about the conduct of the Bill in Committee, and I thank the Building Societies Association for the assistance that it gave to all members of the Committee during the passage of the Bill through Parliament. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) for agreeing to come on the Opposition Front Bench during the course of the Bill's passage through the House, for all the assistance that he has given me and for the wit that he has brought to the conduct of our debates. Perhaps we are not as anxious as the Minister seems to be for the Bill to return to this place and to face it all over again when we consider Lords amendments, but no doubt we shall face that prospect. We wish the building societies well.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time, and passed.

Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations

10.12 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Robert Dunn): I beg to move,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 21st May, be approved.

Hon. Members may remember that last year we came to the conclusion that the original regulations had become rather cumbersome and a somewhat daunting bundle. For the convenience of all concerned, we introduced a single set of consolidated regulations.

As hon. Members will have noted, there has been little need this year for any substantive amendment to the consolidated regulations of 1985. The amendment regulations before the House are designed mainly to assist the smooth running of the scheme, although very little has appeared to need changing. As in previous years, provision is also made for the appropriate revaluation of parental income scales.

To provide some context for this debate on the amendment of the regulations, I should like to speak briefly about the nature of the assisted places scheme as it operates under the present arrangements.

More than 21,000 children are receiving assistance under the assisted places scheme at 226 of the best independent schools in this country. High academic standards are a prerequisite of schools' participation in the scheme.

Of those now receiving assistance with their fees, over 47 per cent. come from families whose gross combined income per year is less than £7,300. The scale for determining the amount of fee remission is intentionally a tough one and only those families with incomes below £6,376 in the current year qualify for completely free places. Even so, for the school year 1985-86 over 39 per cent. of the assisted pupils qualified for full remission of fees. With this evidence before me, I stand ready to refute any claim that the assisted places scheme operates to subsidise the rich. Nor do I accept that it is a means of supporting children, albeit from low-income families, who would have attended independent schools even if the assisted places scheme did not exist. The principal regulations require all participating schools to ensure that at least 60 per cent. of their assisted pupils come from the maintained sector.

Mr. David Sumberg (Bury, South): While my hon. Friend is on the topic of participating schools, may I ask whether he is aware that there is considerable concern about the qualifications for schools that are allowed to participate? May I instance——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. The hon. Gentleman had better not. He should address himself to what is in the regulations rather than to the merits of the scheme itself.

Mr. Dunn: I think that I know what my hon. Friend is getting at. I shall attend to it in due course.

Only four of the participating schools have had difficulty in attracting sufficient suitably qualified applicants from state schools.

It is our view that the scheme is operating very successfully, and as evidence and support of that contention I would point to the consistently low-income profiles of the families involved, the successful recruitment of pupils from the maintained sector and the redistribution of quotas away from poor recruiter schools towards successful ones. For the Government, the participating schools, the pupils and the parents who benefit, and the general public, the assisted places scheme is a resounding success.

I refer to the text of the draft regulations. Regulations 1 and 2 are concerned only with nomenclature, and I shall not trouble hon. Members with comment on them. Regulation 3 does two things. It inserts a missing preposition in regulation 21 of the principal regulations. More notably, it increases the period allowed to the Secretary of State to respond to requests from the participating schools for increases in their fees. At present the schools must give the respective Secretaries of State one month's written notice of intended fee increases. The Secretary of State concerned then has only seven days in which to query the increase. We have found that administratively that has proved difficult, and we now propose an extension from seven to 14 days.

Regulation 4 is put forward to close a legal loophole that was brought to our attention by a number of the participating schools. The principal regulations are designed essentially to treat the assisted placeholder's current family as a family unit for the purposes of assessing income annd therefore the appropriate level of fee remission in individual cases. However, the principal regulations do not at present cover circumstances whereby an unmarried mother subsequently marries a man who is not the father of her child.

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): My hon. Friend has touched on a matter that is of concern in the context of the recent Treasury Green Paper on reform of personal taxation, which is not wholly irrelevant, in that it seeks to address the problem of it being an advantage for people to remain unmarried. It may have occurred to my hon. Friend that under the assisted places regulations as drafted there is a large incentive to someone contemplating taking up an assisted place similarly to remain unmarried.

Mr. Dunn: I understand my hon. Friend's point. Through the change in the regulations, we have tried to deal with the anomaly whereby an unmarried mother with a child, who then marries a millionaire could find that the income of the millionaire was not taken into account for the assessment of fee remission. Regulation 4 amends this anomaly and allows that husband's income to be taken into account in determining eligibility and level of assistance under the scheme. I am sure that the House accepts that this is sensible, placing all family units on the same footing.

Regulation 4(2) is also an addition to the definition of "parent" for the purposes of the scheme and takes account of the new legal definition of "custodian" introduced under those sections of the Children Act 1975 which were implemented earlier this year. The principal APS regulations are being amended so that children who are the subject of custodianship orders and their legal custodians are placed on exactly the same footing as adopted children and their adoptive parents.

Regulation 5 covers the rules for assessing income. Any allowance paid by a local authority to an assisted pupil's

custodian will be ignored for APS purposes. Regulation 5 also updates the relevant income tax legislation in the principal regulations.

Regulation 6 provides for the updating of the income scale used for assessing the amount of parents' contributions towards the fees — the threshold below which parents pay nothing towards fees being raised from £6,376 to £6,806.

I am confident that the changes that I have just described will allow the continuing smooth running of the assisted places scheme. Indeed, they can only enhance what is already highly successful and popular.

10.22 pm

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): I am sure that the House is well aware that the Opposition strongly object to the assisted places scheme. It is a clear symbol of the divisive and destructive approach that we have seen from this Government since 1979 in their policies on education and their attitude to state education. When almost everything in state education was going wrong because of a lack of resources and a lack of Government interest, they seemed to do everything they could to nurture their assisted places scheme. No doubt it is because they believe that education should be elitist and they want to use it to confer privilege on a few rather than to offer higher educational standards to all the children of Britain. There is no need for me to go over again our opposition to the assisted places scheme.

Mr. Sumberg: On a point of order Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Mr. Deputy Speaker: May I anticipate the hon. Gentleman's point of order? I hope that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will now address himself to the document before the House.

Mr. Bennett: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I draw your attention to the fact that in introducing the regulations the Minister made a general comment about them. Perhaps I may just complete one or two general remarks, which might speed up our proceedings. There is very little support in Britain for the assisted places scheme. People want the privilege of good education for all our children and not for a select few.

I shall now turn to the regulations. It is rather interesting to note that the first time round the Government got the regulations wrong. It might have been of interest to us if the Minister had explained why he got them wrong the first time and had to come back with a second set. I put that question before Government Members become too critical. He might also have explained to us why he picked an increase of virtually 7 per cent. in the allowances for income. I can see that there is some relationship to average earnings, but I suggest that perhaps the income increases do not take into account people on very low incomes. The Minister might like to say something about that.

I notice that the new Secretary of State wants more time to think about decisions in education, because he is asking for 14 days rather than seven. I had hoped that he would move in the opposite direction and speed up the Department's consideration, especially of things like local authority proposals for the reorganisation of schools. I am sure that the Minister is aware of the considerable backlog of decisions there, and it would be better if the Government came forward with proposals to reduce the time that it takes to reach ministerial decisions rather than to increase that time.

Mr. Sumberg: What has this got to do with the draft regulations?

Mr. Bennett: If the hon. Gentleman will look at them, he will find that there is a regulation, to which the Minister referred, which suggests that the Government should have 14 rather than seven days in which to respond. Mine seems a perfectly valid point, but if the hon. Gentleman wants to continue to remark from a sedentary position and keep the House here longer, he is welcome to do so.

The Minister mentioned parents and guardians, the regulations in respect of which, if we are to have an assisted places scheme at all, represent a sensible tidying up. Will the Minister answer a question that we asked the last time around when we considered the regulations, but which he did not answer? What evidence does he have about the rate of pay for teachers in the independent sector? There is some evidence to suggest that the rate of pay——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now straying from the draft regulations.

Mr. Bennett: With the greatest of respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the regulations mentions the fact that the Government want to extend the time which they have to consider requests from schools involved in the scheme to put up their fees. Whether an increase in fees is legitimate depends on rates of pay and other matters. If the Government——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If we start a debate on levels of teachers' remuneration now, we are likely to be here for a long time. We ought to stick to what is in the draft regulations.

Mr. Bennett: Perhaps I may refer you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the part of the regulations which would increase the amount of time from seven to 14 days——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. There is nothing in the draft regulations about teachers' pay and we must not get involved in a debate on that topic. If the hon. Gentleman returns to that matter, I shall have to rule him out of order.

Mr. Bennett: I accept that I must not debate teachers' pay, but may I suggest that it would be helpful if the Government could give us the information for which I have asked? They ought to have such information to make decisions about whether it is reasonable to increase fees. When we asked the Minister for this information previously, he said that he had none about the level of remuneration of teachers in independent schools. I am now pressing him to produce that information.

When taking account of a request to increase fees, the Government also take account of the pupil:teacher ratio in assisted places schools and the provision of books and materials——

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I ask this with the greatest possible respect to you. Is there one rule for Back Benchers and another for Front Bench spokesmen? The hon. Gentleman has not directed any of his remarks to the draft regulations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It is not in order for the hon. Member to criticise the Chair, directly or indirectly, but

[Mr. Deputy Speaker]

there is nevertheless substance in his complaint. The merits of the assisted places scheme have been debated and decided upon by the House. We are not debating them tonight. We must confine the debate to what is in the draft regulations. I hope that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish will do that.

Mr. Bennett: I am trying to do that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am also trying to tell the Government that, if they are considering taking more time to examine requests for increases in fees, they should take account of the difference in standards as between the privilege that the Government are conferring on a few children in assisted places and the generality. It would be rather better if they insisted that public expenditure on assisted places was exactly the same as public expenditure on places——

Mr. Sumberg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. When I tried to intervene earlier you ruled me out of order. Although I do not seek in any way to challenge that, I must protest at the way in which the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) is using the debate as an excuse to attack the whole concept of the assisted places scheme. That seems to be an abuse of the procedure of the House. I ask you to deal with him as firmly as you dealt with me.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I remind you that the Minister spent much of his speech extolling the virtues of the assisted places scheme without any mention of the draft regulations and you allowed him to carry on?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: These are difficult matters in which the Chair must use some judgment. The Minister strayed beyond the narrow terms of the regulations. I was anxious at the time about that and I reproached the hon. Gentleman in an attempt to keep the debate in line with the regulations which are before the House. I hope that the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) will now, having had a fair run, and having made a number of points, confine himself to the regulations.

Mr. Bennett: I was trying to bring my remarks to a close. If the Minister wants to raise the fact that I am the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments that dealt with the original regulations and the fact that they were ultra vires, I would stress to him that we are concerned with the vires of the order and not its merits. The purpose of this debate is to deal with the merits of the order. Although I cannot find many merits in the order, I was trying to do that as briefly as possible. It seems that some hon. Members want to make a meal out of the order.

As this is the Secretary of State's first occasion to be on the Government Front Bench in his new role, he should get rid of the assisted places scheme as it is one of the divisive parts of Tory party policy. He shold get rid of that as he got rid of Mr. Stuart Sexton, and return to mainstream Tory policy, to things like the Education Act 1944 and R. A. Butler and not continue with the idea of assisted places.

Mr. Stern: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You have warned the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on a number of occasions about straying from the subject, but he is still doing that. Will you, in the interests of the general amity of the House —we are all interested in the regulations and that is why we are here tonight—ask the hon. Gentleman to confine his remarks to the regulations?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I accept the hon. Gentleman's point. I allowed the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish to go on because I thought for one second that he was about to resume his seat. I thought it better to allow him to do that rather than to provoke him into further comment.

Mr. Bennett: I had only one more sentence to say. I wanted to stress that, as objectionable as the Opposition find the assisted places scheme, we do not think that it would be especially useful to divide the House tonight.

10.33 pm

Mr. Peter Griffiths (Portsmouth, North): It would be a tragedy if the merits of the regulations were lost because points have been made which are not strictly relevant to the debate, which is, after all, limited in time.

I am pleased to note the way in which the regulations show that the Department is prepared to make those changes that are a necessary consequence on changes elsewhere, and that they seek to provide an adequate definition of the person responsible for the child's education. These factors encourage us to believe that the scheme is being properly supervised and considered.

I want to confine my remarks to the changes that have been made in the income scales for parents and the rates at which they make their contributions to the education of the children. In his introduction my hon. Friend did not make it clear on what basis the changes had been made. As the income levels designated in the regulations will apply in the next education year, when the increase will be considerably above the rate of inflation, there is an element of generosity. However, some of us might think it inadequate. I should like my hon. Friend to confirm that that generosity was the intention of the Department and not something that happened by accident when a figure was, as it were, plucked out of the air.

Although my constituency is in the south of England, the people there have quite low wage rates. The Government should recognise that the levels at which parental contributions are fixed are significant in cities such as Portsmouth, which is akin to many of the industrial cities of the north in its social and economic problems. If my hon. Friend can assure us that it is the intention over a period to change the assessment of parental contributions to benefit parents, that will be welcomed in the less prosperous parts of the country, particularly by parents whose incomes are below average. It is they who make the greatest sacrifice for their children to be educated under the scheme.

10.36 pm

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North-East): Participating in this debate is akin to dancing barefoot on razor blades. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you very wisely, I thought, told the first two speakers that they could have a short, fair run. I should like your indulgence to pursue a similar course.

We are talking about draft regulations that are intended to extend a scheme that I do not like. I want to say exactly

what we find objectionable about the assisted places scheme, and find even more objectionable in view of the draft regulations, which exacerbate the evil.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. If the hon. Gentleman will address himself to the merits of the regulations before the House he will be in order. He heard the criticisms that preceded his speech. He will be out of order if he seeks to debate the merits of the assisted places scheme as such. I remind him again that the House debated that scheme and made its decision on it a long time ago. We are now debating amendments to that scheme, and not the scheme itself. The hon. Gentleman should confine himself to the amendments.

Mr. Freud: I thought that what I had said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, had made it clear that I was talking about the draft regulations which extend what we considered an evil. These draft regulations facilitate the taking of money from the hard-pressed, maintained sector of education, to transfer children to the not necessarily better private sector. I will not buy their hype and call it the independent sector.

The draft regulations comes from a Government Department with responsibility for the public sector of education, yet it slaps its customers in the face by depriving them of their most gifted assets—the children. I do not go along with a system that seeks to do more for assisted places than is absolutely necessary. Therefore, it will come as no surprise to hon. Members to learn that we are against these statutory instruments, which widen the catchment area of eligibility.

Mr. Hickmet: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will advise us whether, on that basis, he intends to divide the House.

Mr. Freud: May I tell the hon. Gentleman, who presumably knows little about the procedures of the House, that a Division needs two Tellers. Were I not treading a lonely path, I might well be persuaded to divide the House.

I find it difficult to accept that the statutory instrument widens the catchment area of eligibility for assisted places by raising the earning threshold, not in line with inflation, but by a figure of 7 per cent., which Treasury Ministers frequently condemn as being outrageously high for wage awards. I particularly resent the fact that benefits accrue automatically to children on the scheme, while other poor and equally deserving children have their eligibility to better education cut, and while the actual availability of opportunity is disappearing for them.

The instrument subsidises parental income above the rate of inflation. As it subsidises school fees above the rate of inflation, it is therefore a double subsidy. In the maintained sector there is a double penalty: a falling education budget, whatever the Minister tells us, and parents steadily picking up even greater portions of school expenditure to help the state system. The latest HMI report writes of parents paying for basics, such as rewiring the school hall.

This is a fair opportunity to welcome the Secretary of State to his new office. All hon. Members who have the wellbeing of children at heart wish the new Secretary of State well in a difficult task. There is about the debate an air of déjà vu or, perhaps déjà entendu, if the Minister's hearing aid is in working order. There is an element of confusion, in that the original order was withdrawn and we now have a new one because the clerk was unable to number the paragraphs of the original one correctly. It shows that good schooling costs money. It is right for the Secretary of State to realise that good education does not come cheap, as his predecessor found out with the training and vocational education initiative.

We oppose the draft regulations because they widen the inequality among children, undermine the state sector and give irrational ammunition to those who wish to denigrate comprehensive education. It is based on the utterly false premise that the private sector per se deserves to be better financed than the maintained sector.

I shall not divide the House because, despite this statutory instrument, when we have an opportunity we shall phase out the scheme, for the benefit of all children, rather than for those of the suppressed middle class who already get a good deal from education and who would, if they stayed in the maintained sector, greatly contribute to its excellence.

Mr. Sumberg *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Member for Cambridgeshire, North-East (Mr. Freud) giving way?

Mr. Freud: I had finished my speech, which is why I sat down.

10.43 pm

Mr. Dunn: This is the third occasion on which I have taken part in the debate. *[Interruption.]* Given the opportunity, I should like to do so, but last time I was ruled out of order for straying from the path on which we had been set. This is an annual opportunity for Opposition Members to show their prejudice against an excellent scheme. The regulations as amended should be accepted by the House, and I am delighted to hear that Opposition Members will not divide the House tonight.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986, which were laid before this House on 21st May, be approved.

British Rail Engineering Limited (Springburn)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.44 pm

Mr. Michael Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): I am grateful for the opportunity to draw to the attention of the House the problems of my constituency, especially the major problem at the British Rail Engineering Ltd. works. Just before the Whitsun recess, it was announced that within just over a year the work force at Springburn would be reduced from 1,000 to fewer than 200 and that BREL would cease to operate as a company in Springburn and, indeed, in Scotland, and that the organisation would be taken over by ScotRail.

This is a sad occasion for me and for the community, because at one time Springburn employed about 10,000 people in the railway workshops. There were four workshops employing a highly skilled work force, and between the 1930s and 1960s one was considered a bit eccentric if one travelled outside Springburn to seek employment. It was a boom town in those days. I have lived in the community since I was 15, I served my apprenticeship there, I married a girl from Springburn and I now live in the community, and it is sad to see the problems from which we suffer now.

I asked the Library to give me the latest unemployment figures for Springburn. I do not have much time at my disposal tonight, so I shall not go into every detail of the problem, but I can get the picture across by saying that the latest figures show that 8,747 men and women are unemployed in my constituency. The Department of Employment does not give unemployment percentages for constituencies, but in Glasgow it is more than 22 per cent.

I wish to use this Adjournment debate to ask the Minister questions that have been asked by the work force at the BREL workshops in Springburn, and I took the liberty of telephoning the Minister's Department to forewarn him of the questions so that he could be helpful to the community and to the House. Why did BREL refuse to allow the press on to the premises, especially when a delegation from the Scottish TUC was visiting them last week? The media were allowed into the Swindon works, and we see no reason why, especially when we are considering a public asset, the media should not be allowed in to see for themselves the facility at Springburn.

The contract known as the gangway modification, which has been ordered by the Strathclyde passenger transport executive, has, in part, been completed by the Springburn work force. It is my understanding that the PTE, which is an organisation run by Strathclyde regional council, is satisfied with the work. Why is the remaining part of the contract to go to Wolverton? It seems ridiculous that Strathclyde regional council ratepayers should have to pay for this work. There is no harm to the work force south of the border, and it seems strange that the work should go south of the border when Springburn is in dire straits. It would be helpful if the Minister could give an answer as to why the contract is going to Wolverton.

If the proposals of BREL are to be carried out in full, it means that all major contracts will have to be carried out in Derby, York, Crewe or Wolverton and major repairs will also have to be carried out in those places. This means that any work of that nature in Scotland will have to travel anything between 270 and 370 miles to be carried out. Can the Minister, who has always had a mind for economies, and has always put the case for them before the House tell me that that makes economic sense?

A fortnight ago an announcement was made about ScotRail taking over and that those who were fortunate enough to remain with ScotRail at Springburn would be involved in a method of repair known as component exchange. I should like to know whether this method of repair has been tried and tested in any other part of the United Kingdom. If not, it means, in effect, that Springburn is getting an experimental programme, and that makes the prospects for the remaining work force very unsure.

Mention has been made of the work force of the electronic department at the railway workshops. This department is graded as A1, which is a high grading for electronic work. Currently there is only a small work force consisting of 12 people. However, it is an area which the work force regards as having potential. It is the only section under BREL and British Rail that is involved in the repair of railway signal systems. There could well be room for expansion but there is a worry that under ScotRail this department could be taken away and that outside organisations will be left to do the work. I would be happy if the Minister could give me some reassurance.

The other area that has been mentioned is the upgrading of railway bogies. This has been mentioned in the press, and some people are giving the impression that it could bring a lot of work to the railway workshops. However, the work force feels that it would bring enough work for only six skilled fitters. I should like the Minister's opinion on that matter.

As with any company which is in difficulties, one is always concerned about asset stripping. With that in mind, I ask the Minister to say what will happen to the new high-tech machines, such as the CNCs and the brake presses, which were purchased recently at a cost of £500,000.

I feel sad whenever I pass the apprentice training school which is incorporated in the workshop. The school opened in 1979, shortly after I became a Member of Parliament. At that time BREL showed that it had some commitment to apprentice training. The school has facilities for 110 apprentices. Sadly, not one apprentice has been trained at the school for the best part of 18 months. When my son took part in a YTS scheme he did some training there. I know at first hand that the facilities exit at the school. Machine tools, machines and classrooms are lying waste and there are padlocks on the doors.

It is a scandal that the industrial base of an area which has a proud record in engineering is being destroyed to such an extent. If we do not train young apprentices, we shall destroy the seed corn. There has never been a greater chance to train them—even if the economy does take a turn for the better. If the Minister is serious about the training and care of young people, he should end the scandal of the school lying empty. Something should be done.

I refer to the holding company which was formed to try to bring more industry to the site at Springburn. BREL boasts about the company. It tells us that it has been successful in other parts of the country and that it intends to attract new employers on to the site and will pay a subsidy for a year to every unemployed railway worker employed by the new company. I understand that the

subsidy will not be paid to a company doing subcontract work for the railway industry, yet in England such subsidy is allowed.

We have a community which was one of the best railway centres in the world. We have a railway engineering base which has existed for generations—since the last century. Does BREL wish to destroy that base completely? It appears that that is what it intends with the holding company.

We intend to fight in the community, against the proposals. We are conscious of the fact that hundreds of people have left the factory because of redundancies. In view of unemployment and the redundancies that have taken place, there is a need to attract new industry—railways or whatever—into Springburn. I want to know what steps the Minister and his Government are taking to create work and to co-ordinate efforts by BREL, the Scottish Development Agency, Glasgow district council and Strathclyde regional council. I am grateful for the opportunity to put the case before the House.

10.59 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The hon. Member for Glasgow, Springburn (Mr. Martin) has been forthright in arguing on behalf of his constituents for the retention of the British Rail Engineering Ltd works at Springburn, and, quite reasonably, asked a number of questions. I join him in his profound regret about the proposed job losses affecting his constituency.

As the House will know, BR has recently announced, with great regret, proposals for substantial reductions in capacity at a number of its engineering workshops. These proposals include the rundown of the works at Springburn and the setting up of a regional maintenance depot on the site, employing some 200 people. I stress that these are proposals made by BR management. They are now the subject of the normal processes of consultation with the railway unions. It is right that the hon. Gentleman should seek some explanation for these proposals.

BR's requirement for rolling stock maintenance is declining sharply. This arises from the fact that it is undertaking a major programme of heavy investment in modernisation and new rolling stock. Since July 1984 alone, the Government have approved 10 major investment projects, worth over £630 million in total, including nearly £400 million of new rolling stock, and £200 million for new electrification. Some £700 million of investment in new rolling stock is planned by BR over the next five years.

This investment helps British Rail to give a better service to its customers, and provides important engineering work for British industry. I know that this policy of modernisation commands support from both sides of the House, but investment in modern equipment also means less work for British Rail's maintenance and repair workshops. The new rolling stock can be used more efficiently, and so the same services can be provided by a smaller fleet of vehicles, each of which in turn needs less maintenance than the one it replaces.

The hon. Member will perhaps be familiar with an example I have quoted to the House before, of the new Sprinter diesel multiple units. On average, BR needs only two new Sprinters for every three old units, and each new Sprinter needs 30 to 40 per cent. less maintenance at BREL than its predecessor. Overall, there is a reduction of over 50 per cent. in BREL's maintenance work load for these services. It is a desperately unfortunate but undeniable fact that if there is less maintenance work, fewer maintenance men are required.

Furthermore—this is a point that I believe is not always fully appreciated—from the moment that BR takes the decision to order new rolling stock, heavy maintenance ceases on the old stock that is to be replaced. By heavy maintenance I mean the sort of general overhaul that a locomotive or coach would receive at a BREL works every eight to 10 years. It obviously makes no sense to do any more of this type of work on stock that will be scrapped in a couple of years' time. Although all the necessary day-to-day maintenance continues to be done on these vehicles, BR handles that in its local depots, not at BREL.

I move on from the general principle of what is happening to the more precise effects on Springburn. Scotland is particularly affected by the decline in maintenance requirements, because BR is improving services there through major fleet changes. In a few years' time, a very high proportion of Scottish services will be operated by modern low-maintenance vehicles.

There is new electrification, with over £100 million being invested in Scotland in the east coast main line and the Ayrshire schemes. There are likely to be Sprinter-type vehicles on many services that currently use loco-hauled coaching stock, such as Glasgow to Fort William. There are also likely to be more high speed train type services, for example between Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness.

I know that the hon. Gentleman will join me in deprecating the desperately unfortunate consequences of what is happening. On the one hand, we all want to see a modern BR, able to compete and provide the sort of services that the travelling public wants, so that it will use the services. On the other hand, to do that BR has to modernise its equipment and fleets. It is a desperately unfortunate byproduct of that, that it does not have the maintenance requirement that so fully occupied the works before. Over a year ago, BREL told its trade unions that the lower maintenance work load meant that the work force at Springburn would need to be reduced to about 500 by March 1987. British Rail was not able to give figures beyond that date, but Springburn's long-term prospects were clearly very uncertain.

That announcement was naturally unwelcome to the hon. Gentleman and his constituents. During the past year, BR has been giving further study to the best way of organising its maintenance arrangements in future years. It is seeking ways to improve efficiency, and it has concluded that in future, most light maintenance will be done by exchanging parts at depots. That helps to get vehicles back into productive use while the defective parts are taken away to be repaired separately.

The hon. Gentleman asked whether this was a tried and tested method, or whether it was experimental. It has already been in use for several years for some of the fleets used on the southern region of BR. That way, vehicles need go back to the main works for refurbishment only every eight or 10 years. It is in use, for example, at Chart Leacon, Ilford and Selhurst Park. The latest position is that last month BR announced the details of the new BREL organisation. British Rail made it clear that without a change in strategy, continuing reductions in the maintenance work load would have led to the complete

[Mr. David Mitchell]

closure of Springburn next March. But instead, BR's new strategy of greater reliance on component exchanges at depots offers a new role for Springburn. British Rail now proposes that Springburn should become the regional maintenance depot offering work for up to 200 people.

The hon. Gentleman raised several detailed points about the implications of BR's proposals. Those details are management matters, which BR and BREL will need to consider in the consultation that they will be having with their unions. As the hon. Gentleman rightly pointed out, in reaching final decisions they will have to take account of the cost of moving vehicles to England for heavy overhaul. But the distribution of work between BREL sites must remain a matter for the BREL management. I understand that BREL plans to complete the existing Strathclyde refurbishment order at Springburn, but that it does not plan to undertake any further major overhaul work there.

The hon. Gentleman also asked some specific questions. He mentioned that the press had been refused access to the Springburn works. That is not quite the position. The press had access to the conference room, but wanted to tour the works. There were about 40 journalists, and I think that the hon. Gentleman will realise that for safety reasons—*[Interruption.]* That is my information. The management took the view—as it was entitled to do—that for safety reasons people should not wander round machinery.

The hon. Gentleman also raised the question of upgrading bogies, and talk in the press of that work going to Springburn. I understand that the wheel shop will be retained when Springburn is taken over by BR, but I cannot predict the level of employment. Importantly, the hon. Gentleman also asked what would be done to help to provide alternative work. Regrettably, the new role for Springburn will still entail substantial job losses. I recognise that that causes deep anxiety and distress to all those concerned, as well as to me.

I share the hon. Gentleman's sadness about those job losses. I have explained this evening some of the reasoning that has led the British Rail board to put forward these proposals. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that British Rail will be doing all that it can to soften the impact of these changes. A senior BR director will co-ordinate measures to help those affected, working with BREL to find alternative jobs both within BR and outside the railway industry.

BREL has offered a major job creation package for Springburn on similar lines to that offered at other sites affected by works closures, making available £1 million at Springburn. The Scottish Development Agency has also committed money to the area. Scottish Ministers have indicated that they stand ready to deal with any selective assistance or regional development grant proposals for the area.

Mr. Donald Dewar (Glasgow, Garscadden): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Mitchell: No. There is a very important point that I want to make.

I hope that every possibility for bringing new industry into the area will be explored. Unfortunately, I gather that progress continues to be held up by strained relations between some of the bodies involved. May I ask the hon. Member for Springburn to urge all the interested groups to work with BR and the Scottish Development Agency on trying to find the best means of promoting alternative employment to replace the jobs that have been lost.

The hon. Gentleman will know that I am personally committed to helping in new job creation. Last autumn I went back to Shildon in County Durham to see the progress that has been made since BREL had to close its wagon works there. I was much encouraged to see the results so far. Over 700 jobs have been created in the area since the closure and a further 1,100 are in the pipeline over the next three years. That is a significant achievement in an area already hard hit by the decline of traditional industries.

I hope that similar success can be achieved at Springburn. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will join me in that thought, and I should be happy personally to ask him to join me on a visit to Shildon so that he can see the effect of maximum co-operation between all those who are able to help in the important task of job creation.

Mr. Dewar: Before the Minister resumes his seat, may I ask him to deal with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Springburn about an apparent restriction on the kind of work that will attract grant assistance in the attempt to rehabilitate the area?

Mr. Mitchell: I should like to write to the hon. Gentleman about that point.

There is a very important point that I want to make. The hon. Member for Springburn — who, perhaps understandably, is emotional, as he represents an area where there have been job losses—talked about fighting to prevent this. I hope that he will allow nothing to happen, because of the fighting talk that he uses that will inhibit in any way proper co-operation between the work force, the unions, the local authority, BREL and BR to ensure that the maximum is done to create new jobs in the area. That would be very unfortunate.

At Swindon strained relations led to substantial delay in the start of progressive work to create new jobs in the area. I hope that Glasgow will have the good sense to follow the pattern of Shildon rather than the disappointing pattern at Swindon. It makes a difference to the speed with which new jobs can be created in the area. I know that the hon. Gentleman would like job creation to be a success, and I hope that he will not do anything, or encourage anybody to do anything that would damage its effectiveness.

The next step is for British Rail to take forward its consultation with the work force. BR's proposals will, I am sure, be subject to critical and searching examination. It will then be for the management to decide how to proceed, but I hope that it can proceed in an atmosphere of co-operation, concentrating on how to cope with the adjustments which are necessary to bring our railway system into the 21st century. I am sure that BR does not see its proposals as immutable in every detail.

It is absolutely clear that we must modernise our railways if they are to flourish and survive. That inevitably

means dramatic changes in the maintenance requirements associated with massive investment in modern rolling stock that does not require the amount of maintenance that was required by the old-fashioned equipment that British Rail has used for so long.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at fourteen minutes past Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Thursday 5 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PRIVATE BUSINESS

TEIGNMOUTH QUAY COMPANY BILL *(By Order)*

SOUTH YORKSHIRE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT BILL *(By Order)*

BEXLEY LONDON BOROUGH COUNCIL BILL *(By Order)*

SHOREHAM PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Orders for Second reading read.
To be read a Second time upon Thursday 12 June.

MILFORD HAVEN PORT AUTHORITY BILL *(By Order)*
Order read for resuming adjourned debate on Question [18 February], That the Bill be now read a Second time.
Debate to be resumed Thursday 12 June.

Oral Answers to Questions

NORTHERN IRELAND

United States (Extradition Treaty)

1. **Mr. Adley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his recent discussions in the United States of America concerning the proposed extradition treaty covering those facing terrorism charges in the United Kingdom and taking refuge in the United States of America.

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Tom King): My purpose in visiting the United States was to meet leading Americans who take a close interest in Northern Ireland affairs. Among the matters discussed were the supplementary extradition treaty, the MacBride principles and the international fund. I am satisfied that the many Senators, Congressmen and others I met recognise the importance of achieving early ratification of a satisfactory treaty, and I hope that that will be achieved.

Mr. Adley: I thank my right hon. Friend for that reply. However, has he noticed that the opposition of Senators and Congressmen is argued strongly on constitutional grounds? Does he agree that that may be humbug when considered alongside the behaviour of the same Senators and Congressmen in responding to requests for extradition by the Israeli Government for alleged terrorists? Will he tell those with whom he is in contact that this form of vote-grubbing, ethnic politics, when considered with tourist cancellations and the behaviour meted out to Mark Thatcher, which was announced this morning, is generating a dangerous level of anti-American feeling in this country?

Mr. King: I tried to convey some of the feelings that my hon. Friend has conveyed robustly to the House in the context of the importance that we attach to working closely with the United States Government in the joint fight against terrorism. I made it clear that that was vital. After the Toyko summit, where President Reagan and my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister stood closely together in agreement on the importance of improving arrangements in the fight against international terrorism, and specifically mentioned the importance of effective extradition, it would be tragic if the two leaders of the Western world in this respect were unable to reach agreement.

Mr. Mason: Is the Secretary of State aware that if America means business in tackling terrorism, the supplementary extradition treaty should be ratified as he proposes? What aspects of Noraid have been outlawed in the United States, and what progress did the Secretary of State make on that? Is it not time that the President told his people to stop cowering at home, chicken-hearted as they are in the face of terrorism, and to get out into the world and especially visit Britain, which is a safer haven than America?

Mr. King: Without commenting on the right hon. Gentleman's last point, I must say that there are some muddled ideas in the United States about the risks that are involved in terrorism. One American told me that Americans thought that Europe was too dangerous to visit this year but they might come to Ireland instead. I sought to correct the Americans' problems with their perception of terrorism, and I tried to emphasise once again the safety and security of the United Kingdom and how welcome they would be as visitors.

I also raised the matter of fund raising. I was grateful for the extremely robust approach of the Administration and the President's latest press conference and broadcast to the nation, which made clear his commitment to supporting the United Kingdom on extradition. I was also very grateful for the clear support for responsible fund raising, and I emphasised the importance of that. It is significant that Speaker O'Neill is the leader of the alternative fund, and that is encouraging funds to go through responsible organisations and not through terrorist organisations.

Sir Adam Butler: I am sure that my right hon. Friend argued the British case on the extradition treaty very strongly, but I want to emphasise the points that have already been made about the strength of feeling on this matter. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the treaty were rejected by the Senate it would have immense consequences for the Anglo-American relationship, and, in view of the support that we gave to the Americans in the Libyan crisis and in the light of the Tokyo conference, to which he has already referred, it would, to quote the American ambassador,

"reek of selfishness and hypocrisy"

if that treaty were rejected? May we have a message from the House of Commons on behalf of the British people that

they will not readily understand nor easily forgive those Senators who vote against the measure, and that even the best of friendships has a price?

Mr. King: I should like to report to my hon. Friend and to the House that that was very much the message that I sought to deliver during my visit to Washington. I should like to feel that it was very generally received, and I respect that, along with the support that we had. I pay tribute to the President, and I include Ambassador Price in my remarks. He has given clear and unequivocal leadership in this issue, which we appreciate. As my hon. Friend rightly says, it simply would not be understood, when it is perceived that the first asset of any terrorist is a passport, if we were to allow that facility between two of the leading nations of the Western world so that terrorists can thumb their noses and escape scot free.

Ms. Clare Short: Will the right hon. Gentleman tell us what he had to say while he was in the United States about the MacBride principles? I understand that the Government are opposed to them, yet their aim is surely to encourage American firms in Northern Ireland to move against discrimination, which is far too high in employment? Why are the British Government opposed to the MacBride principles if they are in favour——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this to do with extradition?

Ms. Short: The Secretary of State mentioned the MacBride principles in his main answer.

If the Government are in favour of eliminating discrimination, why are they against the MacBride principles?

Mr. King: The British Government are committed to the elimination of discrimination in employment. The Fair Employment Agency was set up by the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1976 to achieve exactly those objectives. The problem about the MacBride principles is that in certain respects they are in conflict with our legislation. Our legal advice is that they will lead to legal actions, which will lead to problems for the companies concerned. The problem now is that the threat behind the MacBride principles is disinvestment. That is the sanction that is to be applied. I genuinely believe that, far from helping employment for the minority community, they are a threat to all employment in Northern Ireland. They will discourage investment and will penalise the employment not only of Protestants—the majority community—but of Catholics. If the hon. Lady talks to the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) and the Irish Government, who have been vocal advocates of fair employment, she will find that they are equally opposed to the application of the MacBride principles.

Mr. Stanbrook: Before the treaty was signed, what consideration was given to the chances of getting this through Congress, bearing in mind that Congress alone has the power of ratification of treaties in the United States and that the treaty's provisions go far further than do most extradition treaties? Were we not asking the Americans too much?

Mr. King: I am appalled at my hon. Friend's contribution. I am not sure in what respect he would propose amendments to the treaty that we have. There have been suggestions that people who murder by rifle, not machine gun, or by explosion, but not machine gun, might somehow be exempted. I do not know in what respect my hon. Friend suggests amendment. Those amendments are unacceptable to me. I said clearly in the United States that murder is murder and that those who commit terrorist offences should be brought back. That should be the pattern for future extradition treaties. Of course it cannot be guaranteed in advance that the Senate will advise and consent to ratification, but I very much hope that it will on this occasion.

Mr. Archer: Does the right hon. Gentleman recognise that the argument is said to arise from a reluctance to extradite for political offences? First, will he confirm that the House unanimously rejects any suggestion that gangsterism in any cause is a political activity? Can he or his colleagues in the Government help the international community to formulate a criterion which will recognise the legitimate limits of political asylum while ensuring that the civilised world contains no hiding place for those who live by the gun?

Mr. King: I should like to feel that this House is as good a bastion as either of the Houses of Government in the United States for the genuine rights of political asylum. We are distinguishing between those who hold genuine political beliefs and those who use terrorist methods in the pursuit of certain activities. Those are the people whom we cannot tolerate in a civilised society.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

2. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about progress in implementing the Anglo-Irish agreement.

4. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent talks he has had with representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: The Anglo-Irish agreement has now been in force for six months. During that time the Intergovernmental Conference has met five times. The last meeting took place in London on 9 May. The joint statements issued after each meeting have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Yeo: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the vast majority of the people of the United Kingdom strongly support this agreement and recognise that it will take some considerable time for its full benefits to be felt? Is he further aware that if there had been any doubts about the wisdom of the agreement they would rapidly have been removed by the apparent attitude of hostility and concern which the IRA and other men of violence express towards the agreement?

Mr. King: There is no doubt that the IRA is the organisation which most fears this agreement. It sees the agreement as a major threat, and it is right to do so. It is our determination to smash terrorism, and through that agreement it is now the joint determination of the Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of the Republic. However, it is also an approach that recognises in the agreement that while the majority has its rights and traditions, there is also a minority which has its rights and traditions which also deserve to be respected. Therefore, the Anglo-Irish agreement seeks to deal fairly in both respects by giving the reassurance, with the acceptance of the Republic, of the principle of consent in

the position of Northern Ireland in the United Kingdom, subject to the majority view in Northern Ireland and to give that reassurance to the minority community as well.

Mr. Canavan: As the perfectly justifiable demand for Irish reunification is considered to be too sensitive a subject for inclusion on the agenda for talks with representatives of the Republic, is there at least some hope of discussing other issues of possible agreement, such as the abolition of the killer plastic bullets and the abolition of the supergrass trials, which are an absolute travesty of justice? They would be abolished under the private Member's Bill introduced on Tuesday of this week by the hon. Member for Newry and Armagh (Mr. Mallon).

Mr. King: The Anglo-Irish agreement not only confirms the acceptance by the Government of the Republic of the rights of the majority in Northern Ireland and the principle of consent against being compelled into a united Ireland against its wish, but recognises that no wish to be so compelled exists at present. That is an important confirmation by the Government of the Republic, and that is why the matter is not on the agenda of the conference.

The hon. Gentleman suggested other matters which he believes should be on the agenda. We are discussing measures which might enhance confidence in the administration of justice. Any honest person looking at the problems of terrorist trials, where intimidation makes it impossible to have juries and where many witnesses are intimidated, recognises that there are real problems in seeking to bring terrorists to book. We in the United Kingdom have sought honourably to set up the best system of justice we can, but we have also been prepared to discuss those issues fairly and openly. We shall continue to do so, I hope in a constructive way, and I hope that we will be able to find improvements.

Mr. Gow: In the absence of any prospects for devolution in Northern Ireland on a basis that would be widely acceptable throughout the community, is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a growing body of opinion in the Province which believes that the best way forward now is through integration, which would offer proper safeguards for the minority in Northern Ireland? Will my right hon. Friend confirm that integration is not inconsistent with the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. King: The Government have made clear their commitment to seeking to achieve devolution and devolved government in the Province. I do not accept my hon. Friend's initial premise that there is an absence of any possibility of achieving that. I hope that it will be possible to sit down and discuss ways in which this could be achieved. I make it clear that while the Government are always willing to consider ways in which legislation might be handled, carrying that forward into some concept of total integration would raise difficult issues.

Mr. Campbell-Savours: In recent discussions with representatives of the Irish Government, did the right hon. Gentleman raise again the question of kidnap insurance? Is he aware that the publication *Lloyd's Underwriting Syndicates* revealed that the Lords Norfolk, St. Helens, Marlborough, Davenport, Romsey, Peel and Freyberg are all names in underwriting firms which are managed by managing agents Cassidy Davies? This firm offers kidnap insurance and has made payments to the IRA. Does the Secretary of State intend to intervene to ensure that the terms of section 10 of the Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act are complied with and to stop the sale of this kidnap insurance?

Mr. King: As the hon. Gentleman knows, this is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: Is my right hon. Friend aware that Dr. FitzGerald agreed with an RTE radio interviewer on 18 May that Nationalist lives had been put under threat as a result of the agreement, and that that was expected? Was that also expected by Her Majesty's Government when they entered into the agreement?

Mr. King: If Nationalist lives have been put under threat, the threats presumably come from the majority community. I know that my hon. Friend will join me in deploring any threats, whether they come against the police or the Nationalist community, in the present situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Archer: Does the Secretary of State recall that those of us who said that the agreement should be given a chance also argued that it should be known by its fruits? After six months, will the right hon. Gentleman enumerate the fruits that are ripening? Have there been any consequences for the provision of jobs, for community welfare or for civil liberties? Can he make any forecast as to when we may expect a harvest?

Mr. King: As I made clear earlier, it will take time for the long-term changes and improvements in attitudes and reconciliation to be apparent. It is already apparent that the groundwork has been laid in the increasingly close co-operation on security, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman will know that a whole series of meetings are taking place, and that a programme of work has been established, not just between the Chief Constable of the RUC and the Commissioner, but right down the line.

The right hon. and learned Gentleman will be aware that since the signing of the Anglo-Irish agreement the Irish Government have signed the European convention on the suppression of terrorism. He will have welcomed, as I did, the significant shift of votes from Sinn Fein to the SDLP in the by-elections as a further illustration of the growing confidence of the Nationalist community in the constitutional approach. A programme of work has now well advanced confidence in the administration of justice and will bring some useful benefits which will be recognised by the Nationalist community as a real prospect of progress.

Marches (Routes)

3. **Mr. Alton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he intends to take action on the recent proposal of the Chief Constable to establish an independent tribunal to deal with the routeing of traditional marches.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr. Nicholas Scott): The Chief Constable's suggestion is one of a number of matters which my right hon. Friend will consider when reviewing public order legislation for Northern Ireland in the light of the Public Order Bill for Great Britain currently before Parliament.

Mr. Alton: Following the violence at Portadown last July and the growing concern about the marching season this year, has the Minister not missed the opportunity of

introducing a real change that would stop Dublin from being blamed for unnecessary interference in deciding where the marches should be routed?

Mr. Scott: The public order legislation that we may be introducing in the autumn is the proper vehicle for any legislative change in this matter. We want to consider carefully this suggestion, among others, some of which have been discussed in the Committee on the Public Order Bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend aware that officers of the Conservative Back-Bench aviation committee visited the United States over the recess, and discussed with Congressman and Senators activities such as the routeing of marches in Northern Ireland? There was confusion in the minds of these opinion formers and leaders in the United States about the democratic way in which we handle such activities. In fact, they were in doubt whether Northern Ireland was a democracy. They were confusing Northern Ireland with the non-democratic activities of other countries over terrorism, marches, and so on. It is that confusion that is causing enormous problems in the United States in presenting Northern Ireland as a democracy.

Mr. Scott: I am sure that my right hon. Friend's visit to the United States will have cleared the minds of a number of people on the matter. My hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Dr. Mawhinney) will be in the United States in the near future. We consistently seek to explain the basis and the fairness of society in Northern Ireland, because we need international support in the battle against terrorism and because we want people to invest in the jobs that are so vital to the future of the Province.

William Allen

5. **Mr. Mallon** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what factors led him to advise Her Majesty to exercise the royal prerogative of mercy in respect of William Allen.

Mr. Scott: It is not our practice to give details of reasons for exercise of the royal prerogative of mercy.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware that there is great concern in Northern Ireland and that confidence in the system of justice has been further eroded by the fact that a criminal who was sentenced to 14 years imprisonment on 52 charges has been released after serving two years? That has confirmed in the minds of many the fact that he sold his evidence for an early release. Does the Minister agree that the exercise of the royal prerogative in that way to such a person is an insult to the person in whose name the royal prerogative is exercised?

Mr. Scott: I shall not comment, because we do not give reasons. Mr. Allen has not been released. If and when he is, he will have served substantially in excess of the two years mentioned by the hon. Gentleman.

Security

6. **Mr. Proctor** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the current security situation in the Province.

10. **Mr. Portillo** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will make a statement on the security situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Tom King: Since I last answered questions in the House on 1 May there have been 10 deaths in incidents arising from the security situation in the Province. Six of those killed were civilians, two were police officers, one was an Army major, and one was a corporal in the UDR. I am sure that the whole House will join me in condemning those murders. The security forces have continued their efforts to prevent terrorist activity and to bring to justice those responsible for terrorist crimes. So far this year 264 people have been charged with serious offences, including one with murder and 17 with attempted murder. In the same period, 96 weapons, 10,600 rounds of ammunition and 1,200 lb of explosives have been recovered.

Mr. Proctor: Is it not clear that, despite the Anglo-Irish agreement, the murderous campaign of the IRA continues, particularly in the frontier areas? Is it not also clear that, despite the concessions made by the United Kingdom in the agreement, there has not been a single effective and practical quid pro quo from the Dublin Government regarding security?

Mr. King: If my hon. Friend had heard my answer earlier, he would know that that is not true. Co-operation is increasing. There is no doubt that the IRA sees the agreement as a serious threat. There is no doubt also that it will seek, if it can, to maintain a level of violence and to try to get people such as my hon. Friend to ask such questions.

Mr. Portillo: My right hon. Friend has already expressed the view that the IRA has more to fear from the Anglo-Irish agreement than has anyone else. When does he expect the crossover to come, when the IRA activity to undermine the agreement will diminish and some benefits will be seen from the agreement?

Mr. King: I have never understated the seriousness of the threat and the capability that the IRA maintains. That is why anyone wishing to address the issue seriously and who cares about lives in Northern Ireland does not try to turn it into an argument about the Anglo-Irish agreement, but recognises the reality of the terrorist threat, which is international in scope, and realises that we must tackle it by every weapon at our disposal, and makes quite clear our commitment to do so. I hope that I shall have the full support of hon. Members in that respect.

Mr. J. Enoch Powell: Has the Secretary of State been reading the items in the provincial press about the involvement of the CIA in the political situation in Northern Ireland? If not, will he ask his officials to show them to him?

Mr. King: I have to say that I have missed those items. If the right hon. Gentleman cares to send them to me, I shall read them with fascination.

Mr. Winnick: In denouncing the IRA's crimes—I have never hesitated in so doing, and there is no reason why I should—is it not necessary to bear in mind the murders committed by paramilitaries on the other side? Is the Secretary of State aware that a Protestant women was murdered in her bed by such a gang because she had recently married a Catholic? How can those who carry out such foul murders claim that they are Unionists and part and parcel of the United Kingdom? Should they not be denounced for what they are—murderous scum?

Mr. King: I have no hesitation in denouncing those who are guilty of sectarian murders. I believe that I speak

for every Member in the House, whatever views he or she may hold about the Union in any respect, and whatever arguments we may have, when I say that sectarian killings are utterly contemptible and have nothing to do with the honourable tradition of Unionism. Equally, the violence and murders committed by the IRA have nothing to do with the responsible constitutional tradition of Nationalism. Violent extremists are enemies of all who seek the constitutional approach.

Mr. Hayes: Does my right hon. Friend regret the fact that the newly installed lord mayor of Belfast, Mr. Sammy Wilson, has pledged himself and, sadly, his office, to opposing the Anglo-Irish agreement? Does he not believe that all those who are opposed to the Anglo-Irish agreement are dancing to the terrorists' tune, whether advertently or inadvertently?

Mr. King: The position of the lord mayor is one that should rise above political issues of that sort. The first citizen of Belfast, above all, should genuinely give a lead towards reconciliation and better relations. I hope very much that the new incumbent will, on reflection, feel that that is the course for which he would wish to be remembered.

Mr. Bell: I say at the outset that Her Majesty's Opposition fully associate themselves with the Secretary of State's remarks in the condemnation of violence, death and destruction in Northern Ireland, whether it comes from one side or the other of the sectarian divide. We are somewhat appalled at some of the supplementary questions that the right hon. Gentleman has had to answer from Conservative Back Benchers.

Is it not a fact that there has been a steady number of meetings between the RUC and the Garda, that quiet and steady work is continuing on cross-border security, and that that must be to the benefit of everyone who lives in the island of Ireland?

Mr. King: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making those points. The House knows that I can never give facts about security to the House. So much of the work and the effective development that is taking place cannot be made public and cannot be claimed as political achievements, which might be done in other areas of political life. However, I can say that this work is going forward and that I am encouraged by the progress that is being made.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

7. **Mr. Flannery** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland about the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

9. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received from the Unionist parties in Northern Ireland about the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: Unionist elected representatives have regrettably not been communicating with Ministers at the Northern Ireland Office. I have, however, attended meetings with Unionist leaders in company with the Prime Minister, when they put forward their views on the agreement.

Mr. Flannery: Does the Secretary of State remember that it was in 1969, against the background of a march for rights by Nationalist groupings, that the violence broke out? Is he aware that for about 50 years there has been a complete lack of democracy in Northern Ireland, where the Unionist party has tyrannised, no matter what he says about the honourable tradition of Unionism, the Nationalist groupings? Is it not time that something was done to try to ascertain whether there is any division between the Official Unionists and the hardliners of the DUP? Unless that becomes clear, it will be obvious to everyone that the Unionists want only to go back to the old Stormont and once again tyrannise the Nationalist groupings.

Mr. King: I reject the hon. Gentleman's comments, especially those about the tradition of Unionism. I recall the efforts of Lord O'Neill and the late Mr. Brian Faulkner to accommodate and recognise the rights of the minority as well in seeking to find a way in which there could be widespread acceptance of an Administration in Northern Ireland. I shall not comment on the latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question. Relations between political parties are matters for them.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson: If my right hon. Friend was persuaded that the Anglo-Irish agreement was not only an affront to the Unionist parties but a roadblock in the way of any round table talks between all the political parties in Northern Ireland, may I hope that he will show flexibility in putting the treaty to one side, as being of less importance than the setting up of an effective local administration in Northern Ireland?

Mr. King: My hon. Friend leads me into the terrible temptations of hypothetical questions. There is a growing recognition, shared by the leaders of all the churches in Northern Ireland, that we need talks, without preconditions, and that we must sit down and find a way forward. That is something that my hon. Friend and the House will know I have been urging for some time. I think there is a growing feeling in Northern Ireland that that is the way forward. Despite the frustrations, I hope that, at last, we will see some development in that respect.

Mr. Cormack: Is not an unhappy aspect of the boycott —I use the word deliberately—the fact that the Unionist Members are absenting themselves from this place— *[Interruption.]* Almost all of them. Would it not help immeasurably if they came to the House for Northern Ireland Questions?

Mr. King: We must except the presence of the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), who is recognised as a most assiduous attender in the House, but his presence is the exception that proves the rule. I understand that a campaign is running to try to win over hearts and minds to the Unionist cause in opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement, but it is the only campaign I know that seems to think it will succeed by silence and abstinence.

Ms. Clare Short: Does the Secretary of State admit that we are seeing a new version of the Unionist veto, in that all their intransigent opposition to the Anglo-Irish agreement is blocking the progress that was promised by the agreement in real reforms to benefit the Nationalist community of the North? The Government do not dare to

move down that road, because they are misbehaving so grossly about the agreement, and in that way they are achieving exactly what they wanted in the first place.

Mr. King: The hon. Lady knows from my earlier answers that that is incorrect. The work goes on and will continue. We have made that clear, and I reaffirm it now.

Mr. Budgen: After my right hon. Friend directly interfered in the domestic politics of the United States, did he quietly reflect upon the effectiveness and usefulness of politicians in one nation state interfering in the domestic politics of another, especially in relation to the Anglo-Irish agreement?

Mr. King: My hon. Friends seem to have a rather liverish attitude to certain of these issues today. Although that may be my hon. Friend's view, such a comment was not made to me by any Members of the Senate or the House of Representatives, who were extremely welcoming and very grateful for the opportunity to discuss the issue.

Prison Officers Association

8. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he last met the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Scott: In view of my day-to-day responsibility for prisons in Northern Ireland, I normally represent my right hon. Friend at meetings with the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association. I last met National and Northern Ireland Prison Officers' Association representatives on 4 October 1985, when we discussed the future employment of prison officers and their roles; prison regime and operational matters of mutual interest; and the programme for opening Maghaberry prisons and amalgamating both prisons at Maze.

Mr. Bruinvels: Bearing in mind the brave work of the prison officers in Northern Ireland and the sad fact that 24 of them have lost their lives in the past 10 years, may I ask my hon. Friend whether he has increased their protection and security, not just in the prisons, but round their homes, where they are under constant threat of being attacked and beaten up?

Mr. Scott: Where there is evidence of a specific threat, members of the prison service, like police officers and others, receive the full support of the police and the Northern Ireland Office in obtaining protection. I echo my hon. Friend's tribute to prison officers in Northern Ireland for the duty that they undertake on behalf of the whole community there.

Mr. Dickens: Next time my hon. Friend meets the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association, will he stress that as many of its prisoners are bomb and explosive experts, and that when they escape they may often maim, murder and strike again, they must be more vigilant than any other prison service in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Scott: The Prison Officers Association and prison officers in Northern Ireland need no lectures from me on such matters. They are fully aware of the unique nature of the prison population in Northern Ireland and the threat that prisoners could pose to peace and stability in the Province.

Action for Community Employment

11. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what are the criteria of the Department of Economic Development in providing Action for Community Employment funding in Northern Ireland; and, if he will make a statement.

The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Dr. Rhodes Boyson): The main criteria for ACE projects are as follows. First, the project must provide something of benefit to the community; secondly, the project sponsor must employ adults who are long-term unemployed; and, thirdly, existing jobs must not be put at risk. I am pleased to report that in Northern Ireland there are now 5,600 people employed under ACE.

Mr. Dubs: While I understand the Government's obvious concern that public money should not be channelled to organisations which have links with paramilitary groups, is it not easier to make such accusations than to prove them? Will the Minister reconsider the position of four groups in Northern Ireland —Dove House, Shantallow, the Top of the Hill Tenants Association and Conway Street Mill in Belfast—where 47 jobs have so far been lost, to see whether they could not be deemed to be eligible for continuing public support?

Dr. Boyson: I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern about the matter, and it is shared by other hon. Members. We have had considerable correspondence, especially on one of the four groups that he mentioned. Only 1 per cent. of people who apply for ACE schemes are rejected on security grounds. It is extremely difficult to make that decision. On the other hand, the previous Secretary of State made it clear in a written answer on 27 June 1985 that such payments must be carefully watched. Otherwise, there is a grave risk of directly or indirectly improving the standing and furthering the aims of paramilitary organisations which would obviously be against the public interest.

Mr. Holt: My hon. Friend will know that one aspect of the Anglo-Irish agreement was of America giving the United Kingdom money, whether we wanted it or not. Has any of that money been channelled through this organisation for economic development? If so, how much has been spent? If not, what channel is being used, how much of this year's £50 million has been received, and how many jobs have been created?

Dr. Boyson: None of that money has been spent along the lines suggested. Indeed, the suggestion of money is still, as it were, bogged down in the Senate. We would welcome any international fund or help, particularly where there were no limitations on the way in which the money could be spent.

Mr. Hume: The Minister will be aware of my detailed correspondence with him about one organisation mentioned by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs). Is he aware of the public invitation by Dove House for anyone sent by the Minister to carry out the most thorough investigation into its activities? Does he agree that that is a reasonable offer, and that in those circumstances he should review its case and send someone to investigate what it is doing?

Dr. Boyson: The Secretary of State and I are prepared to review cases at any time, but we must be sure that there is no threat of money going to paramilitary organisations. There is no closed door at any time on these issues.

Mr. Mallon: Is the Minister aware that, because of a developing social security paranoia in the north of Ireland, almost every golf and rugby club is being improved through the ACE scheme, and that the socially deprived areas, where the money is most needed, are at greatest risk because that is where the paranoia is having its effect? Does he agree that that is extremely dangerous?

Dr. Boyson: I am not entirely clear about the hon. Gentleman's point, but obviously I will talk to him about it. After the results this week of British teams in the World Cup, perhaps we can help their facilities at the same time.

Mr. Archer: May I beg the Minister to consider whether it is possible that he is wrong about this? Does he accept that some of us have looked closely at the groups enumerated by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), and that, if we had found any evidence to suggest that any of them was a front for criminal activities, we would not be pursuing this matter? Is the hon. Gentleman further aware that Bishop Daly has endorsed our conclusions? For the sake of these desperately deprived communities, will the hon. Gentleman consider the suggestion of the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume), which was to appoint an independent investigator, or does he prefer to be suspected of doing what the Government did in England to community groups in the areas of the GLC and the metropolitan counties?

Dr. Boyson: As I have already said, only seven out of between 600 and 700 groups have had money withheld. The money was withheld because we received advice that they were a security risk. Withholding that money is not an attempt to deprive people of money in poor areas. Indeed, the other 600 to 700 groups exist largely in such areas.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

Sir John Biggs-Davison: I applaud the Prime Minister's championship of family life, to which Labour party elements in London show such hostility, but will she turn her attention urgently to another aspect of the Judeo-Christian ethic, and follow her support of the Unborn Children (Protection) Bill, introduced by the right hon. Member for South Down (Mr. Powell), by ensuring that there is legislation to outlaw experiments on embryonic human beings?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is correct to say that that Bill is a matter of great public interest and that it found much support on both sides of the House, but, as he will know, many different views have been expressed, and before the Government could introduce any legislation they would have to take into account the many differing views.

Mr. Steel: With reference to the Prime Minister's speech yesterday to the Conservative women's conference, is she aware that the theories that she expounded then on how to reduce unemployment have been implemented by her for the past seven years? What makes the right hon. Lady think that they will be any more successful in future than they have been so far?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, in the past three years almost 1 million new jobs have been created—*[Interruption.]* That would seem to mean that we are going in the right direction.

Q2. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Greenway: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that the 1971 and 1981 immigration Acts are not racially discriminatory, that the Government have no plans to repeal them, and that to do so would increase unemployment and lead to difficulties that do not now exist between different groups in this country? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the plans of the Leader of the Opposition would achieve just that?

The Prime Minister: I confirm that it is our intention to maintain both the Immigration Act 1971, with its immigration controls, and the British Nationality Act 1981. Any reduction of the controls on immigration into this country would be highly damaging to good race relations.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Prime Minister prepared to say how much the Government expect to raise in value added tax from the widely acclaimed activities of Sport Aid? Is she aware that every penny of the money raised is intended for Africa's poor, not for the Treasury? Why can she not make a matching payment to compensate the charity for the amount that it will have to pay in VAT?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, this matter comes up from time to time and came up under previous Governments. No Government have been able to exempt all charities from VAT. By way of tax relief, this Government have done more than any other to help the funds of charities.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: Is my right hon. Friend aware of the strength of feeling that exists in my constituency and in that of my hon. Friend the Member for Somerton and Frome (Mr. Boscawen) about the activities of so-called hippies who show contempt for every aspect of organised society, except the social security office? Does she agree that the present law is inadequate to cope with this threat, and will she undertake to draft legislation to make it possible for people to clear land that is being occupied by these travelling gangs?

The Prime Minister: As I and my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary have said, if the present law is inadeqate, we will have to introduce fresh law. In many cases, the present law is adequate. The problem is how to deal with people who accept all the advantages and

benefits of a free society but refuse to rise to their responsibilities. We shall have to look afresh at this whole question.

Mr. Canavan asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Canavan: When the Prime Minister got carried away yesterday with her own empty rhetoric about her vision of a little bit of heaven on earth for everybody, did she forget that we have over 4 million people unemployed, that over 7 million people are living at the official poverty level, that over 1·5 million people are waiting for houses, and that over 750,000 people are waiting to go into hospital? Will the Prime Minister return to the real world and realise that instead of a heaven on earth in Britain today, the reality of Thatcherism is a living hell?

The Prime Minister: The phrase "heaven on earth" came from Mrs. Eleanor Bonner when she was contrasting life in a free society, which is heaven on earth, with life in the Socialist society of Soviet Russia, from which she came. She found that heaven on earth was being able to own one's own home and get operations in the West which she could not get in the Soviet Union.

Mr. Ralph Howell: Bearing in mind the widespread reports that my right hon. Friend was highly impressed by the recent "Panorama" programme about workfare schemes in the United States, will she now set up a pilot workfare scheme with a view to a nation-wide workfare scheme for all able-bodied and long-term unemployed? Does she realise that such a scheme would make life difficult for hippy convoys, would make it difficult for those foreign visitors who can claim £78 a week as soon as they report into a hotel in Britain, and would generally stop abuse of the welfare system?

The Prime Minister: I know how keen my hon. Friend is on that. We are looking into the way in which workfare operates in the United States. We are finding that some of the things that we have, such as the community programme and jobstart, would rank as workfare schemes in the United States. As my hon. Friend knows, some of those schemes are being extended. I am only too delighted to do anything I can to make life difficult for such things as hippy convoys.

Mr. Kinnock: On reflection, does the Prime Minister not think that she was wrong to use the words of a very courageous woman, Mrs. Bonner, for the partisan purposes for which she sought to use them yesterday? Does she recall saying that her policy starts with the family, its freedom and well-being? Is there not a huge inconsistency between those words and her deeds over seven years of government, which have inflicted unemployment on an extra 2 million people, poverty on an extra 4 million people and bad housing and inadequate education on millions more? What about their freedom and their well-being, or does she not think that they belong to families?

The Prime Minister: Mrs. Bonner used those words in contrasting the benefits of a free society with the benefits of a Socialist society of the kind in which Mrs. Bonner lives. Housing is much better under this Government than it was under Labour; so are the health services; so is the standard of living. That is the right hon. Gentleman's problem. We are doing far better than his Government did.

Mr. Kinnock: The Prime Minister compounds her dishonesty and only demonstrates—*[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. Will the right hon. Gentleman please rephrase that question?

Mr. Kinnock: The right hon. Lady compounds the distorted use of words when she gives the impression that there are only two alternatives in this world—the Soviet society and her society—although she knows perfectly well that there are decent democratic alternatives to both kinds of society. If the Prime Minister really believes that housing is better under the Conservatives, how does she explain the worst record for housing starts in this country at any time since before the second world war?

The Prime Minister: On housing, 1·3 million new homes have been built in Great Britain since 1979; 900,000 public sector council houses and flats have been sold to their tenants; home ownership is up to 62 per cent.; and 55 per cent. of blue collar workers own their homes, compared with 40 per cent. in 1979 under the Labour Government.

Sir Peter Emery: Does my right hon. Friend realise that the answer that she gave earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) is not as satisfactory as some of us would like? Will she give a positive assurance to the farming community that the Government will ensure that by this time next year there is legislation to make certain that innocent people cannot have their lives ruined, that the farming community cannot lose out, and that in fact positive steps will be taken to ensure that vagrant hippies cannot invade in the way that they have invaded during the past few months?

The Prime Minister: I make it perfectly clear to my hon. Friend the if fresh legislation on criminal trespass is needed to deter hippies, it will be introduced.

Q4. **Mr. Straw** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Straw: When the Prime Minister said yesterday that it was no coincidence that the countries with lower taxes produce more jobs and have lower unemployment, was she deluding herself or just the gullible ladies of the Conservative women's conference? Is she not aware that Turkey has the lowest tax take of any OECD country, but unemployment as high as ours, and that of 10 countries with higher tax takes than ours, nine have lower levels of unemployment? Is not the real lesson from these international figures that sensible public spending produces jobs, while her policies destroy jobs?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is speaking nonsense. As he knows full well, there are far more jobs and there is far less unemployment in the United States, where personal taxation is a great deal lower and where a Bill that is now before the equivalent of this Chamber in the United States is proposing to make the top tax limit in the United States below the bottom tax limit here. Also, he knows full well that Japan and Switzerland, which have much lower personal taxation than we have here, have far

more jobs and far less unemployment. The fact is that the Labour party likes high taxation. The right hon. Gentleman likes to have his hands in the pockets of the people.

Mr. John Townend: On the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, North (Mr. Greenway), does my right hon. Friend agree that if the proposals put forward by the Leader of the Opposition in India to change the immigration laws went through, that would increase immigration from the Indian subcontinent and be against the wishes of the vast majority in this country?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I believe that to say anything that would effect a reduction in immigration controls would have a very bad effect on race relations in this country. I believe that to say that certain Acts would be repealed without saying what would be put in their place is thoroughly irresponsible.

Q5. **Mr. Redmond** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Redmond: Who from America advised the Prime Minister that the F111s were more accurate than the carrier-based aircraft?

The Prime Minister: As I said the last time I answered questions, we received advice from the United States and from this country to that effect. — [HON. MEMBERS: "Who?"] That is not for me to reveal.

Business of the House

3.31 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): May I ask the Leader of the House to state the business for next week?

The Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons (Mr. John Biffen): Yes, Sir. The business of the House will be as follows:

MONDAY 9 JUNE—Remaining stages of the National Health Service (Amendment) Bill.

Resolutions relating to the Finance Bill

TUESDAY 10 JUNE—Second Reading of the Education Bill *[Lords]*.

Motion on the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order.

WEDNESDAY 11 JUNE — Until about seven o'clock motions on orders and regulations relating to the uprating of social security benefits and other related matters. Details will be given in the *Official Report*.

Progress on remaining stages of the Financial Services Bill.

Second Reading of the Latent Damage Bill *[Lords]*.

Remaining stages of the Crown Agents (Amendments) Bill.

THURSDAY 12 JUNE—Completion of remaining stages of the Financial Services Bill.

Motion on the Patronage (Benefices) Measure.

FRIDAY 13 JUNE—There will be a debate on enterprise and deregulation on a motion for the Adjournment of the House.

MONDAY 16 JUNE — Opposition Day (15th Allotted Day). There will be a debate on an Opposition motion, the subject for debate to be announced.

Wednesday 11 June:

Social Security Orders and Regulations

Motions on:

Social Security Benefits Uprating Order 1986

Supplementary Benefit Uprating Regulations 1986

Family Income Supplements (Computation) Regulations 1986

Child Benefit (Uprating) Regulations 1986

Pensioners' Lump Sum Payments Order 1986

Motion relating to:

Housing Benefits Amendment (No. 2) Regulations 1986]

Mr. Kinnock: Can the Leader of the House assure us that the Education Bill, when it comes before the House, will be subject to the Special Standing Committee procedure?

When there have been so many justified demands from all parts of the House for a debate on the crisis in the tin mining industry and the effect of closures on the mining communities in Cornwall, why has not the right hon. Gentleman been able to find time for a debate? Can he give me an undertaking that he will arrange for such a debate in Government time in the near future in view of the widespread concern about the matter?

Can we look forward to having in the near future the frequently requested debate on foreign affairs and will the Government give two days for such a debate in view of the very wide range of subjects that now need consideration in the House? Meanwhile, in view of Mr. Le Grange's new banning orders in South Africa and the draconian legislation now before the so-called tricameral Parliament, can we look forward to a statement next week from the Government that will commit them to direct support for comprehensive sanctions by the Commonwealth?

Will the right hon. Gentleman approach the Foreign Secretary to make a statement next week about what the Government will be doing to put pressure on the United States Government to prevent the abandonment of the SALT II agreement?

Why are the Government apparently coy about making a formal announcement of the Prime Minister's appointment of Mr. Richard Branson as litter supremo? Will the Leader of the House ensure that the Secretary of State for the Environment makes an early statement about what is clearly a major Government initiative on garbage?

Mr. Biffen: To respond to the points that the Leader of the Opposition has just raised in the order in which they were put, I must confess that the Education Bill has had considerable treatment in the other place. None the less, I shall take account of the request for the Special Standing Committee procedure which perhaps can be examined through the usual channels.

As for the tin industry, of course I join with the right hon. Gentleman in acknowledging the seriousness of the matter, particularly in the context of Cornwall. The Government have now been able to comment upon the observations of the Select Committee and I agree that it would be appropriate to have a debate in the reasonably near future. Again, we can consider that through the usual channels.

I very much hope that in my next business statement I shall be able to announce a foreign affairs debate, although perhaps the duration might be considered. Meanwhile, I note that the right hon. Gentleman would like a statement from my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary on the possibility of sanctions against South Africa. I shall certainly refer that point to my right hon. and learned Friend, as well as the interest that the right hon. Gentleman has shown in the SALT II agreement. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will acknowledge that fairly soon we should have a debate upon the defence White Paper when the matter will be relevant.

I note the right hon. Gentleman's interest in the question of Mr. Branson's appointment. I shall see that his remarks are faithfully conveyed to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment.

Mr. Terence Higgins (Worthing): Is it not important that the House should have an early opportunity to debate public expenditure priorities and to express a view on matters such as overseas aid, the rate support grant, the Health Service and so on in advance of decisions being taken rather than waiting until next March when it will be able to comment only on what has effectively become a fait accompli?

Mr. Biffen: My right hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. Certainly it is a highly topical issue and one that is central to the conduct of economic policy. It is perhaps something that we could look at through the usual channels.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): When are we likely to debate the EEC orders affecting drivers' hours? I understand that the Opposition will pray against them. They are out today. Can the right hon. Gentleman say when they are likely to come before the House?

Mr. Biffen: No, I cannot, but I shall look into the matter and be in touch with the hon. Gentleman.

Mr. Jim Spicer (Dorset, West): May I ask the advice of my right hon. Friend? There has always been in my experience an established code of conduct for hon. Members when they are abroad. Would this be an appropriate moment for my right hon. Friend to draw the attention of all hon. Members to that code of conduct and to ask that they comply with it? We cannot do it retrospectively, but perhaps it can apply to the recess.

Mr. Biffen: I think that I am being invited to tread in somewhat dangerous territory. These are matters essentially for self-regulation. The standards of the past would be a good guide for future conduct.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): I note that the Leader of the House has said that there is likely to be a foreign affairs debate in the near future. Allowing for the fact that that would probably be a wide-ranging debate, does he not think that there is a need for a specific debate on East-West relations, particularly in the light of the visit to the Soviet Union recently by a parliamentary delegation and of the possible breakdown of the SALT II agreement? Further, is there a possibility of a debate on the recent decision of NATO Ministers on the manufacture and deployment of chemical weapons?

Mr. Biffen: No; I have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. Our foreign affairs debates are normally drawn in such a way as to enable a wide-ranging debate because inevitably various topics are legitimately at issue on those occasions. As the hon. Gentleman will have heard, I have suggested that the forthcoming debate upon the defence White Paper will be an occasion when the SALT II issue can be further considered.

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): As the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has suggested that the Northern Ireland Assembly might be done away with in the near future, will my right hon. Friend arrange a debate prior to that in the hope that it will encourage some Northern Ireland Members to come to the House, contribute to the debate and listen to what is said?

Mr. Biffen: In no way would it be proper for me to interpret what the Chair would judge to be in order. However, the second item of business for next Tuesday —the Appropriation (No. 2) (Northern Ireland) Order— might provide an opportunity for my hon. Friend to make a speech.

Mr. George Foulkes (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley): Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that it is a great tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) that Government Members will tonight filibuster on the Channel Tunnel Bill to block his debate tomorrow? Does not that prove conclusively that the Prime Minister has a great deal to hide on the issues that my hon. Friend wishes to raise?

Mr. Biffen: I have every confidence and every reason to believe that this evening's debate will be conducted fully within order.

Mr. Derek Conway (Shrewsbury and Atcham): Will the House have the opportunity next week to consider early-day motion 899 in the name of the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown)?

[That this House recognises the severe hardship and financial distress, which can amount to personal bankruptcy, suffered by individual, frequently small farmers in the South West upon whose land the Peace Convoy has chosen to encamp; believes that individual rights and livelihoods are being threatened, the public peace jeopardised and the police placed in an impossible position by the inadequacy of the present law of trespass, which can take seven days or more and cost individuals £3,000 in legal fees to enforce; recognises that the Department of the Environment has consistently fudged its responsibilities and refused to help county councils to define theirs towards the peace convoys, leaving individual land owners to cope with problems they will not shoulder; and calls on the Government to seek to amend the prespass law immediately to ensure that it can be enacted quickly and effectively in a way which protects property and preserves the peace; and asks the Department of the Environment to undertake an urgent study into the Peace Convoy phenomenon with a view to providing adequate facilities which allows those on the Convoy to pursue their life style in a way which does not impinge on the rights of others and assists county councils and the police to cope with this problem.]

If we have the opportunity to discuss the motion, which calls for the establishment of official hippy sites, does my right hon. Friend anticipate that something unique in this House will happen—that the Liberal party will come off the fence and tell us in which constituencies it expects to have such sites established and whether any of them will be in the county of Shropshire?

Mr. Biffen: I fear that such is the pressure of constructive Government business that there is no time available for what I am sure would be a highly instructive debate on the topic referred to by my hon. Friend. However, that does not prevent the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) from finding his own way of enlightening us all—whether we live in rural Shropshire or the west country—about which treasured areas may be chosen for the sites.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Does the Leader of the House recollect that some weeks ago, with his normal courtesy, he said that he would try to find time for a debate on the report of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs on the events of 1 and 2 May? Does he anticipate being able to fulfil that?

Mr. Biffen: I am not in a position to make any further statements this afternoon, but I shall further consider the hon. Gentleman's point.

Mr. John Heddle (Mid-Staffordshire): Can my right hon. Friend find time, at the earliest opportunity, to debate job prospects in Staffordshire, and especially those of employees in my constituency who work in the old-established and British firm of Wedgwood, which plays such a part in the affairs of this House and the other place?

Will my right hon. Friend direct his attention to early-day motion 901 standing in my name and those of other hon. Members?

[That this House views with great concern the hostile takeover bid for Wedgwood by the London International Group plc; fears that this could have serious implications for Wedgwood's 8,000 employees, predominantly in North Staffordshire, and many thousands more whose livelihood

[Mr. John Heddle]

depends on the company in a part of the country already suffering badly from high unemployment; is concerned that Wedgwood's worldwide reputation as the leading United Kingdom manufacturer of ceramic products synonymous with quality will be at risk if it is absorbed into a conglomerate whose management and marketing expertise has been based on contraceptives, rubber gloves, toiletries, photographic processing and medicine before their acquisition of Wedgwood Spode only eighteen months ago; believes that the combination of Wedgwood and Worcester Spode would produce a share of the total market which should be examined; and strongly urges the Secretary of State to refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.]

Will he find time to debate whether the bid that has been made for that old-established British company, which has an international order book and an international reputation, should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission?

Mr. Biffen: May I dare to offer a few words of friendly advice to my hon. Friend? I would argue that Wedgwood is sufficiently a national institution that its fortunes in employment and other economic activities fall well within the terms of the motion set down for Friday.

Mr. Michael J. Martin (Glasgow, Springburn): Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that I was fortunate enough to secure the Adjournment debate last night on the rundown or closure of British Rail Engineering Limited workshops in Springburn? Is he further aware of the reply by the Minister of State, Department of Transport, about the exclusion of members of the press from those works —although they were allowed into other works facing the same difficulties? The Minister said that they were denied access on Thursday 29 May because 40 journalists wanted a tour of the factory.

I was at the works that day with the secretary and deputy chairman of the Scottish TUC. I can assure the right hon. Gentleman that only four journalists were seeking access to the premises. Is it not a fact, therefore, that those in the nationalised industries are telling lies to Ministers and misleading the House? Can steps be taken to ensure that those responsible for our nationalised industries keep Ministers properly informed?

Mr. Biffen: I have a feeling that this is something like an extension of the Adjournment debate. I can best help the hon. Gentleman by referring his remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Mr. Patrick Cormack (Staffordshire, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware that people throughout Staffordshire are outraged at the thought that the tradition of Wedgwood should be rudely interrupted by the makers of contraceptive sheaths? Will he please ask the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to make a statement on Government policy on the reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission next week in the debate to which he referred?

Mr. Biffen: I understand that the matter is with the Office of Fair Trading. I will try to help my hon. Friend by saying that a motion on enterprise and deregulation might cover the activities of Wedgwood and its present position. Meanwhile, I will certainly refer my hon. Friend's remarks to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): In view of the organised conspiracy to wipe out tomorrow's debate in which the Prime Minister's conduct on many matters would be subject to the full scrutiny of the House, does not the right hon. Gentleman think that he has an obligation to come to the House today with a revised statement on the business for the rest of the week?

Mr. Biffen: No, I do not. We will simply have to see how matters proceed this evening.

Mr. Nigel Forman (Carshalton and Wallington): Following the question of my right hon. Friend the Member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins), is my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House aware that many Conservative Members would appreciate a full-scale debate, broadly drawn, on the subject of public expenditure so that we could examine the priorities within public spending and the relationship between inputs and outputs and the balance between public expenditure and tax cuts? Will he give that matter serious consideration?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's point and I accept that it is legitimate. However, at this time of the year we must assess what time is available for general debates.

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): Is the Leader of the House aware that many hon. Members wish to take part in the debate on foreign affairs which he hinted at a few moments ago? In those circumstances, does he agree that it would be appropriate for it to be a two-day debate so that all recent world events could be fully debated?

Mr. Biffen: The Leader of the Opposition has already put that point to me. It would probably be a courtesy if I were to confine my remarks to what I have already said to him.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): Is my right hon. Friend aware of the anxiety expressed recently by the judiciary and others about the impact of parole on short sentences? It means that, when a defendant is sentenced to between 10 and 18 months, he serves only a period of six months irrespective of the sentence involved. May we have an early statement from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Home Department to allay suspicion that parole is not working adequately to protect the public and is undermining the independence of the judiciary?

Mr. Biffen: I will certainly refer that point to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Michael Foot (Blaenau Gwent): As the Leader of the House apparently washes his hands of the charge that there is any possibility that he or the Government Front Bench is implicated in the attempt to destroy tomorrow's private Members' business, will he give us an absolute undertaking that, if it appears tonight that tomorrow's business may be destroyed, he will introduce a simple motion reinstating that business, as it is open to him to do? A day could be chosen next week for that business. If the right hon. Gentleman is not prepared to give that undertaking, are we not entitled to draw the deduction that he is party to the conspiracy?

Mr. Biffen: I can only tell the right hon. Gentleman that his affectation of innocence is most charming in these circumstances. It is extraordinary to suggest that the Government should find time for a motion drawn in such offensive terms against my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): Is my right hon. Friend aware that, despite having two Cabinet Ministers with responsibility for employment, the Government recently made changes in the employment transfer scheme which are detrimental to the people in the north of England as opposed to those in the south? That is yet another of the matters which bring about the divide. Will he find time to allow someone in the Government to bring the matter to the House rather than issuing the news through a press release as that is not the way to run the country?

Mr. Biffen: I take careful account of what my hon. Friend says and I shall certainly refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General.

Mr. D. N. Campbell-Savours (Workington): Has the Leader of the House had time to read the comprehensive report of the Public Accounts Committee on defence matters which deals with Aish and Company Ltd. of Poole and Mr. Jim Smith, the man who laid his job on the line to whistle-blow and report excess profits by that company to the Ministry of Defence? Will he ensure that a Minister comes to the Dispatch Box to deal with the question of compensation which the Public Accounts Committee has indentified as important in so far as it believes that Mr. Smith should be compensated for the stand which he took?

Mr. Biffen: I have not undertaken the reading referred to by the hon. Gentleman, but I have probably done even better; I have read the article in *The Guardian* today containing a commentary on it and a photograph of himself. As he will appreciate, the matter will now go for consideration by the Government and our next best bet is to await the Government's response to the report of the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. John Browne (Winchester): Will my right hon. Friend accept that one of the key elements in the maintenance of law and order is that the public should not be tempted to take the law into their own hands? Does he agree that the present civil law on trespass is proving woefully inadequate against modern abuse, particularly in respect of the removal of offenders from property and the inability of people who have been wronged and lost their livelihoods to obtain compensation? Surely the issue must be the subject of an urgent debate.

Mr. Biffen: My hon. Friend makes a point which faithfully echoes the deep anxiety and sense of resentment which the hippy train has aroused in the rural parts of our country, but I remind him that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister commented in particular upon that point earlier this afternoon and there is nothing that I want to add to her statement.

Mr. Greville Janner (Leicester, West): In view of the Government's refusal to permit access to a series of documents in the Public Record Office which have been there for some 40 years and which refer to the death of British prisoners and, presumably, to Kurt Waldheim's connection therewith, may we have a debate on the practices and procedures by which this or any other Government are entitled to withhold documents from the public? I and the House understand why documents of current military, intelligence or security interest have to be kept away from the public, but documents that are 40 years old cannot have that interest. In those circumstances who was responsible for taking that decision and to whom is he or she accountable for it?

Mr. Biffen: As the hon. and learned Gentleman knows, we have been in correspondence on this matter and I do not accept the general tenor of his comments. There is no prospect of a debate in Government time on this matter, but I suggest that he might like to consider this as being a legitimate matter for an Adjournment debate. Meanwhile, I shall refer his remarks to my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary.

Mr. Gerald Howarth (Cannock and Burntwood): May I seek the advice of my right hon. Friend? Is he aware of the rumour that at 9.30 tomorrow morning, in a Committee Room, a Member of the House will deliver a turgid 50-page indictment against the most honourable Prime Minister that we have had, certainly since Winston Churchill? Will that turgid rubbish enjoy the same privilege as any statement made on the Floor of the House?

Mr. Biffen: I am not aware of any such arrangements and I have not been consulted about them, but I can say to my hon. Friend that the question of what determines privilege is more appropriate for Mr. Speaker than for myself.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Will the Leader of the House make arrangements with the Home Secretary to consider the workings of the Representation of the People Act 1981 as it applies to recent by-elections, particularly that in West Derbyshire? For instance, is he aware that during the course of that election the leader of the Liberal party was flying about in a helicopter which cost a considerable amount of money and would almost certainly have violated the total amount that could have been spent in a by-election? Such a practice in a general election is regarded as sound because party leaders have to travel all over the country and cannot attribute those expenses to one constituency party, but in a by-election the consideration must be entirely different. Although suggestions have been made that use of the helicopter was free, does not the Leader of the House consider that its use could not be permitted under the Representation of the People Act, given the transport costs that it allows?

Mr. Biffen: I am not sure that I have any competence to answer that question. Therefore, I would rather say that I have noted what has been said and I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary.

Mr. Tim Yeo (Suffolk, South): In the light of the understandable and reasonable requests made by right hon. and hon. Friends for a debate in which public expenditure priorities can be examined, will my right hon. Friend undertake that if such a debate takes place the motion will be couched in terms broad enough to examine taxation policy? That will allow a demonstration of the clear statistical fact that the 18 million workers on average or below average earnings, with whom the Prime Minister is properly concerned, would benefit substantially more by an increase in tax thresholds than by a cut in the basic rate of income tax.

Mr. Biffen: I note what my hon. Friend says. Any chance of the debate requested by my right hon. Friend the

[Mr. Biffen]

member for Worthing (Mr. Higgins) still remains a twinkle in the eye. However, if the debate took place, I should have thought that my hon. Friend's point would be argued, irrespective of the terms of the motion.

Mr. Frank Cook (Stockton, North): Notwithstanding the Leader of the House's inability to respond positively to the question of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I am sure that he would agree that the management of the business of the House is a task which requires great experience, even greater skill and guile, some might almost say cunning, and that other hon. Members have seen it practised in this Chamber with an unfailing degree of humour of late. Will the Leader of the House tell us who he has in mind to shoulder such an onerous burden when, in the run-up to a general election, he is required by his party to replace the Prime Minister?

Mr. Biffen: I have not the cunning, guile or humour to answer that question.

Mr. Tony Favell (Stockport): Is my right hon. Friend able to say whether the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will be making a statement to the House on the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly and the attitude of the Northern Ireland political parties towards the Assembly, especially the Social Democratic and Labour party? Is he aware that many people who support the Anglo-Irish agreement are totally bewildered, indeed, angry, as to why members of the SDLP have not yet taken their seats in the Assembly?

Mr. Biffen: I understand my hon. Friend's point. I shall refer it to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland so that if he does have any plans on the topic of the Assembly he will know of the interest that they should be reported to the House.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): Although the postal workers in the Yorkshire area may have settled their differences with the Post Office, does my right hon. Friend think that it is time that we had a debate on the operation of an unfair monopoly by the Post Office in order to allow in private enterprise to speed up the postal service and deliveries and give businesses some true encouragement?

Secondly, does my right hon. Friend think that it is time we looked again at the Church of England, especially the House of Bishops' pronouncement on "The Nature of Christian Belief", in which some doubtful ideas on doctrine and on the virgin birth are put forward?

Mr. Biffen: I would not in any sense wish to anticipate the ruling of the Chair, but why not try the Patronage (Benefices) Measure, which I do not think will be the most over-subscribed item of business next week? The question of deregulation of the Post Office is a topical matter of great general concern. My hon. Friend might like to consider whether that could be part of a speech he might wish to make during the debate on deregulation next Friday.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Channel tunnel is a matter of widespread and understandable concern to many hon. Members? Therefore, will he accept that any debate on matters relating to the Channel tunnel must necessarily be detailed and lengthy? Therefore, does he agree that, if Opposition Members are unhappy about the conduct of tonight's business and any effect it may have on tomorrow's business, they should be here in strength throughout the night in order to move closure motions and express their disgust by their physical presence as well as verbally this afternoon?

Mr. Biffen: I am sure that hon. Friend is right to argue that the Channel Tunnel Bill is major legislation, and the right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) made that point most graphically on Tuesday when we were having a late, as usual, debate on that topic. I do not think that I can comment beyond that. The conduct of the debate and the rules of order are matters for the Chair.

Mr. Jerry Hayes (Harlow): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the time is ripe for a full-blooded debate on Britain's independent nuclear deterrent so that the Liberal party and the SDP can sit down quietly and ponder the debate? In the end, they may have one or two ideas for the embarrassing policy that they are now presenting.

Mr. Biffen: I agree that there is a desire in the country that there should be a debate in the House so that all those who are seeking a mandate at the next general election can make clear where they stand on membership of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the nuclear dimension of that organisation and what is meant by it. My only regret is that, compelling though the reasons for such a debate are, I cannot find Government time for it soon. I suggest that my hon. Friend reserves his fire for the debate that we shall be having on the defence White Paper.

Mr. Kinnock: I put it to the right hon. Gentleman, following the question from the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), that it is not the conduct of tonight's debate that concerns us but the possible misconduct against a private Member in tomorrow's business. The Leader of the House said earlier that he was confident that tonight's business would be within order. I share his confidence, but does he have the same view about tomorrow's business?

Mr. Biffen: We shall have to wait and see how we go.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the exchanges on business a point has emerged on which I hope that you can give us some help and protection. It concerns tomorrow's business and the motion for debate to be introduced by my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell). The Leader of the House said that he found the motion offensive. That is his opinion. However, it would be offensive to the House as a whole, and certainly to the Labour party, if my hon. Friend, who won a place in the ballot, had no opportunity to move his motion because of an organised plot by the Conservative party to deny him his right.

It is often said—it is almost a cliché—that you, Mr. Speaker, are the defender of the rights of Back Benchers. The chances of a Back Bencher winning a ballot for a motion are not high. My hon. Friend has been very fortunate. Should his opportunity be destroyed because the terms of his motion are disapproved of — obviously strongly — by the Government, is there any way in which the interests of my hon. Friend can be protected, because he has as much right to move his motion, having won the ballot, as has any other Member? Why should his right be taken away because the Leader of the House, the Prime Minister and the rest of the Cabinet do not want the motion?

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. According to the press, the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), instead of having a debate in the House, is considering having a press conference. Would it not help the House, you and everyone else if the hon. Member carried on with his press conference and withdrew the motion, and then we could all get on without any problem?

Mr. Gerald Howarth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker——

Mr. Speaker: Order. Is this a genuine point of order?

Mr. Howarth It is a genuine point of order Mr. Speaker, otherwise I would not raise it. Is it not an abuse of the House that a private Member's motion is used effectively as a confidence motion against the Prime Minister? More importantly, you will have heard during business questions that I raised with my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House the question whether a speech delivered in a Committee, purporting to make accusations against an individual, enjoys the same privilege as it enjoys on the Floor of the House. The hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) knows more about such intimidation than anybody else.

Mr. Foot: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. would it not be perfectly possible for provision to be made so that the rights of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who won a place in the ballot, can be protected? Members who win in the ballot have the right to choose the subject that they bring before the House. The rest of the House has an interest in protecting that right.

Is it not the case that, if it appeared that the House was being delayed by discussions continuing at considerable length tonight and tomorrow morning, it would be open to the Leader of the House to take an action that would protect both that business and the rights of the hon. Member who had won the ballot? When it appeared that the debate would continue and destroy Friday's business, could not the right hon. Gentleman move a motion that the House should have leave to sit again to debate this important matter, which the House wishes to discuss in considerable detail? Therefore, if the Leader of the House does not take such action, it will be by his decision that the rights of a private Member are destroyed.

Mr. Biffen: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Will you also confirm that it is equally open either to the right hon. Gentleman or to any other Member to move a motion for leave to sit again?

Mr. Speaker: Order. It is the absolute right of any Member who wins a place in the ballot to put down a subject for debate, provided that it is in order, as this motion was, and for him to move it. Whether the debate takes place is in the hands of the House, and hon. Members will have noticed that at 10 o'clock there is the Business of the House motion. If that is not passed, the proceedings will not go on until any hour. It is entirely a matter for the House and not for me.

Mr. Winnick: In the exchanges that have occurred since I raised my point of order, I understood—if I am wrong I shall not pursue the matter — that the hon. Member for Cannock and Burntwood (Mr. Howarth) said that I knew more about intimidation than anybody else. If he made such a remark, it should be withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker: I did not hear that.

Mr. Gerald Howarth: I clearly said that. The hon. Member for Walsall, North, is well known in the House for his verbal intimidation of hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: Order. In the interests of good order, will the hon. Gentleman please withdraw the allegation?

Mr. Howarth: As I recognise that you are a gentleman of honour and expect high standards in the House, Mr. Speaker, I shall withdraw the allegation. However, will you answer my earlier question about whether remarks made in a Committee Room enjoy the privilege of remarks made in the Chamber?

Mr. Speaker: I make it clear that remarks made at a private meeting, and not in the Chamber, are not protected by privilege. The only remarks that are protected are those made outside the Chamber in Committees of the House as part of the proceedings of Parliament.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Mr. Speaker: By leave of the House, I shall put together the Questions on the motions relating to statutory instruments.

Ordered,

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction and Survey) Regulations 1984 (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Passenger Ship Construction) (New and Existing Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection and Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Masters and Training) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances Regulations) 1980 (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Chemical Tankers) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Gas Carriers) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Horticultural Development Council Order 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Motor Vehicles (Variation of Speed Limits) Regulations 1986 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

Orders of the Day

Channel Tunnel Bill

Order for Second Reading read.

4.11 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

I have it in Command from the Queen to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the purport of the Bill, has consented to place Her prerogative and interest, so far as they are affected by the Bill, at the disposal of Parliament for the purposes of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker: I have selected the amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Moore: It is with some trepidation, and not a little sense of occasion, that I come before the House today to move the Second Reading of the 1986 Channel Tunnel Bill. Hon. Members will know well the long history of Channel tunnel projects going back almost two centuries, and I will not dwell on them.

The process leading to the Bill that is before the House began over 18 months ago with a meeting in November 1984 between my predecessor, now the Secretary of State for the Environment, and his French counterpart, at the end of which they announced their agreement in principle to facilitate the construction of a fixed link by private promoters. An official working party was established to draw up guidelines, and on 2 April 1985 my right hon. Friend announced to the House the publication of the "Invitation to Promoters", calling for proposals to be submitted by the end of October and to be rigorously assessed by the two Governments. During the assessment period, the House debated the merits of the schemes on 9 December and we had the benefit of a report, produced speedily and with great efficiency, by the Transport Select Committee.

The successful project—the twin rail tunnel of CTG-FM, now known as Eurotunnel—was announced at a meeting of Heads of Government on 20 January this year, and my right hon. Friend made an immediate statement to the House, which Members discussed at some length.

On 4 February the Government issued a White Paper giving the reasons for their decision and setting out the next steps. This was the subject of a full-scale debate by the House on 10 February, at the end of which the White Paper was approved on a Division. Whilst that decision was far from unopposed, there was a wide measure of acceptance in all parts of the House that the Government had made the right basic decision. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), the official Opposition transport spokesman, said:

"the CTG-FM scheme is the best of the schemes that the Government examined. In our view, it suits our transport needs and provides opportunities for British Rail." — [*Official Report*, 10 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 692.]

I welcome such a degree of consensus on such an important issue.

Accordingly, on 12 February the Channel fixed link treaty was signed in Canterbury and on 14 March the concession agreement was concluded. Neither of these instruments—this is important—can take effect until the

two Governments have the necessary powers to implement them. The purpose of the Channel Tunnel Bill is to give the British Government the powers they need. The purpose of today's debate is to establish the principle that there should be a Channel tunnel. Once the Bill had passed into law, the treaty can be ratified and the concession can come into effect.

I thought it important, at the start of this debate, to outline briefly the events of the past year and a half that have led to today's Second Reading. I propose now to look at the implications of the Government's proposals from three points of view.

I shall start by considering the national impact of the project—because its impact is truly national. Secondly, I shall consider the particular issues raised by the project in Kent, and the developmental and environmental implications in particular. Thirdly, I shall describe the parliamentary process and the consultation machinery set up by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, in Kent, which the Government view as an essential complement to the hybrid Bill procedure in this case. I shall then speak about the content of the Bill, specifically.

I begin, therefore, with the national impact of these proposals, which I believe to be extensive, affecting not merely travellers, holidaymakers and business men, but manufacturers and traders throughout the country, our economy as a whole and, indeed, our attitudes as a nation.

Britain is a trading nation. One third of our gross domestic product is traded internationally—a very high proportion for a nation of our size. Last year our exports came to £78 billion, and they are an essential part of our livelihood. As has been said in previous debates, 60 per cent. of our exports go to western Europe—£46 billion worth.

Such a relationship to the world is two-edged. In the past it has brought us great wealth. But it places a premium upon competitiveness, initiative, and, most importantly, on the ability to adapt to change. It is only by adapting to change—in technical development, in new patterns of consumption, in new demands from consumers, in new industries—that a trading nation can prosper. We, much more than other countries which are self-sufficient, cannot avoid the challenge of change, the need to be out in front in new development, new methods, new products and new ways of delivering them to our customers.

Yet what has been the truth in Britain over the past half century? Has it not been that, far from welcoming and thriving on change, we have clung to what we have? While whole industries should have been finding new things to make and new ways to make them, thus expanding into new markets, instead they continued to do the old things in the old ways. They lost ground to those abroad with greater initiative. But the good news is that in recent years we have seen a remarkable change in attitudes and a new recognition of what the modern world requires, which has resulted in dramatic improvements in efficiency and productivity.

These important advances have laid the foundation for long-term improvement of the British economy. The Channel tunnel, coming now, when this crucial foundation has been laid, will provide an opportunity for our industry to expand and grow into one of the richest markets in the world. The Channel tunnel will give British business the opportunity to gain ever larger slices of this enormous market. That means more jobs for individuals, more profits for business, and more wealth and resources for the country as a whole.

Everyone can see the immediate, short-term boost in jobs and wealth. Some £700 million worth of equipment and materials will be needed by Eurotunnel to build the link, and perhaps another £200 million by British Rail. That means pre-cast tunnel linings, reinforcing and structural steel, cables, signalling equipment, high-speed trains, shuttle trains and locomotives. I need hardly remind hon. Members where the country's capacity for producing these lies.

Including direct employment in the south-east—in Kent—on construction work, we are talking, in all, of some 8,000 to 10,000 jobs over a seven-year period. But the benefits will be vastly greater and more long-term than that. The hon. Member for Wrexham (Dr. Marek)—I have read the debates carefully — in the February Channel tunnel debate, said:

> "The business man in Manchester will be able to load his freight on to wagons in Manchester and they can be offloaded at Duisburg, for example, without any difficulties stemming from crossing the Channel."—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 720.]

All over Britain, business and industry will suddenly find they can get their goods to the huge Euromarket faster, cheaper and more efficiently through the Channel tunnel. Passengers as well as freight will benefit. Passenger trains will cover the distance from London to Paris or Brussels in three to three and a quarter hours. Coaches, cars and lorries will reach the continent at least an hour faster and more reliably than now. All this will be accomplished by a combination of private, largely international, capital and profitable investment by BR. Any other nation, I am bound to say, would seize this opportunity with open arms.

The economic rewards of the Channel tunnel far outweigh the costs, but there are some, and it is right they should be mentioned in this debate.

Mr. Robert Maclennan (Caithness and Sutherland): Before the Minister turns to the costs, will he say whether the Government have been able to make projections of the additional traffic volume that will be generated by accepting the generality of what he has said? It would be of interest and help if he could be more particular.

Mr. Moore: It will be for the promoters to make their projections. The hon. Gentleman has made a valid point, however, and I shall see whether additional information, especially on British Rail's expectations as well as those of the promoters, is made available to him.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that the advantages for our exports to the continent will be matched by the advantages that will accrue to exporters of goods to Britain? Perhaps he will deal with the balance and take up the argument that our domestic industry could be adversely affected by the more rapid access that a tunnel would bring.

Mr. Moore: I recognise my hon. Friend's point, but it is rather depressing, when we seek to create new opportunities for our industries and manufacturers, that it seems automatically to be assumed that we shall be less effective, less efficient and less capable of taking advantage of the opportunities than our competitors.

The economic rewards of the Channel tunnel outweigh the costs, and I have said that it is right that we should

[Mr. Moore]

mention some of the costs in the debate. The Government's White Paper made it clear that, taking into account employment in the ferry industry at Dover and Folkestone, there would be a dip in employment, which would not be insignificant in local terms—about 1,500 jobs below present levels. In fairness to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who has made this point on several occasions in the House, I accept that there will be pressure also on port-related jobs elsewhere in the county. Thereafter, we believe the underlying upward trend in cross-Channel employment will resume, and there will be exciting opportunities for general development if local authorities grasp them.

It is therefore right that I should turn now to the second section of my speech—the local impact of the tunnel on the local economy, and especially on the local environment.

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the national interest, will he say something about the effect of the Channel tunnel on the east coast ports?

Mr. Moore: The degree to which the Channel tunnel will have an impact on ferry traffic is not regarded as being adverse to the port which is represented by my hon. Friend, who advanced the port opportunities of his constituency admirably, if I may say so, the other evening.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): My right hon. Friend will know that I do not have the fear of public expenditure from which some of my colleagues seem to suffer. If evidence is produced that additional public expenditure could maximise the national benefits of the project, will my right hon. Friend make it clear that he will not automatically reject them because, for short-term interests, British Rail or others may not be able to justify the expenditure on rather narrow immediate financial criteria?

Mr. Moore: That is a somewhat elliptical question. My right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State for Transport made clear the degree to which the needs of British Rail, having regard to the profitable investment that it would wish to put into the project, are additional to the already expected external financing limit and other future investment prospects of BR. I do not think that this is an area where we expect to worry about the nature of the way in which British Rail's investment is constrained.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): That is an eliptical answer.

Mr. Moore: It is important to take up the critical role of the tunnel on the local economy, and especially on the local environment. Nowhere has the Channel tunnel project aroused stronger passions than in Kent.

I pay especial tribute to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who is in his place on the Treasury Front Bench for the debate. My hon. and learned Friend is unable, of course, to speak in our debates on the Channel tunnel, but, as always, when this matter is discussed, he is with us. He has assiduously represented the interests of his constituents. In only two short weeks in my present job he has left me in no doubt that he will be pressing very hard for some of the features in the scheme that will have a particular impact on his constituents to be justified rigorously and in detail or to be modified.

Out of geographical necessity, the tunnel must begin in Kent. That is where the environmental effects of the link are concentrated, but it is also where there will be special opportunities to benefit from this unique enterprise.

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): I trust that during his speech the Minister will find time to address himself to the environmental impact not only on Kent but on Waterloo. After all, this Channel traffic does have to terminus at some point according to the Government. We hope, however, that the traffic will be dispersed.

Mr. Moore: I have read with care the hon. Gentleman's speeches in these debates. I hope that he will take the opportunity, as my hon. Friend the Minister of State will suggest, of bringing a delegation, if he wishes, to meet my hon. Friend, in addition to the meetings that he has had with British Rail. I think that would be helpful. I think also that when he considers this great and unique national project, he will recognise the changes that will occur and the job opportunities that will become available. I am advised that there might well be about 400 additional jobs at Waterloo in consequence of this major development. That is one of the factors with which the hon. Gentleman, with his constituency interests, will wish to concern himself.

I have already referred to the direct employment consequences anticipated for the link in Kent and set out in the White Paper, but it would be wrong to see a project with potentially far-reaching effects in these terms alone. While the whole country stands to benefit from an efficient transport link for its people and its products, there will be specific opportunities for economic growth in Kent, but where that happens and how many jobs it could create are matters for the planning authorities.

Some would see such a development as an environmental threat. I do not, because I have faith in the councils to discharge their responsibilities with sensitivity. The need to control secondary development is their challenge. The beauty and the treasures of the county must be preserved. If not, it will become less attractive to those who might otherwise choose to live there and contribute to its well-being. But I cannot believe that sufficient land cannot be made available where it is appropriate for economic development to take place. I am confident that the councils will be sensitive while ensuring that the county reaps the rewards of the opportunities which the tunnel will create for Kent.

Great stress has been laid in debates both inside and outside the House on possible environmental damage that the tunnel might cause. Surprisingly little has been said of the potential for one dramatic environmental improvement. Speaking in the Channel tunnel debate last December, my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) said:

"in the first eight months of this year 520,000 heavy lorries went through Dover. Those of us who live in Kent know only too well that that number is increasing all the time."

He went on to say that, given the British Rail estimates of potential freight rail traffic through the tunnel, it would

"be equivalent to transferring from road to rail some 365,000 lorries a year. That is a tremendous prize, with a substantial environmental gain to be won." — [*Official Report*, 9 December 1986; Vol. 88. c. 670.]

Obviously that was a calculation with a lot of assumptions. But anything even approaching that would be a very substantial environmental gain, and I would think that the many hon. Members who have already approached me in the two weeks since I took my present job on the subject of heavy lorries would also agree. As for the direct local effect of the construction works, the limited environmental impact of the Eurotunnel scheme was a major factor in its selection.

The Government from the outset recognised the need to safeguard the environment by mitigating the adverse consequences of the tunnel proposals. The environmental impact assessment, undertaken by the promoters as part of their submission to the Government, and the appraisal commissioned by the Government as part of their assessment process established the areas of concern on which further work would be required.

Kent county council and the districts are now doing a commendably thorough job in the consultation machinery —of which I shall say more in a moment— that the Government have set up to examine the environmental and economic consequences of the project. The impact upon the area of outstanding natural beauty, the heritage coast, Shakespeare cliff and Holywell Coombe — areas and features of great environmental importance — can and will be contained. The Government recognise the importance of this, and I am happy to say that discussions with the planning authorities are taking place on a provision in the Bill that will allow them to continue to play a full part after the Bill has been enacted during the detailed planning stage and construction of the tunnel. I am pleased to tell the House that, in addition, the Government will make arrangements within the Bill to ensure that the Nature Conservancy Council, the Countryside Commission and English Heritage, as the Government's statutory advisers on environmental matters, can be consulted as appropriate.

The third matter that I want to consider is the parliamentary process and the essential consultation machinery that we have established. No great developments of this kind can take place without affecting individuals and individual rights.

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Before my right hon. Friend deals with the parliamentary process—we are all extremely grateful to the Minister of State for the work that the joint consultative committee is doing—will he say what role he sees for the parish councils, including those affected? They are not directly represented on the committee, but they have a great deal of local knowledge and influence. In the months ahead, I think my right hon. Friend would wish to harness their views and not keep them out in the cold.

Mr. Moore: I am aware that the parish councils have sought a greater role. I have asked my hon. Friend the Minister to comment on that when he winds up the debate.

The issue relates specifically to the rights of individuals. The House is always concerned, as indeed it should be, that those rights should be recognised and respected. Hybrid Bills are the appropriate means to proceed when developments of major national importance impinge upon the rights of individuals. In the case of the Channel tunnel, there has been substantial agreement over the years that the hybrid Bill procedure is the right way for this project.

It is significant that, on 10 February, in their proposed amendment to the Government's motion approving the White Paper on the fixed link, Opposition Members did not renew their call for a public inquiry into this project, recognising that this would have been inappropriate for a matter which Parliament, and Parliament alone, should decide. Equally, on 10 February the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross), the Liberal party transport spokesman, put on record his acceptance of

"the arguments against a full-scale public inquiry".—[*Official Report*, 10 February 1986; Vol. 91, c. 703.]

In the report of the Transport Select Committee, of which he is a member, we have the conclusion, which he said he endorsed:

"The Committee does not therefore recommend that a public inquiry be held."

Under the hybrid Bill procedure, Select Committees in both Houses consider the project's effects upon the interests of those directly affected, and Standing Committees consider the proposed legislation as a whole in detail in the usual way. I have no doubt that the Select Committee will act effectively to safeguard landowners, environmental interests, and local people generally. But the Government have consistently made it clear that this must be complemented by extensive local and national consultation with all interested groups.

Since November 1985, my predecessor, the then Secretary of State for Transport, the Minister of State, Environment Ministers and officials have attended countless meetings with local associations in Kent and with national bodies to hear the concerns of local people. In direct response to representations by my right hon. and hon. Friends representing Kent constituencies that seemed most likely to be affected by the scheme, my hon. Friend the Minister of State, with the assistance of my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment established a joint consultative committee—referred to a moment ago by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford — with the Kent county and district councils and Eurotunnel to consider in full depth how the adverse impact of the tunnel project can be minimised and how its potential benefits can be maximised. The Government intend the Committee should continue in existence right up to the time, in 1993, when the link is expected to open to traffic, and beyond.

Much of the Committee's work is long-term, but on several pressing points the Committee is expected to issue agreed interim or final reports that will be of considerable interest and, I hope, value to the Select Committee—for example, on the economic impact of the link, and on spoil disposal. On spoil—I know the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) is interested in this issue is interested in this issue — I can say now that if a preferred solution emerges from the consultative committee for an alternative method for disposal of the spoil from the tunnel workings to that proposed in the Bill, the Government will adopt this, and bring forward such amendments to the Bill as are appropriate.

I submit that never before has established hybrid Bill procedure been backed up with such a thorough programme to consider all the consequences of the project in partnership with local authorities and other bodies. At the same time, the Government have gone to quite exceptional lengths to ensure that potential petitioners understand the Select Committee procedure and can make full use of it. My Department has now distributed more

[Mr. Moore]

than 20,000 copies of a leaflet entitled "Channel Tunnel —How to make Your Voice Heard," the leaflet that has been praised by such dispassionate bodies as the Council for the Protection of Rural England for its clarity and utility.

Mr. Sydney Bidwell (Ealing, Southall): Have the Government estimated the impact on the present ferry industry and the other jobs which exist but which will not exist when the project gets under way?

Mr. Moore: I referred to that earlier in my speech, and it was referred to in the White Paper. I have already made specific comments about that.

I now turn to the Bill itself. Part I is introductory, referring to the treaty and concession agreement, and defining the tunnel system.

Part II contains most of the so-called private provisions of the Bill. It confers compulsory acquisition powers on the Secretary of State and it confers on the concessionaires the basic powers they need to construct and maintain the tunnel system. All the usual protections and compensation for those whose land is compulsorily acquired or injuriously affected will apply.

Part III contains the main "public" provisions of the Bill, dealing with jurisdiction and provision for juxtaposed frontier controls whereby customs, immigration, security and any other checks are carried out before passengers enter the tunnel system. There are powers to make orders to ensure that British controls can be exercised on the French side without any loss of effectiveness, and to allow British customs and immigration officials to detain offenders on the French side and, if necessary, bring them to the United Kingdom for trial, and vice versa. Other clauses deal with intergovernmental supervision of the project, with byelaws, and with the consequences of termination of the project either on expiry of the concession period after 55 years or prematurely.

Part IV of the Bill provides powers for the construction of a four-and-a-half-mile stretch of the A20 between Folkestone and Court Wood, bypassing the village of Capel-le-Ferne.

Part V of the Bill contains miscellaneous and financial provisions.

The objectives of the Bill are clear: to provide the necessary legislative framework for a project of lasting importance to the nation. On each and every count, I believe it can bring tangible and permanent benefits to our country.

If we ask, first, on employment, will it bring benefit to Britain?, the answer must be yes — jobs in the immediate future on construction and an effect upon industry as a whole through the more efficient transport of our goods abroad.

Is it good for us as a trading nation? Yes—because a development that allows trade to take place more quickly, more reliably and therefore more cheaply, must be good for trade.

Is it good for British Rail? The answer was best, if rather excitedly, expressed in the words of my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley):

"The 250-mile barrier which makes British Rail's freight prospects currently so dismal would be smashed to smithereens by the prospect of a rail tunnel." — [*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. 698.]

Is it good for motorists? Yes. Those who prefer to travel by sea will certainly still be able to do so, but they will also have the option of a faster, more reliable, service by shuttle.

Is it good for business men and holidaymakers? Yes, because they will be able to get to northern Europe by trains in times comparable to air travel.

Sir John Osborn (Sheffield, Hallam): My right hon. Friend is listing some of the advantages of this project. It may interest him to know that I left Paris this morning at 8.15 am and was in London at 2.30 pm. I travelled by ferry. I would have been in London two hours earlier but for waiting time.

My right hon. Friend has listed the advantages, but has he had time to discuss them with the European Council of Transport Ministers? That Council has tried to improve the barriers across the Baltic and it has already improved the barriers across the Alps. Why should we miss out on the advantages which benefit Europe as a result of the work of the Council? I hope he will be an active member of the Council. I welcome my right hon. Friend to his new post.

Mr. Moore: I thank my hon. Friend for his last remark. I recall my hon. Friend's words in one of the earlier debates on the Channel tunnel when he quoted the views of the Sheffield chamber of commerce. My hon. Friend is conscious of the potential for jobs and industry in his area.

I have not yet had the opportunity of meeting the Transport Ministers, but I shall be meeting them the week after next in Brussels. I am already arranging bilateral meetings, and the first meeting is with my French counterpart on Monday of next week. I acknowledge the points that my hon. Friend effectively made in previous debates.

What about the environment? Of course there will be an environmental impact locally: that is inevitable. But it can and will be contained. By providing direct rail freight links with the continent, many lorries will be removed from Britain's roads.

Above all, what effect will it have on our national attitudes?

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): Will the Minister give way?

Mr. Moore: I have given way throughout this debate.

Mr. Faulds: Not to me.

Mr. Moore: If the hon. Gentleman will kindly let me conclude—

Mr. Faulds: This is an important point.

Mr. Moore: Very well.

Mr. Faulds: The Minister has listed the supposed advantages of this enterprise. Will he answer a simple question? Will its safety be guaranteed against both natural and unnatural disasters?

Mr. Moore: Safety aspects will be as important as all other aspects of travel. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would like to study the provisions of the Bill more carefully. I look forward to further debate and discussion with him, if the Bill reaches Standing Committee.

What effect will the tunnel have on our national attitudes? In the past, we were never afraid to venture abroad and never worried that contact with other countries

would put our national identity at risk. But of late we seem to have grown fearful of change and timid in the face of challenge.

The truth is that our national identity is entirely secure. The unique qualities of British institutions, history and culture are recognised the world over. They are not threatened by contact with other European countries. Indeed, we are already part of Europe, connected in a multitude of ways, but physically less effectively connected than we could be. To improve the physical connection is plain good sense. It will offer unprecedented opportunities for business expansion, cultural enrichment and individual travel. It could stimulate a whole new era of endeavour and achievement for our country. It is in that light that the Channel tunnel becomes an opportunity, not a threat, and it is in that spirit that I commend the Bill to the House.

4.40 pm

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North): I beg to move, to leave out from "That" to the end of the Question and to add instead thereof:

"this House declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill in respect of which the Government has failed to establish adequate machinery to ensure the maximum United Kingdom content of employment and materials during the construction phase of the Channel Tunnel; has failed to develop plans fully to equip British Rail or to diversify potential benefits in accordance with regional economic policy; and has not considered the creation of a Channel Office of Fair Trading to ensure that freedom of choice will be maintained for cross-Channel custom for freight and passenger travel."

First, I welcome the new Secretary of State for Transport and congratulate him on his promotion. I am sure that we shall have many hours of debate together. He is the fourth Secretary of State for Transport whom I have faced across the Dispatch Box. His predecessor was promoted, the one before that was sacked, and the one before that was promoted and then consigned to the nether regions of Northern Ireland which, I suspect, he is inhabiting unhappily. I do not know whether that comforts the present incumbent of the post, but perhaps he will bear it in mind.

In the reactions in the press to the right hon. Gentleman's appointment there have been suggestions, which I accept as being accurate, that he has a fresh and inquiring mind. There is no doubt that the Department of Transport certainly needs that. The Secretary of State has inherited a transport system in crisis and chaos created by his predecessor the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley). This is not the occasion to canvass these wider issues to any extent, so I shall content myself with saying that it does not matter which face is fitted into which picture frame if the policy does not change. If the policies do not change, we shall be severely critical of the right hon. Gentleman and give them serious examination.

I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman would have wished to begin his work in his new post on a less controversial and complex subject than this one. Indeed, he hinted at that in his speech. On the other hand, although the principle has been set, a fresh approach to the consequences of the decision is essential and will bear fruit. The record of the right hon. Gentleman's predecessor is lamentable. Having set out his high hopes for jobs, industry, and commerce, and spoken of all the employment during the construction phase, the former Secretary of State left it at that and took no further responsibility.

The Government's policy so far has been based on market forces and European economic competition rules and their attitude has been that they will be satisfied with whatever jobs result in the United Kingdom. We do not share that opinion. We have already been over the course on international competition, and we can draw on lessons from the past. I refer specifically to the construction and operational phases of North sea oil development.

No one disputes that the establishment of an Offshore Supplies Office—I cannot remember, and I should have checked, how far the right hon. Gentleman was involved in that when he was at the Department of Energy, but I think he was more involved in coal — significantly improved the British content of contracts. Obviously, 100 per cent. success has not been achieved and, indeed, is unattainable. However, the work of the OSO has been invaluable to British industry. It is imperative that we learn the lessons of the North sea, and analyse our experiences there so that we get a better share of Channel tunnel orders. Unless the Government act quickly, the opportunities and hopes that the Secretary of State expressed and which I share will be lost. In contrast to the North sea oil experience where there is a continuing development, the construction of the tunnel involves a finite period and a finite quantity of work.

To some extent, British industry shares our worries. Today I received a letter sent on behalf of GEC. GEC is concerned to ensure that British manufacturers get a square deal on ordering. It draws particular attention to the class 91 locomotive, which it believes will provide a true flagship for United Kingdom products worldwide, and to the opportunities to export that locomotive to China, India, South America and the USSR. It believes that the proposed routes will eventually extend into the rest of Europe, allowing us further opportunity to export there. GEC points out that the technology is proven and that British Rail has already chosen the class 91. It believes, especially given the severe job losses in British Rail Engineering Ltd. and given that many of the sites for British Rail's manufacturing are in the north-west, that this contract provides an opportunity for exports, manufacturing and jobs, providing the French do not get a free run of the market. The future of the United Kingdom railway industry is far too important for that, and the Secretary of State must take that on board.

I am not persuaded that the Government recognise the urgency or have sufficient initiative to equip British Rail to meet the challenge of increasing its freight and passenger traffic. The opportunities certainly exist. However, I shall not rehearse the anxieties of my hon. Friends in the midlands, the north and Scotland that the tunnel will act as a magnet for new industrial investment to the detriment of regional economic policy. I share some of those concerns.

There is a need to diversify the benefits offered by the tunnel, especially from the south-east coast. It is a strange paradox that those north of Watford say strongly that all the benefits will go to the south-east coast, while those on the south-east coast say that they will get none of the benefits and all of the hassle, and that in any case they do not want the benefits of increased industry.

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): Does the hon. Gentleman recognise that hon. Members who represent the areas that will help to make the rail stock are keen to reap the benefits that will come to us? In other words, many of us north of Watford think that the Channel tunnel is an extremely good idea.

Mr. Hughes: Yes. My point is that there is definitely a paradox and contradiction in the two views. Those furthest from the Channel believe that they will not get the benefit, and those closest to it say that the hassle will be too great or that they do not want the benefits. The hon. Lady is concerned with workshops in Derby, but I do not think that at this stage her concern will help her.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Has the hon. Gentleman not sketched exactly the scenario that private concerns cannot see their long-term interests properly, and that this is manifestly an area in which the Government must take the general long-term view?

Mr. Hughes: I am not sure how that intervention fits in with my point. In a way it fits in with my argument that the Government should not simply say, "We are providing a Bill with machinery to facilitate the building of the tunnel and thereafter it has nothing to do with us. As private money is being invested to build the tunnel, that is it for us." The Government must take into account regional economic policy and make every effort to provide focal points for freight and passenger traffic, not just in Kent and London, but elsewhere. That is absolutely essential.

One terminal at Waterloo is not enough. There must be facilities such as marshalling yards and freight traffic centres to increase the possibilities of long-distance traffic. Some people have serious worries about Waterloo, and they are not assuaged by the fact that British Rail cannot tell them what will happen. The people of Waterloo are worried that the underground links and the adjacent road network will be inadequate to cope with the increased Channel tunnel traffic. People are also worried about the degradation of the environment around Waterloo, which includes the National theatre and the Royal Festival hall arts complex on the south bank, as well as residential areas. The people there say that there should be a public inquiry. I shall return to the subject of a public inquiry later, but the Bill sets aside all public inquiry procedures for roadworks, and so on.

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: This must be the last time that I give way, as I wish to leave time for other hon. Members to speak.

Mr. Crouch: I am most grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He has a Scottish constituency and speaks from the Opposition Front Bench. The hon. Gentleman has a point about Waterloo, which will no doubt be argued by the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland). But will the hon. Gentleman give an assurance that he is not making a special plea that the tunnel should not be built in south-east England or Kent on the ground that that would not be of great advantage to the north of England or Scotland? That would be a Luddite argument, because it would be no good building the tunnel in Middlesbrough or Clydebank. I respect the fact that the hon. Gentleman appreciates the problems facing the United Kingdom with trade and so on, but surely there is only one place to build a Channel tunnel, and that is in south-east England.

Mr. Hughes: I shall not repeat the story of my predecessor for Aberdeen, North, who suggested that instead of a Channel tunnel we ought to have a tunnel between Aberdeen and Oslo. But if the hon. Gentleman looks up the debate in *Hansard*, he will see what I said about that. However, I take the hon. Gentleman's point.

It is essential that the areas north of Watford are properly planned for, and that the massive investment made in the south-east of England, in the tunnel and the infrastructure, does not disadvantage those areas. When I first became involved in politics, we in the north of Scotland used to argue about the problems faced by Scotland because of the so-called golden triangle of the midlands, London and the south-east. We now know that the Government have destroyed industry in the midlands and in much of London, yet the same worries prevail.

We want the benefits to be spread more evenly and that is why we want to diversify the facilities. We want British Rail to have the opportunity to develop its freight traffic and to have the equipment to do so. I am not arguing that the tunnel should not proceed, but the project should be carried out in the best possible way. There will undoubtedly be advantages, and regional economic policy could benefit. Indeed, the traffic congestion and environmental damage to be found in Kent might benefit if the amount of traffic in the Kent area is reduced.

The weakest part of the Government's policy is that it takes no account of regional economic or industrial policy. Some Conservative Members may be surprised about that, but I am not. The Secretary of State has brought with him from the Treasury the naive belief that planning is unnecessary and that the market can do it all. Of course there is much to be gained from completion of the Channel tunnel, but whether the benefits will outweigh the destruction that such a major project is bound to cause is something that can be judged only by future historians.

Mr. Adley: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hughes: This is the last time that I shall give way.

Mr. Adley: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way. With hindsight, he no doubt regrets the Labour party's decision to cancel the rail-only tunnel in 1975, which would have brought even greater benefits. Will he make it clear that the Labour party supports the building of the tunnel and that hon. Members on both sides of the House should press on the Government the need to develop the infrastructure in the midlands and the north, as he has described?

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Gentleman will have to contain himself and be patient. I shall come to that point later, and no doubt he will keenly await my answer.

There will be a significant change in freight and passenger transport patterns. Indeed, those patterns may be distorted. However, that is a matter for speculation. But a good and prudent Government would now examine the problems. They should not wait until issues have arisen and then try to remedy the situation. It would not be good enough if the Government did that.

There is widespread concern that once the Channel tunnel becomes operative, the economics of the scheme will compel the concessionaires to maximise their traffic

to such an extent that they will try to create a virtual monopoly by driving competitors out of business through predatory pricing. In meetings with outside bodies, the previous Secretary of State implied that he was, to some extent, worried about that. But the Government's response to those concerns baffles me. Clause 33(1) clearly states:

"The Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1976 shall not apply to any Concession agreement and shall be deemed never to have applied to any such agreement."

That sends alarm bells ringing. There are various references later to the Director General of Fair Trading, and so on, but apparently the mechanisms of competition policy are to some extent being dismantled.

Mr. Moore: I would not normally seek to intervene, but it is important to put it on the record that of course the Restrictive Trade Practices Act relates to the concession agreement. But my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State made it clear that the concessionaires will be subject to United Kingdom, French and Community competition law. Clearly Community competition law makes provision for the investigation, prevention or remedying of monopoly practices or anti-competition behaviour, including both predatory pricing and abuse of a dominant position. Those aspects are still covered. I thought that the hon. Gentleman might want to be reminded of that.

Mr. Hughes: I am aware of that, but I like to see the evidence with my own eyes. When the Minister of State replies to the debate, perhaps he will say why it was necessary to include that provision. It says clearly that the Act does not apply and

"shall be deemed never to have applied".

That provision must be there for a purpose, and I hope that the Minister will explain it.

There are serious worries that the ferry business could be driven out, perhaps never to return. The Government are keen to mouth slogans about competition and freedom of choice. I believe in freedom of choice. By coincidence, today's edition of the *Daily Telegraph* says that the Government are concerned about the machinery for ensuring fair competition. It says:

"The announcement of the Whitehall review which could also bring in outsiders, has been held up while the Government agonised over the terms of reference to take account of criticism about consistency in handling 'mega mergers' and tactics adopted by companies to avoid Monopolies and Merger Commission references.

Mr Channon is not anxious to change the basis of a merger policy based on competition but wants the committee of civil servants to look closely at points which have produced the complaints. They include:

1. The time it takes for the MMC to complete an investigation . . . Updating restrictive trade practice rules to discourage new forms of price fixing and cartels will form a key part of the examination but City attention will focus on the merger element."

That reinforces my point that the existing machinery is far too slow and cannot act quickly enough to prevent damage. That is why we say that there should be a mechanism to monitor the interplay between sea and air traffic and the fixed link.

Of course, a predatory pricing policy need not always work one way. It is perfectly conceivable that a predatory pricing regime could be adopted by the ferry operators acting in concert or by the airlines acting in concert, because some people believe that the majority of the passengers using the Channel link will be attracted away from the airlines. Those operators could act in concert to the disadvantage of the tunnel business, and that would be just as unacceptable to us.

The Government have not so far shown even the slightest inclination to discuss the issues or to address themselves to the problem of finding solutions. In our amendment we put forward one such solution, the establishment of a Channel office of fair trading which would concern itself specifically with monitoring the operation of the tunnel.

Mr. Crouch: Will the hon. Gentleman give way? I should like to say something on that pertinent point.

Mr. Hughes: I said three times that I would not give way and each time I broke my word. I am a man of honour and this time I mean it. I am sorry, I will not give way.

Mr. Crouch: On a point of order. The hon. Gentleman is misleading the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has made it clear that he is not giving way.

Mr. Hughes: Perhaps I could now turn to clause 26(2) *[Interruption.]* The hon. Gentleman will have to contain himself until he makes his own speech. I have already spoken for a long time and I do not wish to prevent any of my hon. Friends or any Government hon. Member from speaking. It is Government hon. Members who are determined to prevent my hon. Friends from speaking and I want to be fairer than they are.

Clause 26(2) limits the involvement of the Government in the running of the tunnel if the company should go bust, either at about the time of completion or after completion, to a period of three months. That is far too short a period and in his speech the Secretary of State certainly said nothing about how that would work. He did not explain that, and I invite him to do so. Is it correct that if the company goes bust he will simply appoint a receiver, or will the Government themselves seek to dispose of the company? Under the Bill, could the Government directly, through the Department of Transport, take over the company or could they delegate British Rail, to take one example, to take over the company and keep it running? Those are questions to which we must have answers.

I now come to a matter that is not in the Bill and was not referred to by the Secretary of State. I am talking about a Government share in CTG. This issue was raised at a meeting on 17 March between the Transport Committee and the construction industry committee of the Trades Union Congress. The Minister of State was present at that meeting together with a number of officials. I have the TUC record of the meeting.—We know that questions are always asked about whose minute is accurate, but there can be no quarrel about the minute of that meeting.

The TUC asked the Secretary of State, the right hon. Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), whether a golden share would be acquired to protect defence interests or deal with foreign shareholdings. The reply given by a Department of Transport official was:

"a golden share was not in the Concession Agreement for technical reasons, and that precise kind of arrangement was not an option in France. As far as the UK operation was concerned it could simply be written into the arrangements and legislation was not needed. It was therefore a matter for bilateral discussion with CTG. The Government was in principle in favour of a golden share and CTG did not object so it was not just a question of the mechanics."

[Mr. Hughes]

The Secretary of State went on to say that

"control of the Tunnel needed to be in the UK but the golden share would not be used as any kind of lever over trading operations and so on. All the golden share could do was allow Government to control who made the decisions and see it did not fall into the wrong hands."

Will the Secretary of State tell us whether a golden share is being acquired in CTG, or Eurotunnel as it is now described? If it is to be acquired, I hope he will make the details available to us. If a golden share is not to be acquired, he must explain why that is so when the principle of a golden share has been accepted and CTG has no objections to it. If it is simply a matter of bilateral discussions, why has the matter of such acquisition been dropped—if it has been dropped?

The Secretary of State said that it was significant that in our reasoned amendment we withdrew our call for a public inquiry. There is no significance in that. The absence of a call for a public inquiry does not mean for one minute that we do not still believe that a full public inquiry would have been the best way to proceed, and is still the best way to proceed. However, at a later stage we have a committal motion. We have looked at that motion and have put down amendments to it. If some of our amendments are accepted by the Government they will provide a reasonable and proper alternative to a full public inquiry. We are not dropping the demand for a public inquiry because it is reasserting itself in a slightly different form.

Our attitude to the tunnel can be expressed by the phrase, "If it were to be done, 'twere better that it be done well." That is not an exact Shakespearean quotation.

Mr. Faulds: I must warn the House that to quote that particular play is profoundly unlucky.

Mr. Hughes: I hope it is not unlucky for me. Perhaps my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) did not hear the quotation in full and I shall repeat it for him. The quotation that I used was, "If it were to be done, 'twere better that it be done well." The actual quotation is, "t' were done quickly." I did not use the proper quotation because it is not particularly apposite and referred to the assasination of Julius Caesar. It is certainly not my intention to kill off the Channel Tunnel Bill. I want to encourage the success of the CTG. The amendment makes it perfectly clear why we wish to decline the Second Reading. We decline it simply because the Government have not paid sufficient attention to the overall effects of the plan. I invite any hon. Member who is prepared to look at the issue in an objective way to vote with me tonight.

5.9 pm

Mr. Peter Rees (Dover): I hesitate to intervene in a dialogue in the Labour party between the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and the right hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) and say who is to play the part of Lady Macbeth or whether the Channel tunnel is to be brought to Dunsinane. I leave that to them to sort out. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North has made some admirably balanced speeches during the two debates on the principle of the tunnel that took place just before and just after Christmas. Now, after certain vicissitudes we come to the Second Reading, and the hon. Gentleman still maintains a posture of admirable balance. He tells us—and perhaps this is the first time he has said so specifically—that he encourages the success of the Channel Tunnel Group.

It is right that the people of Britain and especially my constituents and those of my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) should know where the Labour party stands on this great issue. No doubt the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) will tell us where the alliance now stands on this great issue. If he will allow me to say so, the hon. Member for Isle of Wight has been much more candid, direct and unequivocal and has reproved the Government on a variety of occasions for not being dynamic and thrusting enough on the question of the Channel tunnel.

There are in fact reservations in all parts of the House about this great project. That is understandable. The reservations are not confined to those members of the Labour party who are sponsored by the National Union of Seamen. I well understand the difficulties of the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North. He must look, on the one side, to the National Union of Seamen and, on the other, to the National Union of Railwaymen and, statesman that he is, he must produce something that tonight will bring all his hon. Friends into the Lobby against the Government—if that is, indeed, his intention. I congratulate him upon his dexterity. However, I am not certain whether he will be able to maintain his position right through to the conclusion of the Bill. Nevertheless, we are grateful to him for his unequivocal statement that he is there to encourage the success of the Channel Tunnel Group.

It is my very pleasant duty to congratulate my right hon. Friend who has assumed the onerous responsibilities of Secretary of State for Transport. Indeed, I wondered whether I should congratulate him or condole with him, since he has immediately assumed, in mid-flow, responsibility for this great but contentious hybrid Bill. Dare I say—expressing purely a personal point of view—that he may find it some slight relief from the Committee stage of the Finance Bill? As he and I know to our cost, Committee Room 10 has its disadvantages.

With commendable bravura, my right hon. Friend ended on a high note by emphasising the national interest in the conclusion of this great project. I do not propose to debate that matter with him. As the Member of Parliament for Dover, I should like to emphasise to him the impact of the Channel tunnel on east Kent. In the second part of his speech he touched, perhaps understandably briefly, on the east Kent dimension. Although I know that, with his customary assiduity, he will have read all the previous debates and that he will have kept an open ear to the tremors on both sides of the House about this great issue, I must emphasise to him the deep and legitimate concern that is felt, particularly in Dover but throughout east Kent, about the Channel tunnel.

I shall not expand on that point, because a number of my hon. Friends are here to represent the particular interests of other parts of east Kent. My constituents' deep concern can perhaps be encapsulated in this form. Over 12,000 people are employed in the port of Dover and on the ferries. I know that the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North will agree with me when I say that, naturally and understandably, they are very concerned about their prospects.

I hope that I do not show undue bias when I emphasise that the ferry services have been enormously flexible during the past 15 or 20 years. They have expanded in

order to respond to the opportunities that have developed, and I believe that they have served the economy well. Also, I emphasise that they have not required or asked for Government support.

It is self-evident that if it is to succeed to any degree —if it does not succeed, all sorts of other problems will be posed, including problems posed by this Bill—the Channel tunnel must take some business that otherwise would have passed across the Channel by ferry. How much business will be taken from the ferries is a matter for speculation. There is a degree of common ground between myself and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North: that if the basis of the case for the Channel tunnel is that there should be competing means of crossing the Channel—my right hon. Friend emphasised the fact that our biggest export market lies across the Channel, and a large part of our armed forces are to be found in the British Army of the Rhine—the competition between the Channel tunnel and the ferries must be fair.

I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Minister of State who is to wind up the debate will want to dwell on this point not only tonight but in the months to come and will want to ensure that there is a fair balance in the competition between the ferries and the tunnel. Given fair competition, I am assured by my friends in Dover and in the other Channel ports—an assurance that I completely accept—that the ferries will compete successfully. Their confidence is demonstrated by the orders put in for new ships and by the investment of the Dover harbour board which I am sure the whole House, and in particular my right hon. Friend, will commend.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North said that there should be a special regime for the Channel tunnel. I am not certain whether I want there to be a special regime for it. I just want there to be a rigorous application of both national and European Community competition regulations. There should be a rigorous application of those regulations at the moment when unfair competition starts to develop. I recall from my experience in the Department of Trade that the complaint about dumping was that the responses were not sufficiently sharp and rapid. I hope that my right hon. Friend will bear that point very much in mind. It is fine to enunciate the general principle that, for example, there should be no predatory pricing, but by the time that kind of feature demonstrates itself the position of a competitor may have been destroyed.

I know that my right hon. Friend, who bears responsibilities for the British shipping industry, will be very concerned to ensure that the ferries, which form a very significant part of the British merchant marine, with all that that means in both economic and defence terms, will be very quick to ensure that there is a sensitive and rapid response to any unfair measures that might be taken by the operators of the Channel tunnel. I am not accusing them of anything. These are early days, but I sound a warning note.

Mr. Crouch: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend will appreciate that by intervening I am not seeking to weaken his case or to argue with him in any way whatsoever, but does he not agree that the present costs of travelling across the Channel by sea do not represent the cheapest route and method of travelling, that the introduction of travel by means of the Channel tunnel will provide a form of competition which may stimulate the ferries to reduce their prices, as I believe they should have done long ago, and that this will be very good for all those who believe in free choice and competition?

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend serves only to develop the fundamental point that I am making: that there must be free and fair competition. I note my hon. Friend's criticism of the cost of crossing the Channel, but the cost of flying from Heathrow or Gatwick to Charles de Gaulle or Orly is also something to which I would direct the attention of my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Transport. I pay a tribute to his predecessor, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cirencester and Tewkesbury (Mr. Ridley), who has done something about opening up that particular market. It is not for me to stimulate opposition from other quarters in the House, but it may well be that at the end of the day it will be the airlines rather than the ferries that will suffer more from the operation of the Channel tunnel. It is not for me to express any hopes in this direction, but if this were to develop into a debate about competition, I should probably be subject to stern admonition from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Nevertheless, it is a dimension that I should like to examine.

Sir John Farr: I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way. On the question of the effect upon the employees of the Dover harbour board, a petition from the Dover harbour board was submitted last week to a meeting of the Select Committee. My impression was that the employees of the Dover harbour board who presented the petition to the Committee were very worried indeed about their prospects and felt that if the Channel tunnel were to go ahead as planned, it could mean the loss of many thousands of jobs. Everyone is concerned about that, so is my right hon. and learned Friend able to reassure me on that point?

Mr. Rees: No. I wish that I could reassure my hon. Friend, but it is not my responsibility to reassure him. That is one of my worries. Indeed, it is a worry that, against my normal practice—my Division record only has to be looked at—may well compel me into a different Lobby from that of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. My point is precisely that over 12,000 people are employed in or about the port of Dover and in or about the ferries, and I feel that I am entitled to emphasise their legitimate concern about their future. I do not intend to speculate about the precise number of jobs that will be lost. It may be that some balancing jobs will be created, but it is a small comfort to somebody who has spent his life at sea to be offered a job on land punching tickets at the portal of the tunnel. That may be an alternative form of economic activity, but it is hardly something for which many of my constituents have been trained.

It may be more appropriate to raise this when we debate the money resolution, but I know that there is great concern outside the House, despite the clear statements made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister that public money should not be devoted to the operation of a tunnel. I have considered carefully the money resolution; perhaps it is a more appropriate matter for my hon. Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, but if not, perhaps my hon. Friend the Minister of State will deal with it when he replies. The money resolution should not authorise the Government to give direct or covert support to the private sector consortium that will be operating the Channel

[Mr. Rees]

tunnel. I have in mind especially paragraph (1)(*c*) of the money resolution, but I may be ruled out of order if I dealt with that in more depth.

One matter which is mentioned directly in the Bill, and which relates to the root of fair competition between the tunnel and the ferries, is road connections. I am happy that the A20-M20 extension, at least beyond and round the village of Capel-le-Ferne, is included in the Bill. I hope that that will allow progress to be made, because there is concern already about the weight of traffic, leaving aside the additional traffic that must be drawn in during the construction period. I hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State or my hon. Friend the Minister of State will give us an unequivocal assurance that this does not mean any lack of enthusiasm or any faltering in carrying through the extension to Dover. We will ask him many questions about the point of entry at the appropriate time. There is concern that the extension is being pushed through only to facilitate the building of the tunnel. If the port of Dover is to compete fairly, it must have the connection.

Similarly, I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State can spell out explicitly his plans to ensure that the A2 will be—I hope that I shall be forgiven for using the word—dualled all the way down to the port. I was enormously grateful to my noble Friend Lord Peyton, who occupied my hon. Friend's position, for authorising the building of the eastern bypass round Dover——

Mr. Speed: And me!

Mr. Rees: My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) played a particular role in that too, and I am delighted to pay tribute to him for his special contribution over the years, even when he was not a Member of Parliament for Kent.

Mr. Crouch: The pressure came from the Back Benches.

Mr. Rees: Yes, indeed.

I am bound to say that the traffic has outgrown the existing scope of the eastern bypass. I hope that my right hon. and hon. Friends will bear in mind the essential need, if the position of the port of Dover is to be maintained, to have a proper connection all the way from Lydden down to the port.

Mr. Adley: In view of my right hon. and learned Friend's former incarnation, does he agree that in considering the road and rail links and everything that will inevitably be needed for the construction of the Channel tunnel—I recognise his constituency position—in all fairness, the road and rail expenditure should be regarded as a legitimate public expense to be borne by the taxpayer? At present, British Rail is expected to fund many of those costs out of its operating profits. That is ridiculous, because it is making a loss.

Mr. Rees: I suppose that my hon. Friend refers to my previous incarnation as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. I shall not be drawn into a general debate about overall public expenditure. There will be time enough to debate that. It must be for my right hon. and hon. Friends who are much more up-to-date with the problems than I am, or probably ever was, to determine in their departmental budgets where they wish to place the thrust of their expenditure.

In answer to my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley), may I say that the Exchequer has been pumping money into British Rail to the tune of just under £1 billion a year. It is not for me to say whether my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, having considered his budget, believes that a further allocation should be made. We are talking mostly about trunk roads, but my hon. Friend perceptively put his finger on the sensitive issue: some lateral roads will be of considerable importance to us in east Kent. That will be a matter for Kent county council. I repeat that since Kent county council will be exposed to expenditure that goes beyond the normal responsibilities of a county council, I hope that the present Chief Secretary and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will look kindly on any applications made by the county council in this regard.

There is anxiety that British Rail may not be completely committed to maintaining the rail link between Folkestone, Dover, Deal, Sandwich and the Isle of Thanet. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) may wish to discuss this point. It may be said that there is always the alternative route from Victoria to Dover through Canterbury——

Mr. Crouch: We need both.

Mr. Rees: Of course we do. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) is right. We need that lateral connection. I believe that British Rail has committed itself at least until the end of the century, but that leaves a feeling of unease—after all, we are only 14 years away from the end of the century—about what might happen thereafter. If the rail connection were discontinued, it would disadvantage Dover as against the operators of the tunnel.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister of State can bring us up to date on the Department's thinking on the following matters. It must be fair that the customs and immigration procedures on the ferries will be as quick and effective as any that are devised for the tunnel. The safety regulations for the operation of the tunnel must be no less onerous than those that are currently and properly imposed on the merchant marine.

I do not wish to cover the entire area of the environment because I have wearied the House at least two or three times with our anxieties in east Kent. However, I must mention the transfer of spoil from the workings at Shakespeare cliff. Some could be taken directly to Cheriton, but some at the lower end may have to be taken away, and there is anxiety as to where it will be dumped. There was a suggestion that it may be dumped at Dungeness, for reasons connected, I believe, with the Folkestone district water company and others. I have no doubt that my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, who represents Folkestone and Hythe, will have strong views about that which he may have communicated in his inimitable way to my right hon. and hon. Friends.

I must emphasise to my right hon. and hon. Friends that the spoil must not be carried away by lorry. It must be carried away by rail. We are talking of an excess of about 1 million tonnes of spoil. The roads of east Kent would become intolerable——

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): They are already.

Mr. Rees: That is a fair point from my hon. Friend, who has problems with the Thanet way, which no doubt he will ventilate in due course.

The transport of shale from the three east Kent pits, with which my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is familiar in view of one of his earlier incarnations, forms the basis of the works at Cheriton and thereabouts. There is deep concern in the villages of east Kent, some in my constituency and some in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), about the transport of that shale by lorry. I press my right hon. and hon. Friends to impose a condition that that shale should be transported by rail. Only in that way will it be bearable in the affected parts of east Kent.

Mr. Crouch: The proposed route to transport shale from the pits in east Kent to mix with the chalk taken out from the digging of the tunnel to make the base for the terminal at Cheriton is the connecting road that leads from the A2 to the A20 or M20. It is a narrow road. I use it frequently, and have done for 20 years. It is about 12 miles long. When one is on it, one cannot even overtake a long car. If there are lorries on it, there is no question of overtaking and if there was a succession of lorries carrying shale it would be impossible.

Mr. Peter Rees: My hon. Friend is right to emphasise his experience, which I am sure that all of us who are privileged to represent Kent constituencies have shared.

I come to the competitive position of east Kent. The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North rightly emphasised the concerns of other parts of the country that too much economic activity may be drawn down to east Kent. He emphasised the contradiction between the anxieties of hon. Members representing east Kent and those representing other parts of the country. It is not for me to speak for hon. Members representing east Kent collectively, all of whom are here in the Chamber today, but our concern is that there may well be a concentration of activity in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford, the consequences of which he will no doubt explore if he is successful in intervening in the debate.

It is possible, as I know from the days when there was more railway activity in Ashford, for people to travel to work every day from Dover and Deal, but I think that that would be an unhealthy development. We want to see a diffusion of economic activity, particularly along the coastal strip where the unemployment figures are uncomfortably high. It is a matter for speculation how much and what kind of business can be attracted there, but it is important to create the maximum opportunities. I know that is not primarily the responsibility of my right hon. Friend, but I want a powerful voice to speak for us in Government discussions that he has, for example, with his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

What is not a matter of speculation is the resources that the French Government are pouring into the north-west of France. I have touched on this on previous occasions. Since then, however, we have acquired a greater perception of what is involved in the published documents. The case is that north-west France, Nord-Pas de Calais, is a depressed area. I am happy to say that we cannot claim to suffer quite the disadvantages of declining industries that are found in that area. None the less, my right hon. Friend will recognise that as the communications across the Channel are improved — bigger, faster, more efficient ferries—with perhaps, if the Bill recommends itself to the House, a form of fixed link, east Kent will be competing not just with mid-Kent and west Kent, the midlands and even Aberdeen, but with north-west France. It is crucial that a fair balance be struck.

I do not suffer from any paranoia about the competitive skills of our French neighbours, who are agreeable and efficient in many fields. But I think that we can hold our own, provided that the scales are not tilted too far in their favour. I therefore think that, since undeniably the Channel tunnel will dislocate and vary the economic patterns that we have experienced in the past 20 to 25 years, east Kent will deserve some kind of special status. As I said, I hope that my right hon. Friend will prove a powerful advocate in talking to other of our right hon. Friends on the subject. I hope too that he will ensure that Development of Tourism Act 1962 is administered with due sympathy, for example, to the hoteliers and boarding-house keepers who form such an important element of our economic community in east Kent. It is crucially important that the benefits, if there are to be benefits, of the project should be felt in the area that will immediately take the brunt and where the cost will be paid.

I come now to express a few concerns about the Select Committee, although I have no doubt that we shall be debating the scope of that a little later. It may well be that local authorities are well-equipped to put in appropriately drafted petitions — indeed, I know that many already have those organised. My right hon. Friend will recognise that there are many smaller bodies and individuals with equally legitimate concerns that might not be quite as practised. I hope that he will take a sympathetic view of their position to enable them to make their concerns felt and evaluated by the Select Committee. I know that, to a degree, the terms of reference will be a matter for the Select Committee, but I hope that my right hon. Friend will repeat the assurance that was given earlier, that no restrictive views will be taken in that regard and that, as far as it lies in his power, he will give them ample opportunity to put in their petitions.

That said—and I hate to say this, because I know that my right hon. Friend is coming fresh to the problem, and I am sure that he will look at it with a sympathetic eye; indeed, his first contribution confirmed that he has already grasped our concerns—I have to say to him and to my hon. Friend the Minister of State that, even after the earlier debates, there are too many unresolved problems and questions that crucially affect the well-being of my constituents in Dover and east Kent, and not entirely encouraging answers can be found to those problems and questions in the Bill so far as I can see. I will, therefore, to register their concern and mine, be compelled to vote against the Bill at the conclusion of the debate.

5.36 pm

Mr. John Silkin (Lewisham, Deptford): I should like to add my personal congratulations to the Secretary of State. It occurred to me when listening to him that if he could make so reasonable and agreeable a speech in such a bad cause, he will make a very powerful opponent when in God's good time he has a cause which is worth defending.

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): He will never get one.

Mr. Silkin: Give him time.

The Secretary of State finished his speech by disclosing to us a powerful and good concern for the rights of individuals. I think that he has taken immense personal trouble to ensure that, as he sees it, their needs are looked after and they get an opportunity to be heard.

The debate is not entirely about the rights of individuals. Of course the House must respect those rights. That is what we are here for. We are all constituency Members. However, the debate is also about a great principle—whether we should build a Channel tunnel. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch), who made that point very early in the morning when some of us may have begun to nod off. He put it correctly. It is not just about details; it is about principle.

Let us get rid of one myth straight away. As the House well knows, I have always been against British membership of the Common Market; but long before that I was against a Channel tunnel, and that is one of my consistent beliefs. The two are not necessarily connected. One can be in favour of the Channel tunnel and against the Common Market, and the other way round.

The question to which we have to devote our minds is not even so much whether it is desirable to have a Channel tunnel. It is the question, asked in the debate in February, which the Select Committee on Transport examined in its first report, the answer to which it then dodged. The Committee put it succinctly in paragraph 128 of its first report:

"The one question which has persistently hung over the Committee's inquiry is 'Is there a need for a fixed link?'"

Nothing that the Secretary of State or any protagonist of the fixed link has ever said has shown us that there is a need. Of course, the Secretary of State and the Government have given what they believe to be reasonable justifications. As the right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) has said, there are balances across the whole House. What we have heard are only justifications or excuses. Nowhere do they point to a need for a Channel tunnel.

Mr. Adley: If the right hon. Gentleman had been in the House in 1825 when the Stockton and Darlington railway was proposed, how would he have expected the Minister of the day, or whoever was handling the Bill, to explain the justification of that need, and how would he have voted?

Mr. Silkin: It is all rather hypothetical, but I believe that I would not have been in favour of it in 1825, nor would I have been in favour of it in 1882 when the House rightly chucked it out and told the London, Chatham and South Coast railway that it could go in the other direction.

The need for a Channel tunnel has never been expressed, but there have been justifications or excuses for it. The first is that it will speed up traffic. That has been said by the Secretary of State today and it has also been said by several hon. Members. But will it? I recommend hon. Members to read page 13 of the Channel Tunnel Group's digest, which says that the time required for the tunnel transit, if everything goes right—an assumption that has not been universally observable in the timetables of British Rail—will be 30 minutes. I have crossed the Channel by hovercraft in less than 30 minutes. The average time by hovercraft is 41 minutes.

Mr. Crouch: If the weather is right.

Mr. Silkin: If the hon. Gentleman wants to know about the weather, I shall come to that in a moment. Expenditure of £6 billion seems to be a lot to save 11 minutes of a holidaymaker's time.

Let us consider the time. Hon. Members should travel by hovercraft. The average loading time of a hovercraft for a car and its passengers is 10 minutes and the unloading time is five minutes. According to the CTG's own digest, the unloading time for the tunnel will be 15 minutes. It does not dare tell us what the loading time will be because that includes export clearance, passport control and all the rest. The CTG rightly does not give a figure for that.

Let us consider long-distance lorry drivers. The hovercraft is a great invention but it is not strong enough to take lorries. They have to go by ferry. The real calculation is not one hour 15 minutes spent crossing by ferry as against 30 minutes by tunnel. One must take into account the journey over the roads of Europe and the roads of Britain. That runs to several hours or many days. What saving are we talking about there?

The Secretary of State has been conned by his Department into believing that time is absolutely vital. But of course it is not. The time for the ferry crossing is very little when taken as a rest period for drivers that is probably not only deserved but necessary in the interests of safety. They probably need at least an hour and a quarter to rest between long road journeys. When one considers a lorry driver's total journey time, it does not count.

The Secretary of State by his speech struck me as being able to take these points well into account. Therefore, I beg him to examine the matter himself and not to rely on what he has been told, because it is absolute nonsense.

Mr. Speed: Do I follow the right hon. Gentleman's argument correctly? His argument about ferries and hovercraft relies on vehicles driving through Kent, through my constituency and the constituencies of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Is he ruling out in his argument journeys from city centre to city centre by rail?

Mr. Silkin: I do not know what city centres we are talking about. The brochure talks about London and Paris. I do not think that people would make that journey by tunnel. [HON. MEMBERS: "Why not?"] I do not think that more people would do it that way than would make the journey by air. However, I am not ruling it out.

Mr. Dubs: Of course they would.

Mr. Silkin: My hon. Friend is entitled to his opinion. I always let him have it. I beg the House to give him every courtesy and to let him say what he believes. It does not have to be what I believe. I have some experience.

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): The right hon. Gentleman has talked about proving the need. As I understand it, close to his constituency a second Dartford tunnel is being considered because of the growth in traffic. Would he suggest that we should go back to crossing the Thames by ferry?

Mr. Silkin: No, I would not. A second Dartford tunnel has probably become essential. That is irrespective of a Channel tunnel. I shall deal with the Channel tunnel in this debate. I shall deal with the Dartford tunnel, if the hon. Gentleman wants me to, in any debate in which that is appropriate. No doubt the hon. Gentleman and I will be on the same side on that matter.

A few moments ago the hon. Member for Canterbury referred to the weather. Part of the argument for a tunnel is that there will be transport facilities 365 days a year. I have to admit that the ferries operate on only 364 days a year, because they do not cross the Channel on Christmas day. Let us assume that those who wrote the brochure forgot about that and we are talking about like and like. Having checked, I can say that there was not a single day last year, except Christmas day, when there were not ferries crossing the Channel, even though the weather may have been bad.

Mr. Crouch: What about delays?

Mr. Silkin: I shall come to the delays on British Rail in a moment. Let us talk about delays on this for a moment.

Mr. Crouch: The right hon. Gentleman should go to Dover and see for himself.

Mr. Silkin: If the hon. Gentleman wants to intervene, he should do me the courtesy of standing up.

Mr. Crouch: When the right hon. Gentleman makes a good point, I shall.

Mr. Silkin: Does the hon. Gentleman want to intervene?

Mr. Crouch: Of course I will. The right hon. Gentleman knows that I am happy to be on my feet to intervene. I did not want to interrupt his speech, but he was making such an obvious mistake that I wanted to put him right. The Channel ferries—not the hovercraft—are held up frequently when they have to wait outside Dover and Folkestone. I go to Dover on a Sunday just to enjoy looking at ships waiting to get into Dover harbour when it is too rough for them to get in straight away. I am very fond of the sea. I would prefer to cross the Channel by sea any day, but I do not like hanging about, and that is what one has to do on ferries.

Mr. Silkin: The hon. Gentleman has made a valid point, but it is not the point with which I was dealing. I was talking about the cancellation of crossings. I shall come to delays.

Apart from Christmas day the number of days in any year on which the hovercraft has been cancelled is four. If we are talking about cancellations, there is nothing in it.

Mr. Adley: What on earth is the right hon. Gentleman worrying about? The ferries will still run. The consumer will have an additional choice, and the taxpayer will not fund the cost of the tunnel. What on earth is the right hon. Gentleman concerned about?

Mr. Silkin: I was wrong to give way. If the hon. Gentleman will be patient, I propose to deal with all the points that he has been making.

The next matter that the Secretary of State and those who are in favour of the tunnel raise is employment. They do it rather diffidently, because everybody knows that there will be unemployment in parts of Kent. They talk about a balance of various additional jobs that will come against the loss of jobs in the immediate areas. Nobody really knows the figures, but quite frankly, the estimate for job creation is not worth substantive discussion. It is hypothetical. Indeed, we could take any figure we wanted. The only figures that stand up are the Channel Tunnel Group's estimates of increases in jobs—under 4,000 in 1993 and under 6,000 by the year 2003. The ferries and ports submission shows a loss of 12,000 jobs in the United Kingdom generally, with another 4,000 in east Kent. That gives a net loss of 10,000 jobs. That is the only substantial evidence.

The Secretary of State, in a powerful part of his speech, made a point about the economy. It is obvious that he passionately believes it, and I pay tribute to him for that. In effect, he was saying that the project would produce many benefits, and all with little or no public expenditure. That is not so. Even the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) and other Conservative Members have encouraged the right hon. Gentleman to accept that there will need to be some public expenditure. At the least, improvements to the motorways will cost £100 million and to the railways £400 million, which is £500 million of public expenditure. In addition, the Government will have to bail out a bankrupt Channel Tunnel Group—that will certainly be the case—and the figures will then be astronomical.

Why do we not learn from experience? The Seikan tunnel between Honshu and Hokkaido was held to be a great, exciting engineering adventure when it was first constructed, yet 20 years later the final costs are a great deal more than the original budget. Japan feels regret only that the tunnel was ever contemplated.

Sir Julian Ridsdale: Is the right hon. Gentleman aware that there is another tunnel in Japan, between Kynshu and Honshu? It is a road tunnel, and it pays.

Mr. Silkin: Yes, but I was dealing with something commensurate with the proposed Channel tunnel project. The hon. Gentleman and I are probably the only two Japanese-speaking Members of Parliament, so at least we can agree about that. The Honshu to Hokkaido tunnel is commensurate, almost to the inch, with the proposed Chunnel tunnel.

The Government are prepared to spend £500 million on the Channel tunnel. Would it not be better to spend that money — and I would spend much more — on modernising and cheapening the whole of our rail system? That would make some of the environmental improvements about which the Secretary of State rightly spoke. He mentioned the large number of lorries that congregate along the roads of Kent. Such a scheme would do a great deal to improve the employment position and bring down the cost of transport.

There is one aspect of the proposed project to which no one on the Government Front Bench dares give weight —security. A narrow tunnel, 30 miles in length, with cars, motorists and families all travelling together, will be an obvious security target. If we assume that the Channel Tunnel Group's timing is anywhere near accurate, there could be as many as six trains in the tunnel at any one time. The group refers to trains running every 10 minutes, and the journey lasting 30 minutes. Whether by a terrorist bomb or by a mechanical defect, if one of those trains breaks down there will be a danger to life not only through bombing or fire, but from panic. The House may recall that a couple of months ago a London underground train broke down and was stuck for two hours in a tunnel. There was no great danger and the train was quite near a platform, but there was panic.

I spoke earlier about delays in the rail system. We all know that there can be breakdowns. A breakdown in the

[Mr. Clarke]

The Government legislated less than two years ago to improve the controls over new nursing homes, to ensure that the interests of the best and legitimate nursing homes were not damaged by the incursion into that area of homes which dropped below essential nursing and other standards. That shows that, when it is necessary to protect the public, the Government improve controls, so long as we are satisfied that they serve a serious purpose, and best protect elderly and sick people against exploitation in sub standard homes.

Mr. Anthony Steen (South Hams): I welcome my right hon. and learned Friend's comments about licensing. Is he aware that there is a special problem about the 200 commercial vineyards? These need a special vineyard licence to allow them to offer tourists tastes of their wares throughout the day. At present, they must have an off licence and an on licence. If a visitor arrives during the off licence period, he cannot taste wine as he can anywhere else in Europe. Will my right hon. and learned Friend make a simple alteration to this excellent document to allow tourists to taste our splendid English wine whenever they choose to drop in at a vineyard?

Mr. Clarke: At present we are considering no fewer than 65 licensing systems, as is explained briefly in the Bill. We are certain to act promptly on the licensing requirement for public billiard halls. That dates back to social conditions, which have no relevance today. My hon. Friend has raised a pertinent point and he appears to have identified yet another of the idiocies of our liquor licensing system. We all hope that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary will soon be able to crystalise his ideas over the licensing laws. We shall then have to see when we can get the legislative time to bring reforms forward.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the Paymaster General aware that, when the Minister of State for the Armed Forces rises to make a statement to the House in a few minutes' time, the other place will interrupt its business so that a simultaneous statement can be made? is that not an excellent example, not only of the contempt that the Secretary of State for Employment has for this House, but of the contempt he has for the Paymaster General?

Is the Paymaster General also aware that his proposition that individuals should be charged £25 deposit for appealing to an industrial tribunal is yet another example of the way that the Government have steadily removed and eroded the rights of the ordinary citizen? The former Financial Secretary to the Treasury referred to about 80 new proposals when he presented the "Lifting the Burden" White Paper last year.

This year the Paymaster General mentioned nearly 80 new proposals. Can he clarify whether those 80 proposals are different proposals? If so, how many of last year's 80 proposals were carried into effect? Does he also recall that last year it was said that cutting red tape and ending form-filling would create some 8,000 jobs? Will he tell the House how many jobs were really created? Does he appreciate that the Opposition would welcome proposals from the Paymaster General or his noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment which would begin to reduce the appalling dole queues rather than glossy documents, empty words and rhetoric?

Mr. Clarke: Like me, the hon. Gentleman has served time in the Whips Office. He also probably knows more about the procedures of this House than about the procedures in another place. The statement on "Building Businesses — Not Barriers" was made by Cabinet Ministers in each House. The Lords took the statement, made by the Secretary of State for Employment, at the time that they always take statements, after questions when sitting in the morning. The statement on defence matters will be made by my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces who is sitting beside me. That statement will be repeated in the other place by a Minister who is not a Minister in that Department. The rules of the other place require the statement to be repeated. My right hon. Friend the Leader of the House has agreed that we shall look at all that, but the fact is that parliamentary procedure is responsible for where we are and it does not really feed the hon. Gentleman's main point.

On the £25 fee, the problem, which I hope the hon. Gentleman will accept, is that some cases which are going before industrial tribunals really should not be brought. At the moment, an individual can go to an industrial tribunal at no cost to himself and at the very least he will impose considerable costs on his employer simply by raising the complaint, and cause considerable public expenditure while ACAS and the tribunal system deal with it.

We have deliberately avoided anything that would cut people off from access to justice or be punitive in that way. The £25 fee will be returnable in most cases, but at least it might cause people to reflect before they casually make a complaint to an industrial tribunal, and thus leave tribunals freer to get on with the important cases that they have before them.

The part of the White Paper that relates to the hon. Gentleman's last point is only one of many policies in our Department. We are engaging in other inititatives which he and I will have many other opportunities to discuss. However, the fact is that since the spring of 1983 we have seen the creation of 985,000 — nearly 1 million — additional new jobs in the British economy. That has arisen because the British economy is expanding and because it is being made freer and more flexible in the operation of its labour market. That process must continue, and the White Paper is a small but important part of that.

Top Salaries Review Body

5.1 pm

Sir Kenneth Lewis (Stamford and Spalding): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. We now have the copies of the pay review bodies' reports and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor's letter. I notice that a large number of public servants will get quite good rises, especially those in the medical field, as from 1 July, which happens to be my birthday. It looks as though my hon. Friends and myself will be the only people to be left out. Will my right hon. Friend the Chancellor put that right by sending another letter to say that, in view of the bounty that is coming on my birthday, there can be something for me and my hon. Friends?

Mr. Speaker: I hope that the hon. Gentleman has a very happy birthday on 1 July.

Cyprus Secrets Trial (Calcutt Report)

5.2 pm

The Minister of State for the Armed Forces (Mr. John Stanley): Following the acquittal last year of eight service men from 9 Signal Regiment in Cyprus who had been charged under the Official Secrets Acts, I announced in the House on 29 October that there was to be an independent inquiry into the way in which the service police carried out their investigations of the eight men originally accused. Mr. David Calcutt QC agreed to conduct this inquiry. The House was also told that it was the intention that, subject to the usual security considerations, Mr. Calcutt's report on his inquiry would be published. The report has been published today, Cmnd. 9781.

Mr. Calcutt has concluded that the service police investigations, which he acknowledged involved special difficulties due to their sensitivity and complexity, were undertaken without any animosity or ill-will towards the service men concerned, and that none of the service men were subjected to any violence or threats of violence, or any form of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment.

Mr. Calcutt has, however, concluded that the custody of the eight service men was, for part of the time, unlawful and that, even after the service men had been lawfully arrested on holding charges, their continued custody was at least improper. The interviews by the service police with each of the eight service men mostly took place during these periods of unlawful and improper custody.

In the light of Mr. Calcutt's conclusions as to the lawfulness of the custody of the service men, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has concluded that in the case of seven of them he is prepared to make an ex gratia payment. The seven service men concerned are Senior Aircraftmen Kriehn, Lightowler, Owen and Payne, Lance-Corporal Glass and Signalmen Hardman and Tuffy. On their application, my right hon. Friend will ask Mr. Michael Ogden QC, who acts as an independent assessor for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, to make an independent assessment of the amount of the award in each case.

As regards the eighth service man, Senior Aircraftman Jones, Mr. Calcutt considered, on his construction of Air Force rules of procedure, that his custody was unlawful. Although the facts adduced in evidence before both Mr. Calcutt and the trial judge were essentially the same, the submissions addressed to them by counsel were very different. Indeed, before the trial judge, Senior Aircraftman Jones's counsel did not contend that the custody was unlawful. When the trial judge considered the same provisions of the Air Force rules of procedure, he accepted that Jones's custody was lawful. In these circumstances, since the trial judge found that Senior Aircraftman Jones's detention was lawful, it would be inappropriate to offer an ex gratia payment in his case. It is of course always open to him to pursue his remedies in the courts, should he be so advised.

Mr. Calcutt has also concluded that, as the number of days spent in custody increased, so the pressure which was exerted on each of the service men gradually built up and crossed over from what was at first proper to what he could only regard as becoming improper, and that the pressures which were ultimately exerted on each of the service men were such that these were likely to render unreliable

[Mr. John Stanley]

answers given or statements made by them. However, Mr. Calcutt also points out that the investigations carried out by the service police in Cyprus in February and March 1984 were difficult, sensitive and complex, and they would have created profound problems for anyone who was given the task of carrying them out. Mr. Calcutt concludes that, although he has pointed to some breaches of lawful and proper procedures, it would be unfair to be over-critical either of the investigating service police or of those who were advising them.

The Government fully recognise the difficult position in which the service investigators in the case were placed and that they were motivated solely by what they perceived to be their clear duty. The Government are also grateful to the service investigators for their full participation in Mr. Calcutt's inquiry, which was entirely of their own volition. I should also like to take this opportunity to make it quite clear that we continue to have full confidence in the integrity and professionalism of the royal military police and the RAF police who do difficult, complex and very important security work in many key defence areas.

Mr. Calcutt has recommended seven matters for further consideration. These are: the potential conflict between learning the nature, extent and full circumstances of any breach of security and bringing the offender to justice; the need to give at an early stage in an investigation clear guidance on the relative priority to be given to the counter-intelligence aspect and the criminal aspect of a security case; whether, in certain circumstances, the 48-hour maximum period allowed under current service procedures for suspects to be detained without charge should be capable of being extended; whether RAF Queen's regulation 1034 should be either annulled or amended; how far the rigid application of the "need to know" principle may have the effect of depriving a suspect of the protection which the law provides for him; the effect of classifying the routine documentation in security investigations; and whether investigations such as those leading up to the Cyprus trial should be conducted from the United Kingdom rather than overseas. The Government accept all Mr. Calcutt's recommendations for further consideration, and the House will be informed of the outcome of this further work.

As far as present practice is concerned, Mr. Calcutt acknowledges that the new code of practice for the treatment and questioning of persons by the service police has now been issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and that this may at least go some way towards overcoming some of the shortcomings revealed by the inquiry. In addition, the House will wish to know that RAF Queen's regulation 1034, which provides for a form of custody short of arrest, has been suspended, and that further instructions are being issued to clarify and re-emphasise the safeguards for individuals under investigation.

Finally, I should like to express our gratitude to Mr. Calcutt for conducting his inquiry both speedily and with great thoroughness, and for producing a rigorously argued and most valuable report.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): The House owes a debt to Mr. Calcutt for this report. In the short time that we have had to glance at it, it is apparent that the House will understand why the new Parliamentary Secretary, whom I congratulate on his appointment, moved the motion in the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill that it conclude its business before Mr. Calcutt reported. Given the cold, cruel and measured tones of Mr. Calcutt when he does not consider himself to be overly critical, I would hate to be at the receiving end of his tongue when he is.

This is one of the most devastating and horrific statements that I have ever read. It is about what happened to people described by Mr. Calcutt in paragraph 5.47 in the following terms:

"With the exception of Lance Corporal Glass, who was in his early thirties, all of the servicemen were young and inexperienced. One minor matter apart, none of them had ever been in any form of trouble. They had no previous criminal convictions. They were all young men of good character. They were, however, junior in rank, and military discipline requires orders by those of a higher rank to be obeyed."

They were caught up in a web of intrigue and circumstance, of bullying and of improper treatment. If we had seen that in a weekend horror film we should have said, "That is good fiction." For this to have happened to those men is one of the worst indictments that could be made. We strongly welcome the decision to make ex gratia payments to them, but no sum of money can compensate them for what they have been through, for careers ruined and reputations blemished. Thank God they had the benefit of a British jury.

I have read the carefully constructed statement by the Minister and one has to bear in mind the background against which it was constructed. It says that we must pay attention to the difficult problems surrounding this sort of inquiry. That almost suggests that this is the first time such a thing has happened in Cyprus. We have already had one section 1 Cyprus spy trial, at the Old Bailey—the Mata Hari and Aircraftman Davies trial. The people who investigated for that trial were used for the second trial and the first trial collapsed around the ears of the prosecution. The Government then sought another occasion and again we had the Old Bailey, Cyprus, sex, blackmail, young men who did not know what was happening to them, and forced confessions. But again, thank God, we had a British jury. We saw the Ministry of Defence turned down by a British jury about Ponting, Davies and these eight men. In some ways we have things for which to be grateful.

Let us look at some of the things Mr. Calcutt said. In paragraph 4.197 he says:

"I am of the view that the service police did caution the suspects, as they assert, though whether it meant anything to the servicemen (and whether they realised that they need not answer questions) may be open to doubt."

In paragraph 4.198 he says:

"I am quite satisfied that none of the servicemen was subjected to any form of deep interrogation or to any inhuman treatment."

He further says in paragraph 4.199:

"I have no doubt that the service police interviewed the suspects in a firm and vigorous way. I believe that accounts of events were suggested to the various servicemen as being the truth, and that denials often resulted in relentless and aggressive questioning."

He says in paragraphs 4.202 and 4.203:

"Taken together, these coincidences and inconsistencies tend to support the view that the approach of the service police during the interviews was very far from simply being a matter of waiting for the servicemen themselves to volunteer information.

There was other evidence that the service police were willing to resort to threats during the interviews. Threats featured in the evidence of most of those who were interviewed by the service

police. The threats mentioned both at the trial and the Inquiry were of a similar pattern: first, prolonged incarceration in the event of failure to co-operate; second, threats to involve a suspect as a major spy punishable by a long prison sentence if he did not admit to being a minor spy, which would only be punishable by a short sentence; and threats to involve the suspect's family or his home in the event of failure to co-operate."

Those are all classic interrogation procedures and all meant to build up pressure. Therefore, the question one must ask is, what was improper and what was proper? Where was the line to be drawn and at what point do pressures of this sort on young men so described become degrading treatment and be seen to be so?

There are other questions that have not been answered by Mr. Calcutt. First, who manufactured the evidence to which they were forced to confess? Secondly, why are no disciplinary procedures being instigated against the people involved in these investigations? Thirdly, are the people and the House not entitled to know about what happened at that base, what was going on? Why were so many of the men who served there purged from the regiment and transferred elsewhere? Fourthly, there is ministerial responsibility in this matter; why is someone in the Government not taking the proper course and thinking about resigning?

Mr. Stanley: The extremely exaggerated and selective accounts of the Calcutt report given by the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) do not constitute a balanced view of the report, which I have read from cover to cover. If the hon. Gentleman has not done so already, I hope that he will read the report from cover to cover, because it is only by doing that that one can be in a position to take a balanced view.

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for acknowledging the good work carried out by Mr. Calcutt. We endorse that acknowledgement. Mr. Calcutt has made a detailed and rigorous study in a remarkably short time and I am glad that the hon. Gentleman shares our views on that.

The view taken by the majority on the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill is fully vindicated by the Calcutt report. It is quite evident from the report that there is no question of the primary legislation on service discipline being called into question. It is quite apparent from Mr. Calcutt's recommendations that, if there are to be changes, they will be made to existing procedures and will almost certainly be made by administrative action, by amendment to Queen's regulations or by secondary legislation. If by chance there are to be amendments that require primary legislation, they are likely to be made in Home Office legislation to which the Ministry of Defence would be joined. It is quite evident from a careful reading of Mr. Calcutt's report that he does not call into question the primary legislation underpinning the services discipline Acts.

The hon. Gentleman said that the service men had been subjected to degrading treatment. I must make it quite clear to him and to the House that Mr. Calcutt's conclusion is quite to the contrary. I repeat what I said in my statement which reflects the conclusions of Mr. Calcutt. I said:

"none of the servicemen were subjected to any violence or threats of violence, or any form of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment."

That is Mr. Calcutt's conclusion.

The hon. Gentleman also spoke about disciplinary action and I should like to tell the House the conclusions that we have reached on that. As the House would expect, the question of disciplinary action against any of those involved in the custody decision, which has subsequently been held to be unlawful and improper, has been fully considered. As Mr. Calcutt's report shows, the unlawful custody arose principally through an initial interpretation of QR(RAF) 1034 which we are satisfied was given in good faith, but which was subsequently held to be unsound. As I said in my statement, that regulation has been suspended, but in these circumstances and in the absence of evidence of any culpable action or neglect on the part of any individual, it has been concluded that there are no proper grounds for disciplinary action on this score.

The question of disciplinary action against the service investigators has been considered carefully, and the conclusion of the service authorities is that there is no basis to take disciplinary action against any individuals for culpable action or neglect.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I am aware that this important report has been published. I ask hon. Members to ask questions rather than to indulge in debating points.

Sir Antony Buck (Colchester, North): Both sides of the House have expressed gratitude to Mr. Calcutt for the thoroughness of the report and the speed with which he compiled it. We are also grateful to my right hon. Friend the Minister for coming to the House and making this statement. Will he hive in on two further points? When will we have an opportunity to debate the matter further? I presume we may do so during our debate on the White Paper, or during single service debates. Will he hive in on the recommendations contained in the final paragraph of the report, where Mr. Calcutt suggests that matters should be investigated from the United Kingdom rather than locally, if, unfortunately, there should ever be a repetition, and where he casts doubts on the efficacy of QR1034? I think the Minister said that it was to be suspended. Is it proposed to be abolished in due course? Will the Minister clarify the position of the regulation?

Mr. Stanley: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. Further debates are a matter for the usual channels, but, obviously, as the matter affects the armed services, if hon. Members wish to make comments on this when we have a debate on the defence White Paper, that would seem to be an opportunity. The single service debates provide a further opportunity. In addition, the Opposition have their own time.

On the specific recommendation that such inquiries should in future be conducted from the United Kingdom, as I said in my statement, that is one of the seven recommendations for further consideration which Mr. Calcutt has made, and we shall obviously address that one extremely carefully.

QR(RAF) 1034 is suspended. The question of its future must be seen in the context of some other matters that Mr. Calcutt has given us to consider. In view of the criticism which has been made of that regulation, I am certain that, if it were to be restored in any shape or form, it would be in a way which would meet the criticisms made in the report.

Mr. Tam Dalyell (Linlithgow): Is the Minister satisfied with the conduct of Flight Sergeant Sheehan? May I ask the Attorney-General to give a full answer to question No. 238 on the Order Paper today, particularly on the geographical limitations of Detective-Superintendent Eames?

Mr. Stanley: I am sure that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General has heard the hon. Gentleman's request. On the individual to whom the hon. Gentleman refers, I have already covered that matter in what I said in relation to service discipline against the service investigators.

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): Does my right hon. Friend accept that I would not wish to say anything at this point about SAC Owen, until I have had an opportunity to talk to him and to consider the matter further? Does my right hon. Friend accept that the most important sentence in the whole of this most impressive report is that which states:

"In our society, it is for Parliament and not for investigators, however genuinely and well motivated, to decide if and when, and in what circumstances, the interests of an individual should be subordinated to the interests of society as a whole."

Will he bear that wise maxim firmly in mind?

Mr. Stanley: Certainly the whole Government would fully endorse that extremely important maxim. In view of my hon. Friend's constituent, I should like to tell the House the position of each of the eight service men. As of today the position is as follows. Four service men, Lance Corporal Glass, Signalman Hardman, Signalman Tuffy and SAC Payne, have already left the services on completion of their engagements; and a fifth service man, SAC Lightowler, has already left the RAF prematurely at his own request. Extremely careful consideration has been given to the future of the remaining three service men, SAC Jones, SAC Owen, and SAC Kriehn. Today they are being advised that the Air Force Board is being recommended to consider their discharge from the RAF. The reasons for the recommendation are being given in writing to the service men. They are being advised that they may make representations to the Air Force Board, and use the redress of grievance procedure before the board comes to a final conclusion.

Mr. James Wallace (Orkney and Shetland): We on the alliance Bench wish to express our gratitude to Mr. Calcutt for what, at a brief glance, seems to be a thorough report, which will certainly merit study during the coming days. I do not think that Opposition Members on the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill were as convinced as the Minister and his whipped hon. Friends that there is nothing in the report which would have been a cause for proper study by the Committee.

While we acknowledge the ex gratia payments made to seven of the men involved, at first sight it appears petty and mean that, on the technicality that a point was not taken at the trial, no payment has been offered to SAC Jones. Will the Minister explain why he considers it inappropriate?

He has expressed his views on the lack of disciplinary charges brought against the men involved. While he has given an explanation about QR(RAF)1034, can he expand on why the commanding officers were given no discretion under rule 4 of the rules and regulations regarding commanding officers' discretion to hold men in close or open custody? Who refused to allow them discretion? Have disciplinary procedures been considered in respect of those senior officers? As the code of guidance, under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, provides for disciplinary proceedings against police officers who breach the code of guidance, in future will there be disciplinary procedure against service personnel who are in breach of any of the provisions of their codes of guidance?

Mr. Stanley: On the hon. Gentleman's last point, I can certainly assure him that if any member of the armed forces is responsible for a breach which represents culpability, he is liable to discipline under the services discipline Acts. On his point about the Select Committee, the majority of members of the Armed Forces Bill Select Committee pointed out that the issue was not whether the matter might be studied by it, but whether it raised questions for the primary legislation underpinning the services discipline Acts, which were before the Committee. The Committee, in coming to its majority conclusion, was mindful of the fact that it is open to the Defence Select Committee, which is a permanent Committee, to look on a more long-term basis at any of the aspects of service affairs raised by the Calcutt report.

SAC Jones's eligibility for an ex gratia payment was not decided on a technicality; as I said in my statement, it was the fact that the trial judge found SAC Jones's detention to be lawful. That is the basis on which we had to conclude that an ex gratia payment would not be appropriate in his case. I am aware of the background to the hon. Gentleman's question about rule 4. Obviously, it will be considered in the context of the wider recommendations that Mr. Calcutt has made.

Mr. Cyril D. Townsend (Bexleyheath): Will my right hon. Friend continue to make it clear inside and outside the House that the service police had abundant reason for thinking that a serious security breach had taken place? Is it not remarkable that, in such a meticulous report of 165 pages, so few recommendations for improvement are made, and that even they are couched in general terms?

Mr. Stanley: My hon. Friend makes two extremely important points. In considering the background to the Calcutt report and forming its views on it, the House must be mindful of what Mr. Calcutt says in the opening sentence of paragraph 5.2:

"I am satisfied that throughout the investigations the service police had reasonable — indeed abundant — grounds for believing that a breach of security had occurred in 9 Signal Regiment."

That is the fundamental backcloth to approaching the problem.

My hon. Friend's second point was extremely valid and reassuring. After the detailed and thorough investigation made by Mr. Calcutt, he has proposed seven recommendations, all of which are in the form of considerations for further study.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): May I ask my right hon. Friend to clarify his attitude to the ex gratia payment to Senior Aircraftman Jones? The Minister bases his decision not to make such a payment on the fact that the trial judge was satisfied that this person's detention was lawful. But paragraph 5.30 of the Calcutt report states:

"My conclusion is that SAC Jones was lawfully arrested on 6 February but that the failure to charge him within 48 hours in accordance with rule 4 of the Rules of Procedure was a breach of that rule and rendered his continued detention until 8 March unlawful."

My right hon. Friend must agree that, if he is prepared to accept so many aspects of the Calcutt report, that point should be considered, too.

The most troubling and worrying aspect of the report is one which, in the interests of time, he did not mention:

that the investigators, worthy and conscientious though they may have been, were apparently completely blind to their conflict of interest. Understandably, they wanted to find out what had happened in terms of the security breach. In their enthusiasm, they seem to have been completely unaware that they had to consider the rights of the people whom they were investigating.

Bearing that in mind, along with what the report states about unlawful detention, does my right hon. Friend accept that, in such cases, he should not rely on the legalities and be too strict in his interpretation of the criteria for ex gratia payments? This man was acquitted. For at least part of the time, he was detained unlawfully. It is clear from the face of the report that the investigators did not consider that the defendants also had rights. Is this not a case where, if all of the others are to be given ex gratia payments, Jones should be given one too?

Mr. Stanley: I do not believe that my hon. Friend is doing the investigators full justice—he will wish to read the report from cover to cover—when he says that they were unconcerned about the rights of those whom they were investigating. No possible construction of the Calcutt report bears that out.

I fully acknowledge, as is brought out carefully by Mr. Calcutt, that there was a conflict between the counter-intelligence requirements to establish the extent of any breach of security that had occurred, and the requirements to ensure a basis for successful criminal prosecution. Mr. Calcutt has drawn attention to the need to provide guidance to investigators on how to deal with that conflict. We shall consider it carefully. It would not be right to say that the service investigators ignored the individual rights of those whom they were investigating.

My hon. Friend mentioned Senior Aircraftman Jones' entitlement to an ex gratia payment. He will understand that there is a clear difference of legal opinion on this matter. He will understand that I and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence have taken the most carefully considered advice that is available to us, which is that, in view of the decision of the trial judge that Senior Aircraftman Jones's detention was lawful, it would be wrong to make an ex gratia payment in his case.

Dr. Norman A. Godman (Greenock and Port Glasgow): As someone who served his national service with the royal military police, I listened to the Minister with sadness and regret. I was trained to treat suspects humanely. The Minister said that, in this case, we are discussing the unlawful custody of the men. Paragraph 6.3 states that none of the service men was told of his right to legal advice. That is a scandal. In the light of this case, will the Minister bring to the attention of the commanding officers of military police and serving police units the importance of strict adherence to the code of practice on suspects' rights?

Mr. Stanley: I assure the hon. Gentleman that we are doing that. As I said in my statement, we are issuing further instructions to clarify and re-emphasise the safeguards for individuals under investigation. I assure him that we attach the highest priority to the strictest adherence to the codes of guidance issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Michael Marshall (Arundel): Does my right hon. Friend accept that I have only just heard the recommendation for discharge in respect of Senior Aircraftman Wayne Kriehn? My right hon. Friend has made, as he always does, a courteous effort to give advice on the matter. I must consider my position in the light of what he announced this afternoon.

Reverting to general principles, may I ask my right hon. Friend to accept that my constituent, Senior Aircraftman Kriehn, has suffered the grave injustice of unlawful detention, improper pressure, the failure, for the best part of a year, to give information to his family on the length of detention, and isolation from officers known to him? For many months, I and my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) referred to those matters in correspondence with the Minister. I mention this not because I wish to say, "I told you so," but because I wish the Minister to say whether he believes that this shows a problem in the system that does not seem to be covered by the recommendations.

There is no ministerial intervention or senior officer intervention in the present system; nor would there be in any future system. Will my right hon. Friend give careful consideration to that aspect, to prevent another such tragedy?

Mr. Stanley: I acknowledge that my hon. Friend has been sedulous in drawing our attention to the anxieties of his constituent, Senior Aircraftman Kriehn. As for the hardships that he suffered, I assure my hon. Friend that Mr. Ogden will make his assessment of the ex gratia payment against the background of the Calcutt report.

On ministerial and senior officer involvement, my hon. Friend will be aware that the ultimate responsibility for disciplinary matters for the three services lies with the service boards, on which are represented the most senior officers of the three services, and Ministers. He will understand that it would not be appropriate, remotely practical or desirable for Ministers to become involved in the detailed handling of individual cases. We fully accept the responsibility that lies ultimately on Ministers to ensure that the instructions, guidance, regulations and, indeed, the legislation which apply when suspects are being investigated by service policemen are of a standard that would be fully acceptable to the House and comparable with what applies in the civilian sector.

Dr. Keith Hampson (Leeds, North-West): My right hon. Friend will accept that Mr. Calcutt stresses that the delicate line between proper and improper behaviour was crossed. Equally, Mr. Calcutt has no doubts that the investigation and the trial were justified, despite the claims made afterwards by the press and the Opposition that the trial and inquiry were a waste of time and public money. On the contrary, there was a major security leak from that base. In the light of all that has happened, is my right hon. Friend content that there will be no further breaches of security?

Mr. Stanley: No further legal proceedings under the Official Secrets Act 1911 have been taken or are under consideration in relation to this case. I also remind my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine), the previous Secretary of State for Defence, took immediate steps to consider 9 Signal Regiment and its security arrangements to ensure that changes were made which would rectify the weaknesses of security which may have emerged.

[Mr. Stanley]

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has asked the Security Commission to examine the security of this and other similar units. I believe that everything possible and everything that is reasonable has been done to try to learn security lessons from this case.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): Does my right hon. Friend agree that, with the exception of RAF regulation 1034, this report suggests that the new code of conduct for the interrogation of suspects under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, followed by the Armed Forces Bill, will deal with many of the problems which have arisen in this case such as the right to legal advice? The report totally vindicates the decision of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill not to pursue inquiries until this matter had come before the House.

Mr. Stanley: I believe that my hon. Friend is correct about the decision of the Select Committee. I endorse what he has said. The changes to the codes of guidance under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 should do a certain amount to deal with the problems which have arisen in this case. We are anxious that fresh instructions should be issued to highlight the importance of making certain that clear priority is given to protecting the legal rights of individuals who are investigated.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Will my right hon. Friend reconsider the position of SAC Jones? There has been a manifest injustice in his case. The trial judge apparently ruled that the detention was lawful. By virtue of his acquittal, SAC Jones has no locus, no standing and no right of appeal, but Mr. Calcutt's report shows that the detention was unlawful. The matter was examined with great care by Mr. Calcutt. He was investigating as well as drawing conclusions. Mr. Calcutt clearly states that it was unlawful. Therefore, there is no justification for treating SAC Jones differently from the others. Justice ought to be seen to be done and, as a result of the inquiry, all the individuals should be treated equally.

Mr. Stanley: I am sure that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that Mr. Calcutt's report and inquiry do not constitute an appeal in a judicial sense. Mr. Calcutt and the trial judge made different legal interpretations. I assure my hon. Friend and others who have spoken on this point that, before this conclusion was reached, the most careful considerations had been given and the most careful advice taken.

Mr. McNamara: It seems to be common ground in the House that the case of SAC Jones should be looked at again. Despite the careful advice which has been given, I would be grateful if the Minister could say, having heard the opinions of hon. Members, that he will reconsider the case.

The letters which were sent to the Minister by the hon. Members for Arundel (Mr. Marshall) and for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) raise an important issue. I understand that the Minister could not interfere in the judicial procedure, but, if the matter went to the Air Force Board, was no notice taken of the concern which had been expressed in letters to the Minister from constituency Members regarding what was happening to people who were under inquiry? May we know the grounds upon which three men, who were found not guilty by a jury and who wish to remain in Her Majesty's Armed Forces, are being recommended for dismissal? That almost suggests that, despite the trial, despite everything which has come up before and despite the verdict of the jury, the Ministry of Defence still thinks that those men were guilty.

Mr. Stanley: I can give the hon. Member the absolute assurance that, when any hon. Member writes to the Ministry and conveys a complaint on behalf of an individual service man, that complaint is carefully investigated. A careful report is made to Ministers before they reply to an hon. Member. I assure the hon. Gentleman that that is done in each and every case.

With regard to the grounds for dismissal of the remaining three senior aircraftmen still in the service, the hon. Gentleman, and, I hope, the whole House, will understand that it would be improper for me to say what those grounds are. The service men concerned are being informed of this in writing, and what use they make of that information is entirely up to them. It would not be right for me to indicate the grounds. I wish to make it clear that meticulous care has been taken to disregard any matters which were contested or disputed in the Official Secrets Act trial.

BILL PRESENTED

POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE (AMENDMENT) (NO. 2)

Mr. Peter Pike presented a Bill to amend the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to establish an entitlement for a complainant to have access to the report of the police on the substance of his or her complaint; to make further provision in relation to the complaints procedure; and for connected purposes. And the same was read the First time; and ordered to be read a Second time Friday 6 June and to be printed. [Bill 166.]

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY DOCUMENTS

Ordered,

That European Community Document No. 4676/86, laying down definitions of fishing vessels' characteristics and measurements, be referred to a Standing Committee on European Community Documents.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

PATENTS, DESIGNS AND MARKS BILL *[Lords]:*

Ordered,

That the Patents, Designs and Marks Bill *[Lords]* be referred to a Second Reading Committee.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

Orders of the Day

Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Mr. Speaker: Before I call the Paymaster General, I should announce to the House that I have selected the reasoned amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition.

5.48 pm

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment (Mr. Kenneth Clarke): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill has two major purposes. First, it makes a number of amendments to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to bring it into line with European Community directives on equal treatment. Secondly, it removes sex discrimination in hours of work laid down in statutes which have for many years outlived their original purpose.

The common thread in the various provisions is the Government's genuine commitment to promote equal opportunities in employment between men and women and, in particular, to eliminate all unreasonable discrimination on the grounds of sex. This commitment is consistent with our general aim of improving the flexibility of the labour market. The removal of barriers which hinder either men or women from making their full contribution to the economy will mark a significant step towards the achievement of greater efficiency, competitiveness and prosperity.

The first two clauses stem from a judgment of the European Court of Justice which ruled that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 did not fully comply with the European Community equal treatment directive. The judgment found the 1975 Act deficient on three counts, covering its exemption of private households and of small firms, its application to collective agreements and the rules of undertakings and of independent occupations.

Recognising that the judgment placed on us an obligation to amend the Act, we carried out an extensive consultative exercise last autumn to establish how this could be done in a manner best fitted to our national circumstances and practice. The Bill reflects the outcome of these consultations, in which we were especially grateful to the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Confederation of British Industry and the Trades Union Congress for their comments and the way in which they presented them, even if it was not possible to reach general agreement on all of the issues.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way so early in his speech.

Bearing in mind what he said about there being an EEC obligation to introduce this legislation, and in view of the process of consultation that has been undertaken, will my right hon. and learned Friend say how far he is convinced that there is a legitimate role for the law in this area and what evidence he feels that there is of the success of previous efforts at law-making in trying to do away with different types of discrimination? How satisfied are he and the Government in this regard, or is this merely a matter of complying with a European Court ruling?

Mr. Clarke: My hon. Friend raises wide issues and asks my opinion about how far the law is relevant to the subject of equal opportunities. The House accepted the principle that there was a role for the law in race relations and sex discrimination many years ago. We have the 1975 Act, and successive Governments have believed that they have complied with the equal treatment directive, which they have followed. The Bill would merely amend the law to comply with the judgment and ensure that we match its requirements more directly.

I see that my hon. Friend is sceptical about the legal approach. I go along with him to the extent that the law cannot completely remove prejudice and unfairness in personal relations between people in any society, least of all in a free society such as ours, but I believe that the law has a useful role to play.

When people can demonstrate that they are the victims of unfair discrimination which the bulk of society would say was unfair, it is right that there should be some form of legal machinery that gives them a remedy. We cannot change human nature, but the law has some role to play in protecting individuals in their workplace from the consequences of the worst aspects of human nature. That is what we are trying to do.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): I am most grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend for giving way. It is not sexual prejudice or otherwise.

Was the list of consultations that he gave complete or did he speak to the Institute of Personnel Management, chambers of commerce an others at the sharp end of the operation?

Mr. Clarke: I named three of the larger and better known institutions. The Equal Opportunities Commission had to be consulted, and the CBI and the TUC are concerned with hours of work and the like. We consulted the Institute of Personnel Management and a wide range of other bodies. The ramifications of legislation such as this are such that I am sure that it will transpire that we have missed out some relevant body which we ought to have consulted. Whenever possible, however, we have consulted all those that are likely to be affected.

I shall give the House a quick guide to the clauses. Clause 1 repeals section 6(3) of the 1975 Act, which exempts private households and businesss with five or fewer employees from the requirement not to discriminate in employment. The clause makes a new, more limited, exception for private households. This will protect an employer's freedom to choose a man or woman for a job which involves living or working in a private home where there could be quite reasonable objection to someone of the other sex having such physical or social contact with a person living in the home, or the knowledge of intimate details of such a person's life, which the job is likely to entail.

This part of the Bill seeks to strike a balance between contrasting considerations which were clearly present in the judgment. The court concluded that the present general exemption for employment in private households was too wide, but acknowledged that the principle of respect for private life was fundamental and could be decisive for the treatment of certain kinds of private household employment. We have no wish to bring the law governing public employment relationships into people's private living arrangements. I am sure that the overwhelming

[Mr. Clarke]

majority of public opinion and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) would agree that people should be free to choose the sex of employees who will be closely involved in their home life. I hope that the wording of the clause, which has been improved in another place, safeguards that principle.

Clause 1 also removes the exemption for firms with five or fewer employees. This is necessary to comply with the equal treatment directive. We agree, of course, that it is not in any way reasonable for such firms to practise sex discrimination. Discrimination is unfair and inefficient in a business of any size. We still question whether it is really appropriate to seek the objective of equal treatment by applying to all small firms a law designed to meet the circumstances of larger employers. The Labour party presumably recognised that when it included this exemption in the 1975 Act. Small firms play a vital part in the creation of wealth and new employment, and we want them to be able to concentrate on making their businesses grow with the minimum of rules and regulations. For that reason, we have proposed in the European Community that member states should have the power to exempt very small enterprises from national provisions implementing the equal treatment directive.

We are anxious to give as much help as we can to small firms which will have to comply with the minutia of sex discrimination law for the first time, although I hope that they already comply with the spirit of it. Our Department will therefore give priority to issuing simplified explanatory guidance following the passage of the Bill, and we shall ensure that our small firms service can give informed advice.

Before I leave clause 1, I should say that it has been improved in another place by the addition of a provision concerning partnerships. At present, it is unlawful for firms consisting of six or more partners to discriminate in the selection or treatment of partners. In future, the Sex Discrimination Act will apply to partnerships of all sizes. This is a logical extension of the clause which reflects women's marked entry into self-employment in the past few years. Between 1983 and 1985, the number of self-employed women in the United Kingdom rose by some 25 per cent.

Clause 2 is also designed to bring our equality laws into line with European Community directives. It is concerned with contractual matters, and the House will have an opportunity to discuss its technicalities in Committee. The European Court judgment requires us to make void discriminatory provisions in collective agreements, internal rules of undertakings and rules governing the independent occupations and professions. The court accepted that our law partly implemented this aspect of the equal treatment directive through section 77 of the present Sex Discrimination Act. That section makes void discriminatory terms in contracts—which would include a legally binding collective agreement—but we need to make corresponding provision for agreements and rules which are not legally enforceable.

Although the judgment concerned only the EC equal treatment directive, there is a parallel requirement in the equal pay directive. Clause 2 therefore amends section 77 of the Sex Discrimination Act to make void any term of a collective agreement, whether or not legally enforceable, and any rule made by an employer for his or her employees or prospective employees in so far as it would result in a breach of either the Sex Discrimination Act or the Equal Pay Act 1970. The same applies to any rule made by an organisation of employers or workers, a professional or trade association or a body which confers qualifications. The voiding of discriminatory terms and rules will not impair employees' rights under their contracts of employment, which are specifically protected by the clause.

As for the remaining clauses, perhaps I might quote the Bill's long title. It would

"provide for the removal of certain restrictions applying to the working hours and other working conditions of women; and repeal the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954".

Their origins, too, can be traced back to the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. In establishing the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Act included among its functions a duty to keep under review, in consultation with the Health and Safety Commission, provisions of health and safety at work legislation which require men and women to be treated differently. A prominent part of such legislation is that concerning hours of work.

Following a review of the legislation, the EOC issued in 1979 its report entitled "Health and Safety Legislation: Should We Distinguish Between Men and Women?" As for hours of work legislation, its answer to the question that it had itself posed was a resounding no.

The EOC's report went rather wider than hours of work legislation. It dealt, for example, with safeguards against exposure to lead and to radiation in the workplace where a woman's reproductive capacity or the safety of her unborn child might be put at risk. None of these areas is in any way touched upon by the Bill.

I return to the issue of hours of work. Current legislation distinguishes between men and women in ways on which I shall elaborate shortly; how can this discrimination be removed? In the broadest possible terms, we face a choice. We can remove restriction altogether by repeal or we can extend the present legislation so that the restrictions continue to apply but to men and women alike.

There have been six long years of consultations with interested parties following the EOC's report and so far no consensus on the best way forward can be reached, and there is little practical likelihood that it will. In particular, the views of employer and trade union representatives on the Health and Safety Commission could not be fully reconciled. No one has ever suggested in all the discussions that women, for some reason, are more susceptible than men to any adverse effects which might stem from night work or working long hours. Equally, no one suggests nowadays that women are in greater need of protection. The origin of the requirements that relate to the working hours of women must go back to a time when society widely believed that the weaker sex required greater protection. As I have said, that is no longer anyone's opinion, as far as we can judge from the consultations.

There is no evidence that the existing restrictions are making any effective contribution to the health and safety of women working in factories or of men in baking. The restrictions did, however, clearly represent obstacles to women wishing to broaden their experience in pursuit of career opportunities, and just as clearly were an unnecessary complication for employers wishing to organise the hours of their work force to optimum effect.

The Government have decided that there must be a resolution of these issues. We cannot have discriminatory legislation on hours of work remaining on the statute book. The Government concluded last year that further consideration of the EOC's 1979 recommendations by the parties most affected would be unlikely to achieve consensus against the background of six years' continuing disagreement. The Government therefore decided upon repeal of the existing hours of work legislation.

The Bill has reached this House from another place with this intention broadly intact, although it now contains further provisions, whose introduction was opposed by the Government in the other place and to which I shall return in a moment. It was also argued in another place that rather than repeal the existing legislation, we should give more sympathetic consideration to its extension to men. I should like to examine this contention now in a little more detail.

The argument runs that long hours and, in particular, night working, can have a deleterious effect on workers' health, welfare and social well-being. It is therefore argued that it is the role of the legislator to protect the worker from his employer, and presumably often from himself, as it is not unusual for the worker to seek night work or overtime as a boost to earnings.

Nobody — certainly not this Government — would dispute that excessively long hours of onerous night working might bring adverse effects. We do not believe, however, that the agreements entered into voluntarily between employers and their work forces on hours of work have this as their end result in the circumstances of today. We certainly see no point in extending to men the rigid restrictions which currently apply to women.

The existing restrictions for women reflect the circumstances of the time of the legislation's introduction, when five 12-hour day or night shifts, or sometimes these hours spread over six-day working, were the norm, with significant overtime working in addition. This legislation dates from the mid-19th century, and as late as 1900 hours worked averaged almost 54 each week. But the overall average in 1985 was just over 40. In the present age of new technology, computer-controlled equipment tends to work longer each day, while those who tend it work shorter average hours, but need at the same time to operate more flexible working patterns. We are accordingly seeing the introduction into manufacturing industry of flexitime arrangements along the lines which have become familiar in white-collar employment.

Information technology is changing the nature of work in the factory to something more closely akin to office work than the traditional production line grind. The flexible working arrangements necessary to encourage these developments, especially when based on a flexible working year, but even when based on a monthly or weekly cycle, would clearly be impeded by the existing rigid restrictions applying to women.

Mr. John Evans (St. Helens, North): Is the right hon. and learned Gentleman aware that employees in the baking industry work longer hours than any other group of workers in our society apart from merchant navy seamen? The average working week in the baking industry is in excess of 60 hours. Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman expect repeal to increase or reduce those hours? Would it not have been better to allow the legislation to remain on the statute book, bearing in mind that there is no demand for its repeal from major employers or the trade unions, and to extend the protection that it affords to women?

Mr. Clarke: I assure the hon. Gentleman that I have first-hand experience of night working in the baking industry. Baking has always been a fairly nocturnal activity as people buy in the morning fresh bread that has been cooked for them the night before. As I understand it, however, modern technology and newer types of bread are rather reducing that practice. I do not claim typical experience, but between leaving school and going to university I worked for a couple of months as a night worker in a bakery. I did all sorts of unpleasant jobs, such as greasing tins in the middle of the night. My experience was as a worker in the industry. I opted deliberately for permanent night work and sought the maximum amount of overtime, and I think that many workers still do that.

Collective agreements already override the legislation in a large part of the baking industry, and I do not believe that we are still in a position in which it is necessary to protect bakery workers from exploitation, which was intended to be suppressed when the legislation was put on to the statute book. In practice and reality, the legislation is rather liked by trade unions in the industry. It tends to ensure that the industry remains unionised because there can be exemptions only as a result of collective agreements. It improves the bargaining position of the unions vis-à-vis the employers as they negotiate exemptions from the Act. I do not believe that we are protecting downtrodden workers in the baking industry, even though I do not base my argument on a 20-year-old recollection of those I worked alongside during the night and on overtime, when there was legislation to protect us.

There is a gap between the legislation on women's working hours and some of the defences of it and what actually exists as a result of modern social conditions. I shall spell out the complexities of the restrictions on women's hours which are imposed by just one piece of legislation, the Factories Act 1961. Clause 4 provides for the repeal of the provisions, along with similar provisions in the Hours of Employment (Convention) Act 1936 and in the Mines and Quarries Act 1954. These restrictions currently cover only 1·5 million women, working mainly in manufacturing industry, out of a total of 9 million who are employed within the labour force. It seems that no one has thought it necessary to protect the remaining 7·5 million women by means of the present curious requirements.

The 1·5 million women who are covered by the collection of legislation to which I have referred cannot work more than nine hours a day within an 11-hour period of employment, subject to a maximum of 48 hours a week. They cannot start before 7 am or finish later than 8 pm, or 1 pm on Saturdays. Sunday working is prohibited. The maximum continuous spell of work is limited to four and a half hours, or five hours if a 10-minute break is allowed. Any employer with women and young people on his books must post a notice setting out the full schedule of their starting times, finishing times and intervals, which the legislation stipulates should apply to all alike.

This is not the whole story. The legislation provides for some exceptions and variations. I have so far explained the detailed instructions applying to factories working a six-day week, but the permitted daily hours are somewhat extended for factories normally working a five-day week.

[Mr. Clarke]

The legislation also allows for each factory the working of "overtime" — which is different from that normally regarded as overtime for payment purposes — during six hours in any week, not exceeding 100 hours during the calendar year and confined to 25 weeks during the year, as long as for each employee the total daily working hours do not exceed 10, and provided that the maximum period of employment does not exceed 12 hours in a day. Finishing times for overtime can be no later than 9 pm, but still 1 pm on Saturdays.

There is provision for yet further extensions to the hours that may be worked by the making of regulations, providing that the Secretary of State is satisfied that work in any class of factory is

"subject to seasonal or other special pressure".

For instance, regulations permit the employment of women from 6 am if they work in a laundry, a milk or cheese factory, or are employed in bread, flour, confectionery or sausage manufacture.

I have inflicted on the House this tedious recital of the legislation on the statute book because it clarifies the choice between whether we should repeal all of it if it applies to only 1·5 million out of 9 million working women, or whether we should apply it all to men involved in similar activities. I believe that repeal is obviously the answer.

There is also provision enabling the Health and Safety Executive to permit an employer to run his factory on a shift basis. That is all prescribed in the legislation in a detailed way which obviously inhibits the flexibility of employers engaged in particular manufacturing processes. In this day and age it is quite absurd for the law to meddle in such a detailed and prescriptive manner in the arrangements which employers and employees need to agree for the running of any enterprise. We live in a world in which flexibility is increasingly at a premium. Indeed, the legislation avoids ultimate absurdity by making provisions under which the Health and Safety Executive can give special exemption orders from those detailed restrictions, renewable on an annual basis, to employers who argue increased efficiency in justification. The Health and Safety Executive has not in recent years refused such a request. In 1984-85, more than 4,000 special exemption orders were granted, covering more than 200,000 of the 1·5 million women in manufacturing. Almost half those exemption orders allowed some night working by women.

Far from being an argument for retaining or extending the existing legislation, the "flexibility" provided by this exemption procedure if anything strengthens the case for repeal. Had there been anything to be gained by these restrictions, ready exemptions by the granting of such orders largely neutralised any effect the legislation might otherwise have had. We are left with a near-meaningless rigmarole of complex restrictions which may be lifted by invoking a bureaucratic procedure at the cost of the employer's, and incidentally the Health and Safety Executive's, time and energy, with no obvious benefit to anybody.

Opposition Members will no doubt argue that, in spite of the dearth of prosecutions or other enforcement action, it is only the existence of the legislation which deters the rogue employer from transgressing or, where he applies for a special exemption order, which persuades him to be reasonable in his requests. I quite frankly find that incredible.

Mr. Evans: The Minister should wait until we have made our arguments before he starts replying to them.

Mr. Clarke: I look forward to hearing those arguments, but the complexities I have described are impossible to defend. I am no longer even able to think of arguments that could be raised in defence of the present legislation.

Clause 5 repeals the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954.

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): In Committee, do the Government intend to remove clause 3?

Mr. Clarke: Yes. If I remember correctly, that clause was inserted into the Bill in the other place. It seeks to postpone the implementation of part of the legislation in the hope that a consensus might still emerge from the discussions. We will listen to any arguments put forward both on Second Reading and in Committee, but at present I believe that the clause represents the triumph of hope over experience, and will merely delay a desirable reform.

But the House is impatiently waiting for me to return to the subject of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954. That Act, which regulates the hours which men may work within the baking industry and specifically excludes women from its provisions, would, with the repeal of the restrictions on women's hours of work envisaged by the Bill, regulate the work of men in bakeries while women's hours were totally unregulated. I hope that all hon. Members agree that that would clearly be ridiculous.

Currently, exemptions may be given under the baking Act by the Secretary of State, which suspend the statutory restrictions on hours of work. These exemption orders in effect substitute regimes of hours of work forming parts of different collective agreements covering different employers and unions within the industry. The six collective agreements on the strength of which past Secretaries of State have granted exemptions over the years now set the hours of work of over two thirds of the industry.

The Act was introduced initially not out of concern for the effects of shift patterns in the industry on the operatives' health or safety, but because of the long history of weaknesses in the industry's machinery for collective bargaining. It is the Government's view that this weakness is no longer apparent and that there is no longer any justification for trying to alter this industry's collective bargaining by statute, when in no other similar industry is this done. This Act was ripe for repeal, and the other repeals envisaged by the Bill make this the suitable and necessary occasion.

The unions in the industry and the Equal Opportunities Commission, both in the 1979 report and during the recent consultations on the Bill's proposals, have argued for the Act's extension to women instead of its repeal. The Federation of Plant Bakers strongly favoured repeal while other employees' federations were generally supportive of this view. The Government have decided, for reasons that I have explained, in favour of repeal. Moreover, the extension to women of this outmoded legislation would be totally inconsistent with the need to avoid unnecessary and burdensome restrictions on enterprise—a subject that we have already touched on today.

I turn to those clauses that were introduced into the Bill in the other place after the Government had argued against them. I have already dealt with clause 3. As I said to the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), it is far from clear to the Government that anything would be gained by yet further rounds of consultations on this issue when six years of that have resulted only in stalemate.

Clause 7, on what is described as the "protection of existing conditions", incorporates the statutory restrictions that are to be repealed into the existing employee's contract of employment and ensures that dismissal for refusing to accept new hours of work would be treated by an industrial tribunal as automatically unfair. We understand why there may be concern for the transitional effects on employees for whom statutory restrictions would no longer apply. But we are not convinced that a complicated and far-reaching provision, that in some ways duplicates and in others expands upon other legislative protections, is necessary, or indeed justified, in these circumstances.

There will be cases where the employee can rely on the implied term in the contract, which is already there, governing hours of work. Obviously employers and employees will need to discuss any suggestions about changes in the hours of work. But clause 7 would reduce the flexibility available to industry under the existing law. At this stage that seems to be quite unnecessary.

Mr. Robert Rhodes James (Cambridge): It is of considerable concern that an amendment may be moved later that would make employment in women's colleges and schools contrary to the legislation, following a ruling of the European Court. That would mean discrimination against women in their employment. Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that there is genuine concern about that? Can he give me—as I am sure that he will—a complete assurance that such fears are groundless?

Mr. Clarke: With my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science, I am pursuing the implications of proposals that might be made for certain women's colleges and universities whose statutes presently prohibit them from advertising for men for academic posts. We shall have to consider that.

I understand that there is alarm in some of the women's colleges that such a change would have an adverse effect on the character of the academic institutions. I shall continue to consider that point.

At the moment, the Bill does not affect women's colleges. It is my desire that we pass this legislation in a way that actually improves and strengthens our law and protects us against unfair discrimination. It is also my desire that we should not be led into absurdity in so doing. I shall consider with sympathy the points made by both my hon. Friends and consult my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science who is interested in this matter. Indeed, it might well be part of his responsibility.

Mr. Steve Norris (Oxford, East): Will my right hon. and learned Friend note that interest in this matter is not confined to the younger universities but exists in older institutions than that represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James)? This afternoon the principal of St. Hilda's college, Oxford, contacted me specifically to express her concern at the prospect of any such change. I am grateful for the assurances that my right hon. and learned Friend has given. Will he ensure that any steps to alter the present position and take away the exemption provided by section 51 of the 1975 Act are taken only after the fullest consideration?

Mr. Clarke: I appreciate that my hon. Friend, who represents an Oxford constituency, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Mr. Rhodes James) have a close interest in this matter. The right hon. Member for Glasgow, Hillhead (Mr. Jenkins) was lobbying me in the House last night. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office has raised this matter with me, as has my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary. Indeed, my wife was educated at Newnham college, Cambridge. It is obvious that there is considerable, widespread and influential concern about this matter. Obviously we must consider it seriously. I assure my hon. Friends that we are consulting the principals of the colleges most concerned and will take no steps until that consultation is complete.

Mr. Forth: I speak on behalf of liberated women who are not incarcerated in all-women colleges. My right hon. and learned Friend will be undermining the serious principles of equality of opportunity for liberated and confident women who can make their own way in the world if he allows the perpetuation of an anomaly which, if it were done by men, would be castigated and criticised by everybody. Will he give me an assurance that in considering representations from his friends and his right hon. and hon. Friends he will pay equal attention to the considerations of fairness and genuine equality and not allow this anomaly to be perpetuated?

Mr. Clarke: I assure my hon. Friend that we will consult on the widest possible basis and listen to all views. I am absolutely certain that the merits of single-sex education versus co-education are outside my immediate sphere of responsibility, and I shall most emphatically put to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science all the points that have been made.

Mr. Evans: It is always nice to hear concern for women who apparently have such influential and high-powered friends. No doubt their case will be well heard. May I bring the House back to the position of women at a much lesser level? Does the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that his announcement that the Government intend to remove clauses 3 and 7 is absolutely outrageous? Why is it that when the Government were trying to bribe their Back Benchers to get the Shops Bill through the House they promised that they would enshrine the rights of shopworkers in the legislation, while in this Bill they are apparently happy to remove the rights of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of workers? Why does not the right hon. and learned Gentleman accept that clause 7 is a valuable protection for millions of workers?

Mr. Clarke: I repeat that we will listen to the arguments. I do not think that we can establish a general principle that every time this House considers modest amendments to employment legislation it is necessary to enshrine in statutory form a rigid protection of the existing position for all existing employees. Indeed, it is not only protection for employees—clause 7 proposes a rigid statutory straitjacket, tighter than that which currently exists, on working conditions in industries.

[Mr. Clarke]

Those clauses will have to be seriously considered in Committee. Obviously, we have been considering them since they were first introduced in another place. To be fair, I am telling the House today that our reaction to clauses 3 and 7 is unfavourable. To complete the hon. Gentleman's distress, I can tell him that our attitude is much the same to clause 8 on changing hours of work. That clause imposes on all employers proposing significant changes in hours a new statutory duty for the health, safety, welfare and interests of employees, especially those with domestic and family responsibilities. It also allows the Health and Safety Commission to issue a code of practice containing practical guidance on the entirety of that duty.

As I said a few moments ago, the pattern of work that is emerging in today's more modern economy calls for ever-increasing flexibility in working arrangements. This country must not stick to a rigid nine-to-five, five-day week pattern of working in manufacturing or service industries. It is in the interests of both employers and employees to move to more flexible arrangements. There is tremendous growth in the amount of self-employment, part-time employment, short-term working, flexi-hours, varied shift systems and so on.

When we consider in Committee the arguments about clause 8 we will have to address ourselves to the problem that, on the face of it, it appears to impose on any employer wanting to make a change in the hours of work a detailed statutory duty to inquire into the personal interests and circumstances of each and every employee before making those changes. I understand the motives that lay behind clause 8, but I am not satisfied that it is in the interests of women, men or British industry to introduce such a clause.

Mr. Holt: Will my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that the implementation date of the Act will be as set out in the Bill? Notwithstanding the consultations between the Health and Safety Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission, can my right hon. and learned Friend assure me that if they cannot get together and reach a conclusion as they have done with the Bill over a six-year period, any employer who makes substantial changes in the meantime will not be taken to an industrial tribunal and found automatically guilty simply because those two learned bodies have not reached a conclusion?

Mr. Clarke: The lack of agreement is principally between the employers' representatives and the trade union representatives within the Health and Safety Commission. It is our intention to proceed as stated in the Bill. I realise that my hon. Friend believes that it is time to reach a decision on these matters, which continuing consultation is not likely to resolve. It is contrary to the spirit of all legislation to introduce new statutory procedures that employers must follow before they can make any substantial changes in hours of work. We will listen carefully to what is said in a debate on these three new clauses, and obviously these matters will be dealt with in Committee.

To sum up on the repeals, the present legislation is discriminatory and sets obstacles in the way of womens' opportunities in manufacturing industry. For those women it can limit their access to shifts paying premium rates and, moreover, hamper them in gaining necessary experience on the way up the promotion ladder. If it offers them any real protection at all, which I doubt, it is against ills that are singularly vaguely defined, and it does so with very inconclusive results. It imposes burdens on the employer which, in the circumstances, are unnecessary and unjustifiable and which hence should be lifted at the earliest sensible opportunity. It is our intention to do so.

I wish to outline the major addition that the Government intend to make to the Bill in Committee. The House will know that the Government plan to take the opportunity presented by the Bill to give effect in our legislation to the judgment of the European Court of Justice issued on 26 February in the case of Marshall versus South-West Hampshire area health authority.

The judgment stated that it was contrary to article 5(1) of the equal treatment directive for an employer to dismiss a woman solely because she had reached state pensionable age where that age was different for women and men. The court also ruled that the article could be relied upon as against a state authority acting in its capacity as an employer, and to that extent the judgment took effect immediately. The new clause that we shall table will mean that employers must change policies that currently oblige women to retire at an earlier age than men in similar circumstances.

The Government have been concerned to take action as soon as possible following the judgment, to avoid the unsettling effects of uncertainty both for employers and employees. We accordingly carried out a rapid consultation exercise during April, receiving comments from some 90 interested organisations. I am glad to say that there was virtually unanimous support for our view that the judgment should be implemented in the Bill.

It is clearly difficult, if not impossible, to contest the general principle that women should be entitled to work for as long as their male colleagues. I should like to pay a personal tribute to Miss Marshall for her determination in fighting her case and winning a place in the long history of the movement to establish equal rights for women. It is both fair and economically desirable that women who wish to go on exercising their skills and contributing to the economy should be able to do so to the same age as men.

The change marks an important step forward. I urge employers to begin thinking now about any consequential changes they will need to make in their policies. At the same time, I must emphasise the limits of the amendment, in that it will not affect either occupational or state pensions—a question which was not affected by the Marshall judgment, as I explained in the House.

The Government raised the possibility—I imagine hon. Members will refer to it in the debate—in their Green Paper on the reform of social security, issued in June 1985, of moving towards what we described as a decade of retirement in which both men and women could choose to retire between 60 and 70 with a higher or lower pension, depending on whether they retired earlier or later.

There is a strong case for making this a longer term aim, as an effective means of establishing equal treatment between the sexes as well as for other reasons; but the cost implications could, of course, be very substantial as they would for any equalisation of state pension ages below the age of 64. We would certainly not wish to hold up action on the European Court's judgment—even if we were able to do so—until the major questions of future pensions provision were resolved.

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): Will my right hon. and learned Friend confirm that that means that women who retire at 65 will receive a higher pension than men who retire at the same age?

Mr. Clarke: That is the case, and it has always been the case. Anyone who defers his state retirement in this country gets an increment for each year by which he defers it. So long as we have different ages for state retirement, if both men and women remain working until they are 65 the woman will receive a higher pension. On an actuarial basis, she is likely to receive it for longer than her male colleague. In many people's opinion, the state pension system is discriminatory in favour of women. They tend to contribute less and receive their pensions for longer. They can receive a higher pension if they defer retirement. That is a long-standing policy, not touched on by the Bill. I am describing a way forward which would remove any discriminatory effects, and which was canvassed in the Green Paper. We cannot wait for that longer-term aim to be implemented before we act on the Marshall judgment.

We shall also be tabling an amendment to section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, which deals with the provision of single sex training. Under that section, training bodies may offer vocational courses or other encouragement to women only—or to men only—with a view to their entering work in which they are seriously under-represented, or to help them return to the labour market after a spell of domestic or family responsibilities.

The main object of the Act is, of course, to eliminate discrimination on the grounds of sex and to promote equal opportunities between men and women. Discrimination in favour of one or the other is allowed only in exceptional circumstances. That is presumably why only the Manpower Services Commission, industrial training boards and training bodies designated for this purpose by the Secretary of State were empowered to run single-sex courses under section 47. I am sure that those who drew up the present Act were right to provide the filter of designation, ensuring that the section would not be abused to undermine the principle of equality then being introduced into law.

However, the situation has changed markedly over the 10 years since the Act came into operation. In particular, much more attention is being given to training women for occupations associated with engineering and new technology, where extra talent is needed to alleviate skill shortages, together with a general public acceptance that such training is justified. This has led to a welcome increase over the past two years in the number of training bodies seeking designation, and there are now some 150 designated bodies compared with 46 at the end of 1983.

We have looked at the situation carefully and concluded that there are no great advantages in retaining designation, and obvious benefits to training bodies in dispensing with the paper work involved in the designation process. Therefore, we intend to remove the need for persons to be designated to run these training courses, although the training would still have to conform to the strict requirements of section 47 in other respects. I must also emphasise that discrimination, including so-called positive discrimination, in recruitment of employees will remain unlawful.

I have described one or two quite important matters which we shall be adding to the Bill in Committee and which I believe will have widespread support in the House. I commend the Bill to the House as one which admirably combines two very desirable objectives—the furthering of equal opportunities and the removal of needless bureaucracy. The Bill will eliminate a number of legal loopholes in our sex discrimination law and bring us more closely into line with Community law. It should also make a modest contribution to labour market flexibility and the ability of business to respond to changed economic and social conditions.

I ask the House to give the Bill a Second Reading.

6.35 pm

Ms. Jo Richardson (Barking): I beg to move,

That this House welcomes the Government's acceptance of the European Community ruling that the Sex Discrimination Act should be strengthened to apply to small firms, private households, partnerships and collective agreements; but declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which fails to apply the Act to collective agreements and which seeks to repeal the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 rather than extending protective legislation to women as well as men.

The Paymaster General and Minister for Employment made a most interesting speech. As the hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. John Evans) and I followed it, we saw that it was an exact repetition, word for word, of what Lord Young said in the House of Lords. Every now and again the right hon. and learned Gentleman diverted and threw in a bombshell, such as that he would remove—it is a disgraceful move—clauses 3, 7 and 8 from the Bill. Some good debates took place in the House of Lords on those clauses.

The Bill, as the Paymaster General said at the beginning of his speech, needs to be considered and adjudged as two quite separate and, in a way, unrelated pieces of legislation. Clauses 1 and 2 have been forced on the Government by the European Court and the EEC equal treatment directive, when the Court found the United Kingdom's legislation on sex discrimination deficient in three areas—private households, small businesses and collective agreements. The EEC has urged the Government to act on those areas since 1983, when the Court made the ruling. It has taken three years for the Government to do something.

The Government, with their consistent record of obstructing every practical and progressive measure towards promoting real and meaningful equality of opportunity for women, have been delaying ever since, until they found a way to use it as a camouflage for one of their top priority ideological commitments — to dismantle, bit by bit, all employment protection legislation and health and safety regulations, and to further weaken the rights of all workers against exploitation in a so-called free market economy.

Clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill are a direct consequence of the Government's determination to turn back the clock to pre-Victorian conditions of employment for men and women. We must remember that the Government announced their intention to amend and repeal legislation governing women's hours and times of work in what I call the infamous "Lifting the Burden" White Paper—the same paper which lists, among its achievements, extending the qualifying period for unfair dismissal, exempting young people, reducing the scope of regulation of the wages councils and revoking over 300 individual health and safety regulations since 1980. Only this

[Ms. Jo Richardson]

afternoon we have seen the introduction of a further White Paper under the title of "Building Businesses — Not Barriers" which, broadly speaking, has the same theme.

No court ruling on equal opportunities was needed to prod reluctant Tory Ministers into producing those so-called anti-discrimination measures. Clauses 4 and 5 are all their own work. It is true that they have tried to hide their true intentions behind the Equal Opportunities Commission report, published seven years ago, to which the right hon. and learned Gentleman referred, on the question of health and safety legislation which distinguishes between men and women. The commissioners were not in unanimous agreement on the report, and the Health and Safety Executive could not agree on implementation.

However, even this flimsy cover has been blown by, among others, the chairperson of the Equal Opportunities Commission. She was appointed by the Government and sits on the Government side in the other place. She was forced into moving amendments and dividing the other place against the Government in an attempt to improve a seriously deficient Bill.

I take this opportunity to congratulate those of their Lordships who took a serious interest in the Bill, not only on the changes that they have succeeded in making to it, albeit to be wrecked shortly, but on their thoughtful and sensitive approach to a complex and controversial issue. In distinct contrast to Conservative peers, they demonstrated a genuine commitment to the principle of repealing discriminatory legislation, and an understanding of, and support for, the need for legislation to protect the health, safety and welfare of all workers.

Moreover, they showed an equal commitment to and understanding of the particular consideration that must be given to women in a society such as ours, that still fails to provide the economic and social environment that is a prerequisite of real equality for women. Important amendments were won in the other place, but are now to be lost — not without a fight, I warn the Paymaster General. Amendments affecting partnerships and applications for employment within the scope of the Sex Discrimination Act were accepted by the Government but others, such as protection against unfair dismissal provision for equal protection orders and a code of practice for employers, in clauses 3, 7 and 8, which were forced on the Government, are to be taken out. Even if those clauses were kept in the Bill, it would still have major deficiencies.

We generally welcome clause 1, which brings private households, small businesses and partnerships within the scope of the Sex Discrimination Act. However, we have serious reservations about clause 1 (2)(*ba*)(ii). We support the provision in subsection (2)(*ba*)(i) for the freedom of women and men to choose a woman or a man for a job where the employee will be living in a private home, and where there is a real objection to someone of the opposite sex having:

"the degree of physical or social contact with a person living in the home".

However, we cannot and will not accept that the

"knowledge of intimate details of such a person's life"

should be allowed to determine the sex of the prospective employee.

The Government have given no clear explanation of the meaning of the words "intimate details" and no coherent reason for including this exemption. The EOC has already given warning that this lack of clarity could give rise to legal conflict, and has asked for subsection (2)(*ba*)(ii) to be deleted. We shall be tabling an amendment along those lines. I hope that between now and the beginning of the Committee, the Minister will look again at the debate in the other place carefully to see whether that should be done.

We accept that trust and confidence are of vital importance when an employee can obtain information in the course of his or her work in the employer's house, but we do not accept that the sex of the employee is relevant in securing that trust and confidence.

Clause 2 is similarly welcome in principle. It deals with discriminatory terms in collective agreements and any rule made by an employer or an organisation that discriminates against, or treats more favourably, any person employed by, or applying to join, the company. However, because the Government have again chosen to take minimal action —they have opted for voiding such terms and rules— we have serious reservations about the effectiveness of clause 2 as it stands.

We should like an assurance from the Government that the section dealing with the rules of organisations will permit offices and posts to be held exclusively by women as part of an anti-discrimination or positive action policy. This is an extremely important measure that will help to give women some status and help them into better jobs.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): Do I understand that the hon. Lady is suggesting positive discrimination — in other words, discrimination against men?

Ms. Richardson: I am suggesting an anti-discrimination, or a positive action policy, which it is important to have. The hon. Member is obviously shocked, but that does not surprise me. It is a shock when somebody challenges the power of men, who have positive discrimination the whole time. We are saying that women should have a bit of positive discrimination and action, and that is the line we intend to pursue in Committee.

Mr. Forth: Not a chance.

Ms. Richardson: Not with you lot over there.

Secondly, we can see no justification for the abolition, through clause 6, of the Central Arbitration Committee's jurisdiction in respect of section 3 of the Equal Pay Act. We consider that this opportunity should have been used to review and strengthen the functions of the CAC, to involve it in the provisions of clause 2, especially with regard to the recently debated EEC 1986-90 programme of action for equal opportunity. Some Conservative Members may have participated in the rather disgraceful exhibition on the Conservative Benches last week. The programme of action announced the Commission's intentions to investigate the feasibility of drafting a directive that would provide for class action in equal pay for work of equal value rulings.

Furthermore, clause 2 fails to provide for the removal of discriminatory items in collective agreements and rules, which means that they will remain unless or until they are removed by renegotiation or as a result of individual complaints and a successful decision in a court or tribunal.

Such a piecemeal approach will lead to inconsistencies and confusion for everybody concerned—the individuals, the employees, the employers and the trade unions. It will encourage an increase of unnecessary legislation and conflict, with at best patchy and at worse contradictory agreements and rules. The failure to provide a centrally recognised mechanism for arbitration and enforcement will be particularly problematic in indirect discrimination cases, which have always proved to be the most difficult disputes.

Again I express my horror — that is not too exaggerated a word — over the announcement that the Government intend to delete clause 3. I had intended to say how much I welcomed the clause that was introduced in the other place by Lord Wedderburn of Charlton. My intention was to ask the Government what status is attached to the clause, but thanks to the timely intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch), who quickly managed to nail down the Paymaster General, we now know that it is to be deleted. That is outrageous, as is the removal of clauses 7 and 8.

As the Government intend to repeal protective legislation, clauses 7 and 8 were designed to provide a different kind of protection by the laying down of standards and guidelines. I hope that the Paymaster General intends to listen in Committee to the arguments for the retention of the three clauses. They are extremely important. Without them, the Bill will be horrendous for many women.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Of course we shall listen to the arguments. However, I ask the hon. Lady, who has expressed horror about the possible removal of clause 3, to reflect on the fact that all that has been achieved by clause 3 as it stands is that nothing can be done for at least a year and that another report should be published after further consultation with employers, trade unions and others. I am all in favour of consultation, but does the hon. Lady not accept that there have been six years of discussion and that a complete stalemate has obviously been reached? The only purpose, therefore, of clause 3 is to create futher delay, which I do not believe can be of enormous importance.

Ms. Richardson: There has been a substantial reaction to the Bill from the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Trades Union Congress, the National Council for Civil Liberties and other organisations. Those who followed its passage through the other place warmly welcomed the inclusion of clause 3. We believe that the delay for which it provides will ensure that employers have guidelines to follow. Perhaps "horror" was too exaggerated a word, but it leapt to my lips because I was stunned by the announcement. Nevertheless, I am dismayed that the clause is to be deleted and that the curbing mechanism that is provided for in clause 3 will not be there to provide help for women in many organisations.

Clause 4 repeals important terms and conditions that provide protection for women workers. That is the key to the Government's true purpose in introducing the Bill. The existing legislation guarantees meals and rest breaks, annual holidays and Sundays off. It prevents unreasonable periods of continuous employment and overtime and places healthy restrictions on the hours that are worked by women and on the amount of night work that they may do. I underline the word "healthy".

Mr. Forth: Is the hon. Lady able to tell the House whether the Opposition have any real interest in equality, or whether they have any other idea in mind as to the treatment of men and women? It seems to me that the hon. Lady is much more interested in replacing one kind of discrimination with another instead of wanting true equality, to which I and, and I am sure, my right hon. and hon. Friends, are genuinely committed.

Ms. Richardson: I have yet to see any semblance of commitment by Conservative Members to the principle of equality. I refer to those Conservative Members who sit mainly below the Gangway. In the face of pressure, the Government are not introducing genuine equality——

Mr. Weetch: They are levelling down.

Ms. Richardson: My hon. Friend is right. They are levelling down all the way.

The existing legislation guarantees some semblance of decency that ought to be extended to men. Instead of levelling everybody down and saying that their conditions of work should be rotten, the decent conditions that have been brought about by these restrictions should be extended to men. I would not oppose taking a rational look at the protective legislation. Valuable protection is provided against exploitation by unscrupulous employers, but it is dismissed by the Government and certain Conservative Members as outmoded and discriminatory.

The Opposition ask for whom these regulations have become outmoded. Why should workers no longer have the right, by law, to refuse to be pressurised into doing double-day shifts and night work? They will have no right to refuse starting times before 7 o'clock in the morning or finishing times later than 9 o'clock at night, or to refuse spells of work lasting more than 4½ hours without a break, or overtime in excess of 54 hours a week.

The Paymaster General referred to some of the points that I have just made, but he did so in what I thought was a slightly caustic and derisive manner, as though we should not really have to bother about them. Obviously he does not want there to be protection of this kind. However, any Government should try to build upon the experience of the working of this legislation and try to improve it so that it covers everybody.

Clause 4 will affect all the firms that were covered by the previous legislation. They include organisations that do not provide the facilities that hon. Members expect to be provided for them when they are working unsocial hours. At certain times of the year we work very unsocial hours and we grumble about them. Although we may think that they are inadequate, some facilities are provided for us. I have been told that there are 30 catering points in this building. They are designed to serve the needs not only of Members of Parliament but of the staff who have to service Members of Parliament. We grumble and think that our conditions should be improved, yet we are denying even that right to women outside Parliament.

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): While she is discussing conditions in the House of Commons, will the hon. Lady say whether she is in favour of positive discrimination and of eliminating those rooms that are for ladies only? I should not wish that to happen.

Ms. Richardson: When I first became a Member of Parliament in 1974 I walked down the corridors and came across door after door that was marked "Members Only".

[Ms. Richardson]

I thought to myself, "Ah, I am a Member," walked in and found that it was a gentleman's lavatory. If there are three doors that are marked "Ladies Only", why not? I wish that there were better facilities for female staff. Most of them have to walk a very long way indeed to find a toilet. Hon. Members are protected to a certain extent, but if this clause is passed there will be no protection for those outside Parliament. We must also ask ourselves, discriminatory against whom? The answer must be obvious to everyone.

The Government have turned their back on the logical course for a Government who genuinely wish to overcome the apparent inequality because a responsible, caring Government would have sought to draw up legislation that equally and fairly protects the health, safety and welfare of women and men at work.

Existing statutory minima provide an essential safety net for workers in non-unionised workplaces, the very area where women tend to predominate in the work force. The existing requirement on employers to apply to the inspectorate for annual exemption has provided an important negotiating platform to obtain compensatory environmental and financial improvements for all the workers affected.

Perhaps this provides an example of what the Government mean when they talk about lifting unnecessary burdens or lowering the barriers from employers. We believe that the abolition of such protection without statutory provision for a transitional period, which would have been provided in clause 3, and without statutory provision for equal protection for women and men, is a serious regressive step, especially in the current economic climate of mass unemployment and increasing poverty coupled with the general attacks upon employment and trade union rights that the Government have actively promoted.

The Bill furthers a course that has as a priority objective the creation of an unprotected, unorganised, insecure work force that is open to equal exploitation in the sweatshops and the so-called entrepreneurial businesses that this Government promote in the hope that they will fill the vacuum that they have created in destroying our manufacturing industry by pursuing laissez-faire dogma. Clause 5 provides the last plank in the Government's equal exploitation platform.

The Paymaster General gave a witty reminiscence of his time in the baking industry between student days and work. That was a very long time ago, and he was in a rather different situation in that he did not expect to work in that industry for the whole of his life.

Mr. Evans: He was there only two months.

Ms. Richardson: The bakers themselves do not want these restrictions to be removed. As my hon. Friend the Member for St. Helens, North well knows, bakers already work the longest hours of any group in the industrial sector.

The Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 was implemented after decades of conflict and dispute in the baking industry. The Equal Opportunities Commission and the bakers' union have both opposed the repeal and have called for the Act to be extended to women. We do no more at this stage than call upon the Government to follow their advice.

Before concluding, I wish to refer in passing to two or three points that the right hon. and learned Gentleman mentioned as additions that he will introduce to the Bill. I cannot think why they were not included when the Bill was printed for the House of Lords. It would have been interesting to have the benefit of their debates upon these quite difficult points that the Government will bring forward.

First, we support the idea of equal treatment in retirement, which has great benefits for women who want to go on working and with respect to equalisation for men. I believe that both that and the decade for retirement has to be seen in the context of a consideration of the whole question of pensions. I know that some hon. Members say that retirement has nothing to do with pensions, but that is how people outside see it. They want to know that the pension for women at 60 is preserved. Men have been agitating for a long time—I know that it is costly—for their pension age to be brought down to 60. I understand that this is not something one can do in a flash.

In order to deal rationally with the question of retirement the Government must consult—indeed, they probably have already done so or will do so—the Department of Health and Social Security about pensions provision and ensure that as a result of the differences there are no discrepancies and dilemmas.

I am opposed to the removal of single-sex training courses. I did not even guess that the Paymaster General might be going to do that—or did I get this wrong?

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We are all in favour of single-sex training courses that comply with the terms of the Act providing training, usually exclusively, for women in occupations where there is a need to increase the supply. The only proposal that we make here is to remove the requirement for each one to be designated by the Secretary of State for Employment. It was intended as a protection against abuse, but it is now quite unnecessary paperwork. The legislation will make it easier to have courses designated as single-sex courses in suitable places. They will still have to comply with the legislation.

Ms. Richardson: I am grateful and relieved that that is so. We shall, of course, consider this when the right hon. and learned Gentleman brings forward the legislation.

May I remind the House that when the Sex Discrimination Bill was introduced in another place Lord Young described the existing legislation as restricting working women's employment opportunities. It is our view that the Bill will not improve women's employment opportunities at all and that it was never intended so to do. Indeed, it is our view that the end result of clauses 4 and 5—particularly without the protection of clause 3—and of clauses 7 and 8 will be to force many women out of the workplace while many who remain will increasingly face serious domestic difficulties.

In the recent debate on the Shops Bill, Opposition Members and some Conservative Members showed that they understood the special significance of that legislation for women. I think that the effect on women was a powerful factor in the decision to throw out the Shops Bill. If the Government truly intended to provide for any improvement in women's access to employment, they would be laying a statutory duty upon local authorities to provide child care facilities, as the next Labour

Government will do; and real community care for disabled or elderly dependants, as the next Labour Government will do; and provide the resources for local authorities to meet those statutory requirements. They would be encouraging affordable improved public transport with higher staffing levels to ensure safe, secure travel, especially at night, instead of hiving off bus routes and starving the public sector of funds.

If the Government had a real commitment to equality, they would be tackling all these things to make it easier to go out to work and in some senses to look to the removal of the protective legislation. Instead, against the background of mass unemployment, increased poverty and a decaying infrastructure that this Government have created, their proposals will lead to further inequality and less freedom of choice for women. They will increase the already too prevalent attitude and reality that women alone should carry the burdens of unpaid domestic work, caring and rearing and paid employment while the state and employers withdraw from any responsibility to provide the support services that are required.

For many, the lack of protection and the burden created by the lack of support services will in the long run prove unbearable. I call on my right hon. and hon. Friends and on any other Members of the House who feel able to do so to support the Opposition amendment.

7.9 pm

Mrs. Elizabeth Shields (Ryedale): Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech.

I should like first to pay tribute to the former hon. Member for Ryedale, the late Mr. John Spence. He was a modest, conscientious and well-known constituency Member. His sudden death came as a great shock to us all. I met him on several civic occasions, when he was unfailingly pleasant and courteous. He will be greatly missed in the constituency and I am sure that all hon. Members will join me in extending deepest sympathy to his wife and family. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

A fortnight ago the electorate of Ryedale bestowed on me the great honour of representing them here. For my part I have promised to do my utmost for all my constituents and to ensure that their major problems, which derive directly or indirectly from Government policies, are raised in Parliament.

This Mother of Parliaments has seen many fine sons of all shades of political opinion grace this hallowed Chamber, not least, of course, those who have sat on the Liberal Benches. But the number of her daughters is far too few for the continuing health of the nation. A balance between the sexes is both desirable and necessary. I trust that in the not-too-distant future there will be a greater representation on all Benches of the House of the nationwide majority. I take special pride in being the first Liberal lady Member elected since 1951 and only the fifth in the history of my party, the last being the daughter of David Lloyd George. I believe that some of the values and sensitivity that women can bring to public life are unfortunately absent from politics today.

By tradition new Members may say something about their own constituencies. Ryedale, stretching 60 miles from the market town of Easingwold in the west to Filey on the coast in the east, and 50 miles from the northern suburbs of York to the breathtaking beauty of our Yorkshire moors and dales, is one of the largest constituencies in England. However, many people, including members of the press, have found Ryedale something of an enigma because there is no specific town or village of that name, although we have a river Rye. Ryedale's exact geographical location has therefore caused not a little puzzlement to the many interested parties who, for one reason or another, found it compelling to visit us in recent weeks. I should like to clear up one misconception: Ryedale, like Wensleydale, is a very attractive tourist area of north Yorkshire, but unlike Wensleydale, Ryedale is not a variety of cheese.

Ryedale's greatest asset is its people who, with their genuine, innate warmth and friendliness, combined with the straightforward, outspoken way of calling a spade a spade, make this part of north Yorkshire the best place in which to live or take a holiday. Beautiful it certainly is, but many people of all ages throughout Ryedale have a housing problem. The Government's right-to-buy legislation has enabled council tenants in all three districts within the constituency to purchase their property, a measure with which I agree.

However, Ryedale district council has a statutory responsibility to provide rented accommodation for specific groups of people. More than 2,000 are at present on the waiting list, of whom some 900 are in real need. Therefore, when housing stock is being sold off there is a need for new build to cope with the demand. The embargo on the spending of the district's own capital receipts—except for one fifth—hits unnecessarily hard at a council one of whose priorities is to provide decent, adequate housing for the elderly and indigent.

Our rural communities will also suffer from the results of the Transport Act 1985 on bus services, in that village routes through Sheriff Hutton and Foston, Coxwold, Wass, Byland, Duggleby and the Barughs have not been tendered for. These sound rather quaint but the quaintness of the names belies the fact that real people live there. Even the main service from York through Malton to the coast will be severely curtailed in the evenings and on Sundays. I hope that before October, when the Act comes into force, more routes will be registered and the anticipated competition for less popular areas will materialise, but even the subsidies to be provided by the North Yorkshire county council will have disappeared by 1990. Many villages could then be totally cut off.

I should like to draw attention to the fact that great concern is being expressed by residents at Filey, where the threatened removal of the local coastguard next year is causing considerable alarm. The population of Filey and its hinterland is increased many times to about 100,000 during the summer months as tourists flock into this popular resort. The great bay of Filey, eight miles round, is watched over by a special lookout at the coastguard station. As soon as any swimmer, or a boat or any of its occupants is in difficulty, it takes very little time to go to the rescue.

But if, as has been suggested, Filey's deceptively beautiful bay is deprived of its watchman, and the responsibility for the safety of the many children and adults who use it is delegated to Scarborough and Bridlington, each with its own stretch of coastline, I shall share with the people of Filey the fear of many tragic consequences. I feel sure that hon. Members on both sides of the House, especially those whose constituencies include part of our coastline or its innumerable islands situated offshore, will sympathise in this matter, which is

[Mrs. Elizabeth Shields]

not political, but a question of human safety, and one in which monetary considerations must not be the overriding factor.

But many people in my constituency are really worried—not so much for themselves and the present as for their children and their future. Ryedale has extensive rural areas with some 200 village communities, many of which support a local school. Sadly, several of these first-class village schools, such as Ganton, Reighton with Speeton and Flaxton, are under threat of closure. This is due to cuts in staff by 0·4 or 0·6 of a teacher, which effectively leaves the head teacher as the only responsible adult on the premises for two or even three days a week. Apart from the obvious safety risks, dedicated, well-qualified and trained primary teachers are thus being deprived of employment. This is a waste of a human resource—the most important resource that any country can have.

As an educationist, I obviously have a special interest in all aspects of the system. The confusion over the introduction of the GCSE examination, the enforced early retirement of university teachers, the reduction by 20 per cent. in the real value of student grants since 1979 and the generally low ebb at which morale in the teaching profession is standing, show that a major reassessment of education policies is urgently required. Although a new Minister has now been appointed—I wish him well and hope that one of his priorities will be the GCSE—I remind hon. Members that it was a Liberal Government who introduced free education in 1870. It may take another Liberal Government to restore morale in the primary and secondary sectors and maintain standards in further and higher education.

The Sex Discrimination Bill which is the subject of today's debate aims to amend the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 so that it comes into line with the European Community directives on the equal treatment of men and women. I hope that equality of opportunity will, as a result of the Bill, enable more women in the teaching profession to reach positions of seniority as deputies or heads of school. Too often, their inability to gain success in that way is not due to lack of qualifications, training, or experience, but simply to the fact of their sex.

The Equal Opportunities Commission has argued that conditions of work should be good for men and women. The protection that has been afforded to men in the baking industry through the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 should now be afforded to women. Good conditions for all should be the objective. The Labour party amendment is addressed to that point, but my hon. Friends and I believe that it does not go far enough. In spite of the Bill's inadequacies in that respect, we believe that it is a useful measure. We intend to vote for it tonight and I hope to have the chance to amend the Bill in Committee.

On 8 May, the people of Ryedale gave me the opportunity to become their voice in Parliament. Today, I have had the opportunity to make my first contribution. I thank the House for its attention and look forward to playing an active part in the debates that lie before us.

7.21 pm

Mr. Richard Holt (Langbaurgh): We have just heard an excellent maiden speech,. I think that the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) began her speech well by paying tribute to our late colleague. We all knew Mr. John Spence and liked him very much, and I think that his place in this House is now temporarily adorned by the hon. Lady.

In a sense, I am also making a maiden speech. I am following a maiden speech and I have not done that before. I am also speaking in a debate on sex discrimination and I have definitely not done that before. Yesterday, I desperately wanted to speak in the debate on shipbuilding and was allocated four minutes in which to speak. Today, when I did not want to speak on sex discrimination, I have been allocated the rest of the evening. There must be a reason for that.

Mr. Evans: Does that not speak volumes for the Tory party?

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman's intervention shows one of the fundamental differences between Conservative Members and Labour Members. Labour Members have no sense of humour and no sense of occasion. On an issue such as this, the hon. Gentleman is trying to bring in some petty party point.

There is a more serious reason why I am speaking in this debate. For many years I have worked in personnel in factories. More specifically, in connection with clause 5, I am married to the baker's daughter. In that context, I have a little more experience than my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General, who introduced the Bill.

The underlying principle of the Bill is the Government's philosophy that we must seek equality. I found it destroying to listen to the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) speaking from the Opposition Front Bench—not for equality but for discrimination in favour of ladies. That is the absolute negation of what the European Community has wanted, what the hon. Member for Ryedale said, and what the Government have set out to achieve.

In all my years in personnel, I have found it strange when writing contracts of employment, when engaging people and dealing with such matters in factories where people did identical jobs—usually the ladies were better than the men—that we had to have legislation enshrined in the contracts in such a way as to destroy job opportunities and not to create them. Today we must all try, whatever our political stance, to improve job prospects and opportunities for those who are unfortunately unemployed.

It is never easy for the Opposition to look across at the Government Benches and point a finger at the Tory party when it comes to sex discrimination. We have a lady Prime Minister.

Mr. Evans: That is the problem.

Mr. Holt: If the hon. Gentleman wants to make an intelligent contribution to the debate, I will happily give way to him. However, if he wants to continue shouting from a sedentary position, I would prevail upon you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to tell him to shut up.

Certain clauses in the Bill will be debated in Committee. I am happy to say that I will not be on the Committee because I have done my porridge for this year, last year, and the year before. However, I would like to consider the part that relates to the protection that is supposed to be enshrined in current legislation. All that protection is discriminatory. It is a change to refer to the

hon. Member for Barking as "the hon. Lady opposite speaking for the Labour party" as distinct from "the hon. Lady opposite" which would automatically have meant that she was speaking for the Labour party. We must now make the distinction, albeit for a short period, and we will enjoy making that distinction——

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I fancy my hon. Friend the Member for Ryedale's chances better than the hon. Gentleman's. She is 5:4 on.

Mr. Holt: The hon. Gentleman should not tempt me.

Restrictions on hours and starting and finishing times do not apply to 7·5 million working women in this country. Those women can drive buses, serve all night on their own and lonely in a hospital ward or they can spend all night entertaining people in strip shows. However, they cannot work on a Saturday or a Sunday in a factory legitimately producing manufactured goods so that we can sell those goods and improve job prospects. It is time that that arcane law was thrown out; the reform is long overdue. It is strange that the Labour party should want to oppose that. I was pleased to hear that the Liberal party will support the Bill in the Lobby this evening. That shows that the Labour party is out of touch with the realities of the workplace and the work force when it comes to creating job opportunities and removing this kind of petty restriction which has existed for far too long.

To revert to my personal experiences in the baking trade, I first met my wife shortly after her father had died leaving the family business to his widow. She was quite able to go into the bakery at all hours of the day and night as the proprietor, unprotected by unnecessary legislation, to work and make bread, to knead the dough. But she could not have employed another lady to share her labours instead of other men, because she would have been restricted by unnecessary and outmoded legislation. We should remember that it is not rare for a lady suddenly to find herself at the head of a business on the death of her husband.

However, the Labour party wants to perpetuate that legislation. Indeed, it wants to extend it so that the baking hours even now worked by men would be curtailed so that we would not have that lovely home-made fresh bread that comes only from the small baker, not the large multiples. If we stick with the family baker, we shall have our fresh bread, but we should help by voting for the Bill this evening. This is the sort of positive discrimination that we want — positive decisions to remove ridiculous old-fashioned out-dated legislation.

I shall not speak all night, despite the encouragement from the Government Front Bench and colleagues elsewhere. Like the hon. Member for Ryedale, I too represent a constituency in that part of the world. My constituency is 20 miles north of Ryedale in the north Yorkshire moors, and it is a beautiful part of the country. I look forward to seeing the hon. Member for Ryedale, here during the period that she graces us. That time will, I am sure, be like the life of a butterfly — short and beautiful.

However, one of the things that I can guarantee is that the hon. Lady will be in a different position from many of us. Whereas we shall labour for hours and hope to be called, she will shortly be a Front Bench spokesman for something because that is the way the portfolios go round in the Liberal party. If she is a Front Bench spokesman for the ladies, I hope that she will continue to support the Government in this type of legislation, making the ladies' lot in the world better.

7.31 pm

Mr. Ken Weetch (Ipswich): I cannot emulate the entertainment value of the speech by the hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt), which I followed carefully.

The Bill is a mess. Three of its clauses are at variance with the rest. There are conflicts of principle. A few minutes ago the Paymaster General announced that the Bill will undergo major surgery in Committee. It will undergo more than major surgery, because three of the clauses will disappear. That will be a massacre. Therefore, the Bill is completely unsatisfactory in its conception.

The Bill has its roots in the fact that the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 falls short of meeting European obligations in a number of respects. That is particularly so with regard to access to employment, vocational training, promotion and working conditions.

The House should welcome parts of the Bill while expressing some sharp reservations about the consequences of some parts for women workers. Even without the three clauses that the Government intend to remove, we still have two Bills because there are two distinct principles. One is to conform with the European directive which was based on a court case brought by the Commission, and the second is to embrace regulation more intensively in some areas of industrial working conditions.

We are debating whether we can agree in principle with the basic objects of the legislation as put by the Government. I agree with some of the Government's basic aims, but they will not be achieved by the Bill.

I welcome the Government's acceptance of the EC ruling that the Sex Discrimination Act should be strengthened so that equal opportunities are promoted between men and women. Labour Members would certainly support that. Secondly, I can sympathise with any move to remove outdated legislative burdens which decrease efficiency and competitiveness. Those are two sound objectives.

However, I regret that the Government accepted the EEC ruling with bad grace. If one reads carefully the proceedings of the debate in the other place on the Bill, one sees that the Government embraced the EEC ruling with some reluctance. In fact, Lord Young, in arguing his case in the other place, said categorically that he was accepting it because he had to, not because he had any great agreement with the principle.

It is disappointing to learn that the Government are only accepting the EEC ruling in extending the 1975 Act to small firms, private households, partnerships and collective agreements. We are disappointed that the Government are doing that with some reluctance. One can sum up the Government's position in a sentence. They are grasping the legal obligation to the EEC and its framework, but they are in no way embracing the spirit in which the reform has been proposed.

I listened carefully to the Paymaster General. He said, first, that there is some confused thinking among Opposition Members. I would say to him that there is a lot of confused thinking behind the Bill.

It is possible to take three approaches. It is possible to scrap all regulations so that everybody is made equal in that nobody is protected. The second approach, the one

[Mr. Ken Weetch]

traditionally made by the Factory Acts in Britain, is to consider certain special categories of people such as women and children, make regulations to protect them, and then level up the regulations so that they protect men as well. The third approach, which is broadly the one that I would favour, is to say that there are special areas of employment in Britain where women need protection. I have no hesitation in saying that.

Therefore, I disagree to some extent with the Equal Opportunities Commission's argument that deregulation would be a good way to make everybody equal. The Equal Opportunities Commission's report of 1979 argued that there should be deregulation but that there should be a code of practice as a safety net so that when the Bill became law its disadvantages would be limited.

The Bill is unsatisfactory. It involves some complex thinking. Industrial and factory legislation and conditions of work have always been a complex legislative area. I have substantial reservations about the Bill and those reservations are shared by the TUC and by unions such as the Confederation of Health Service Employees. Some 80 per cent. of the members of that union are female and view the Bill with critical interest. My reservations are about clauses 4, 5 and 6 because they deal specifically with removing restrictions on the number of hours that women can work in certain industries, especially the baking industry. Clause 4 would allow women in factories to be freely employed at night, on Sundays, on shift work, and between overtime starting and finishing times. The clause would also remove restrictions on the hours, including hours at night, during which women may work in mines and quarries.

Let us come to the brass tacks of the argument. One either believes that there should be protection for women in certain industries such as mines or quarries and in industries where conditions are difficult and pay is low, or one does not. I commend the Government for their honesty. They say there should not be protection and that is because they are proposing to deregulate and saying that that is the path to equality. There is a substantial disadvantage in that approach. I take the traditional view of factory legislation. Certain categories of people should be protected by legislation and when one sets up a demolition exercise to sweep a lot of it away, one will have attendant disadvantages.

Mr. Holt: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman could tell us how many members of COHSE work in factories that are covered by current legislation?

Mr. Weetch: The hon. Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) must take a narrow view of people's interests. There is no reason why people in one occupation cannot have sympathy for people in another. That is a sympathetic view of life, but obviously the hon. Gentleman does not hold such a view. It is commendable that people who work in the public sector have some thought for people who work in more difficult industries in which people have to labour for long hours and low pay. There ought to be more sympathetic consideration between occupational groups.

We must be careful before we play fast and loose with the legislative protection that women have at work. Factory legislation has taken a long time to accumulate and immense efforts by all sorts of social groups and the trade union movement have gone into it. I am doubtful about the basic proposition advanced by the Government. I note the argument used by Lord Young in the other place and it brings me to my second point. I shall paraphrase what the noble Lord said:

> "This Bill will mean that women will have access to often higher paid nightwork, shift jobs and better promotion prospects. All these things may widen women's job marketability, and make them available for a wider range of work."

I will believe that when I see it.

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): A number of women in my constituency have written to me requesting precisely this change. They object to the present restraints and want to see the change in this Bill enacted.

Mr. Weetch: One has to set one person's experience against the experience of another. I have had letters expressing the opposite view. I ask the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood): has there been any systematic study in Britain to show that if this legislation is passed women could expect to have a significantly better deal because of wider market opportunities? The argument underlying the Bill says that there are lots of opportunities for women and that women are waiting in the wings and will better themselves as a result of this legislation. That argument has not been subjected to systematic study. I certainly know of no research body that has reached that conclusion. It may well be that things will alter at the margin here and there, but in the wider sense the Bill is not a significant step.

How convincing is this talk of wider scope which will occur in practice and give women more opportunities for jobs, higher wages and better conditions? I am advised by people who have a lot of experience in industries which I shall presently name and which would be altered in a substantial way by this legislation, that the case is not proven. There are few good jobs restricted to men for which women are likely to be substituted if this legislation goes through and if protective legislation is abandoned. That is because the industries to which much of the discussion has been directed are in textiles and baking and in other industries where wages are low and where the protection given to women is likely to be put into total jeopardy because of deregulation.

Clauses 4, 5 and 6 are not necessarily in the Bill to make it comply with European directives. That is quite a separate principle. We are talking about the principle of deregulation as opposed to the principle that arises from compliance with the European Court case and the directive. They are totally separate things and need to be separately argued. The Government are set on a course of quite widespread and wholesale deregulation, even though there is no practical value in that. They are motivated purely by ideological considerations and about arguing for its own sake. That is not an allegation: it is a substantive fact.

If we are not careful, the legislation that protects certain vulnerable groups will go the same way as wages councils and other instruments of welfare. This notion of the Government stems from unregulated free enterprise rather than from any notion of social advance. That is why there is a substantial set of arguments against this legislation. An unjustified parallel has been drawn between night work in public services and night work in factories. In the public services, nights are already worked by women, but to transfer that principle and say that it applies to factories and mines and quarries as well, does not stand up in a

practical sense. Factory legislation and the whole notion of industrial welfare has been built up case by case. That is why I firmly believe that clause 3 should remain.

It is all very well for the Paymaster General to stand at the Dispatch Box and read out some of the complications of the legislation. Welfare legislation across the board is complicated because it has grown up organically to meet special considerations. There is no escaping that. To sweep it all away and say that it is simpler to do that, and therefore much better, is an argument which will not stand up.

Factory work is different. It is often associated with working on machinery and being constantly vigilant to avoid industrial injury. There is a great danger that women will be open to risks arising from a combination of a lack of regulation of the hours at the place of work, particularly at night.

I do not shrink from saying that I take the traditional view of factory and industrial legislation. It has been built up over a long period, has been hammered out by collective bargaining, and put into legislation because people have considered that to be the constructive, detailed way forward. We should think long and hard before we put that legislation under the hammer in the cause of deregulation.

I do not wish to say much more because there is a danger of straying into Committee-type material. The principle of large parts of the Bill is that in order to give women greater opportunities and to put them on all fours with men, it is necessary to make inroads into industrial welfare legislation. The two things do not go together. It is a logical fallacy. One can have one without the other. For that reason the legislation is misconceived in principle. It is misleading because no more jobs will be available in areas where women traditionally have not been able to compete, and conditions for women at work will worsen in terms of health and safety.

If I am selected to serve on the Committee I shall resist strongly the removal of clause 3, which is the traditional approach to factory welfare legislation, which we should retain. The matter was debated at great length in the other place. It was an interesting debate and some perceptive points were made. The clause was won on a hard-fought amendment, and we shall see a great deal of hard debate in Committee. I hope that the Government's attempts will be resisted, and that they fail. I shall certainly be part of the opposition.

The Opposition's amendment provides the correct approach. We welcome certain aspects of the Bill, and reject others because we believe that they are wrong in principle. But that must be argued in Committee. At this stage the argument is essentially between substantial deregulation and saving what beneficial general factory legislation we can. The Opposition are right. The Government are seeking the lowest common denominator, whereas the Opposition are seeking the highest common factor in industrial welfare. I believe that we shall have much support in the country.

7.54 pm

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): I join others in congratulating the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) on an excellent maiden speech. It is strange that during this debate she should remind us that she is the first lady hon. Member on the Liberal Benches since 1951, and only the fifth or sixth in the history of the Liberal party. I feel sure that she will persuade her party that there should be a little less discrimination and a few more candidates of her sex. That is an act of positive discrimination that one expects from time to time in politics.

The hon. Lady has said that she comes from a beautiful area, which I know, and that it has a coastline. As I represent an area which includes Ashby-de-la-Zouch, which is the furthest point from the sea in whichever direction one goes, I envy her. I certainly enjoy the coast, and especially boating. She mentioned lifeboats and having once been rescued by a lifeboat I know how valuable and important that service is. She said that the Liberal party hoped to restore teachers' morale, but as someone who is in education, I can assure her that Conservative Members do not intend to wait to the year 2086 for that. We look for a restoration of teachers' morale in the near future.

As is so often the case, I follow the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch). When I refer to him as an hon. Gentleman it has great meaning because he is in every way a gentleman. He does not deny that his approach to the Bill is the old-fashioned approach of a gentleman towards a lady. He feels that women need the protection of legislation, and speaks of protection for women. But I often wonder whether he is talking of protection from women. He rather reminds me of the story, which we all know, of the boy scout and the blind lady. The boy scout insists on leading her across a road, despite her wish not to cross the road but to continue on her way. I often wonder whether that is not the case with the protectionists' approach to legislation, and whether in this day and age women want that protection.

The Conservative party and I believe that women feel that they do not require the protection that was there formerly. Heaven forbid that we shall see women down the mines and in the quarries. I know that in my constituency, which includes many mines, the local National Union of Mineworkers and possibly the Union of Democratic Mineworkers would throw up their hands in horror at a woman at the pit face. I know that last century they used to work there and that many of us would dislike it, but at the end of the day that would be the choice.

Some women enjoy the sort of work that was formerly very much the province of men—for example, repairing cars. The numbers of girls who are taking courses in engineering and car repairs is amazing. One sees them covered in grease as only young men would have been previously. One sees that they enjoy every minute of it and have a thorough knowledge of the engines.

It is a changing world, and one to which we must accommodate ourselves. I am anxious to get used to the changing world. I have a 17-year-old daughter. She, like many other young women, wants to get somewhere in life and achieve something. They do not want only to be wives. I used the wrong phrase; to be a wife is honourable, decent and nice. I am not saying that to be a wife and mother is in any way a lesser job. It is as major a job as any other, but many women do not wish to go down only that path. That is their choice. Educational opportunities are open to them now that were not available previously, and they wish to take full advantage of them.

I do not know whether I welcome the legislation, because I am never happy with legislation that forces people to change their views and attitudes—we have had a series of such Bills over the years and it is a great

[Mr. David Ashby]

pity that they have been necessary. I recognise that such Bills resulted in changes being made, but I wonder whether they created change or followed change. Many of the changes occurred before the legislation. I imagine that a great many women work the sort of hours that the Bill is proposing, but no complaint has been made. They are ahead of the legislation.

As a free trader, I believe in a meritocracy. It is never right or proper to discriminate on any ground whether it be race, sex or colour. Those barriers have been broken down and will continue to be broken down because of the great social changes that have taken place in Britain, especially since the war. It is now accepted that a woman has a right to work equal to her husband's.

Much home life is shared jointly between husbands and wives. I shall not name the hon. Members who have working wives. I telephone them and ask them what they are doing and they say, "I am looking after the baby. This is my bisque night, my night off. My wife is doing something else." The changes have already taken place. To some extent some legislation shuts the stable door after the horse has bolted.

The problem with discrimination is that it is difficult to prove. It is often subtle and, in evidential terms, negligible. One cannot put one's finger on it or demonstrate it. It is not written down in black and white. It is subtle and difficult to deal with. I am always worried about passing legislation that is unenforceable. I welcome the legislation because the freeing of the restrictions would free much of what is unenforceable.

Ms. Richardson: The hon. Gentleman said that some of the discrimination was so subtle that he could not put his finger on it, but some of it is very unsubtle, such as the fact that three quarters of women work for just over two thirds of man's pay. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that is an unsubtle way of confirming women in their dependent position?

Mr. Ashby: I repeat that I believe in a meritocracy. That answers the question of the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson), because it shows that I agree with her. I believe in equal work for equal pay. I am by profession a lawyer. There are many women members of the Bar, and there has been no discrimination since women came to the Bar, although obviously it existed previously in terms of equal pay for equal value and equal work. The fee for defending someone is set; whether one is a man or a woman, one gets that fee. I have worked for a considerable time in a profession that is completely undiscriminatory in that sense. It has been like that since I had the honour to be called to the Bar about 23 years ago.

Mr. Stephen Dorrell (Loughborough): Does my hon. Friend agree that the fact that the pay for male and female barristers is in balance owes nothing at all to any statutory obligation on the part of clients to pay the same to a male as to a female, but owes everything to the excellence of the people concerned? It is not an obligation imposed by law, but something that emerges by concensus.

Mr. Ashby: It goes further than that. It owes itself to the excellence of the clerk who negotiates the best fee for his barrister, whether a man or a woman. I agree that we have never required legislation to have equality at the Bar, and it is much better that it should be so. The changes that are taking place, the social and economic shifts and the other ordinary things that have happened have had a greater effect and will ultimately provide greater and total equality between the sexes at the workplace.

In other professions, too, no legislation has been required to give complete equality. In most Government Departments, there has been no real need for specific legislation to provide equality. There is equality in the medical profession, and no legislation was needed to provide it.

The area in which most discrimination arises is the most difficult for which to legislate. That worries me because it is totally wrong; indeed, it is monstrous. That discrimination occurs in small and medium-sized businesses. Often, larger businesses are ready and willing to take on women. In smaller and medium-sized businesses, one seldom finds female production managers, sales managers, sales directors or production directors. In such businesses, women are relegated to the job of secretary, or to the boring, repetitious jobs at the machine end, doing one process after another at a machine. I do not suggest that such jobs are not necessary and vital. Indeed, some women work in areas where decisions are made, and can show their full value.

I accept that women are different. Thank goodness that I can discriminate between men and women. Women have a special place. There are some things that women do much better than men. People say that women are often more perceptive than men. Women, in a subtle way, can often tell better than men whether someone is telling the truth. In business, there are areas where women are sometimes better than men.

Women have something valuable to give to medium and smaller-size businesses. Some women have a great deal of business acumen and they have succeeded at business management schools and universities. When they reach the next stage, getting a job, they often turn to large businesses. I would like to see far more women in small businesses? It is an area where they could give much. An increased number of women university graduates in business studies would lead to a better quality of managerial staff. Much of the country's wealth can be made in small businesses and they would profit from the better managerial quality that women offer.

Mr. Dorrell: Does my hon. Friend also agree that one of the interesting phenomena of the last few years is that there has not only been a big expansion in the small business sector but a willingness on the part of women to set up their own small businesses? Women's participation in the small business sector is one of the interesting new social phenomena of the past few years.

Mr. Ashby: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for mentioning that. He is absolutely right. The problem is that, so often, women feel that they have to set up their own businesses to give full expression to their abilities. That is sad because there is a great place for women in small businesses. I do not mean the smallest of businesses but those which employ between 200 or 400 employees. Often, it is only the large businesses which have the courage and perspicacity to employ women of calibre and ability in managerial positions.

When we consider schools we appreciate the problems and subtle discriminations that occur. We have often said

that the quality of school leavers, especially males, is bad, but what is happening in our schools is not understood. A few years ago the male school leaver, who did not have great managerial ability and who did not aspire to a managerial position, would leave and take a job in a factory or another labouring job. Now, the male school leaver aspires towards managerial jobs even though he may not have the ability for such a job. The boys stay on longer and look for a better job. I do not blame them for doing so but they often look for a job which is beyond their ability.

Girls tend to leave school at a younger age than boys and take the jobs that the young men would have taken some years ago. That is subtle discrimination. Employers may say that they get young men of 19 coming from school, who cannot read or write properly. The girls come to the employers at the age of 16 or 17 and they can read and write and are very bright indeed. The girls are leaving school earlier than boys yet they may have a good deal of ability and could stay on for higher education and achieve more.

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the fact that people leave school unable to read or write has nothing to do with sex discrimination? It depends on the money which is put into their educational facilities. If the money is not put in, the pupils do not get the right educational opportunities.

Mr. Ashby: No, I do not agree. Thank goodness, we are all individuals and everyone is different. One could pour millions of pounds into the education of some individuals but they would never read or write properly because they do not want to. Such people do not aspire to managerial work but they are given hopes beyond their abilities and expectations. That is not a fair reflection on the teachers. Many teachers spend a great deal of time trying to get people to read and write but at the end of the day they have no success.

A careers master told me that one out of every 10 young school leavers cannot be placed in a job. He said that one could pick that person out at the age of 12 or 13. Such children are given a great deal of care. At the end of the day, they do not wish to stay at school, they are not interested in work and they leave unable to read or write, despite the efforts of teachers. Employers are not terribly happy to have such people and they would positively discriminate in favour of the better educated person.

It would be an unfair reflection on the excellent school in my constituency to suggest that the staff were bad teachers to allow that one person to go through school and to leave without being able to read or write adequately. The teachers have tried all they can but they have not been successful.

Mrs. Shields: With great respect to the hon. Gentleman, I have come recently from the teaching profession and I know that practically no child leaves the school in which I was teaching without being able to read or write, and that applies to boys as well as girls.

We need teachers to cope with those who are slower learners. We need to have special remedial departments. In recent years, with falling rolls, the school numbers have been cut but, instead of giving the schools the opportunity to have smaller classes and to give more attention to the individual child, they have been faced with staff cuts. Over the past three years at my school, five members of staff have had to go. If those staff had been retained those who are slower learners would have had more attention and would have been properly looked after. It is a great shame that, 20 years ago, the Conservatives were encouraging married women to take a two-year course to go into teaching so that there could be smaller classes but now that we have smaller classes they say we must get rid of the teachers.

Mr. Ashby: I do not know what the special situation is with regard to the hon. Lady's education authority—[HON. MEMBERS]:"It applies to all". Since the Conservatives came to power in 1979 the average numbers in schools have consistently dropped. That suggests that the pupil-teacher ratio has dropped and that suggests that more teachers are available than before. That is a statistical fact although I accept that, as with all statistics, there are some areas to which it does not apply.

The hon. Lady said that practically no children left her school unable to read or write adequately. I noted that she said "practically", as that is my experience of the school about which I was talking.

Mrs. Shields: I am talking about one in 10 years.

Mr. Ashby: I am afraid that I come across far greater numbers than that in London, not in my constituency. We know about the special problems in the Inner London education authority and its failures. I have seen inspectors' reports which speak of its failures. That shows how badly a Labour-controlled authority can run education. I lay the blame entirely at the door of the Labour party. It has been party political and it is unable to run London's schooling properly.

I have mentioned women's hours of work and the need to free them to enable them to work the hours that they want. Many factories work flexi-hours in my constituency and others work split shifts. The latter have been of great benefit and work extremely well. The factories work day and night. The women are grateful and I have found nothing but happiness at how they are working. I recommend that system.

My right hon. and learned Friend spoke of retirement pensions and what will happen in view of the recent decision of the European Court of Justice. It is monstrously unfair that women should not be entitled to choose their retirement date in parity with men. That is a long-overdue development. I would welcome greater flexibility and parity. I am aware that that would be extremely expensive, but I hope that we shall work towards it. It will take time, but it is a goal worth aiming for.

Mr. Dorrell: I entirely agree that the signs that changes in retirement law may be written into the Bill in Committee brings into the debate something of enormous importance to all of our constituents. Would my hon. Friend like to give his views about a compulsory retirement age? The Bill is concerned with giving women greater access to work. It seems to me the principle of a compulsory retirement age, whether 60 or 65, is something that the House may wish to consider in much greater detail than it has so far.

Mr. Ashby: I agree with my hon. Friend. The principle of a compulsory retirement age is difficult. Thank goodness we did not have a compulsory retirement age in 1940. Judges now have to retire at 72, but those who

[Mr. Ashby]

started service before the compulsory retirement age was introduced were able to go on. Lord Denning retired only recently, aged 80. He was an exceptional judge and highly regarded by all. Nobody would have wanted to suggest —even if they had dared to—that he should have retired at 75. At that age, he was still going strong. His judgments were exceptionally lucid, good and highly regarded by the profession. He is an example of why a compulsory retirement age may be bad. On the other hand, he may be exceptional.

There is a time, however, when we all have to pack up and give way to a younger man. My hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) said that he spoke for only four minutes yesterday on the shipbuilding industry and had not expected to speak again today. I rather wish that I had spoken on the shipbuilding industry. Nevertheless, I am speaking here today. I feel that I have reached my compulsory retirement time and I must thank the House for listening to me with such attention.

8.26 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): I join other hon. Members in congratulating the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) on her maiden speech. I am sure that it was a portent of things to come. She could not have made it on a more appropriate subject than the Sex Discrimination Bill, if this Bill has anything to do with sex discrimination.

The hon. Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) is also to be congratulated on filling so many words with so few ideas. I was intrigued by the notion that the legal profession, of all professions, is free from discrimination. I wait with interest to see hordes of female High Court judges.

Discrimination against women in employment is not best looked for among the relatively privileged. The hon. Gentleman must accept that there is privilege in the legal profession. Women are represented significantly at the lower end of the market. They tend to do the low-paid jobs which are now difficult to find or have simply disappeared. In Greater Manchester, a significant proportion of women in work receive low pay. The House should address the problem of sex discrimination at the place of work and in other parts of society but it has failed to do so with this tawdry Bill.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the boy scout and the blind old lady. If the old lady is the Prime Minister and the boy scout is the Paymaster General, who has a reputation for liberalism, it is obvious that the boy scout has been unable to have any impact on the old lady in the context of the Bill. That which is good in the Bill has been forced on the Government. The Government have been goaded unwillingly into introducing changes by the powers of external courts.

Clauses 1 and 2, which have been given a cautious welcome by my right hon. and hon. Friends, are the direct result of the European courts and their clear disapproval of existing United Kingdom legislation. We have been slow in amending our law since the decisions of the courts but at least we are now putting our domestic legislation into some sort of order. A recent decision in the case of Miss Marshall gave her the right to remain at work. The decision was greeted with great pleasure by many health workers in my constituency, but it took a court decision on that issue to force the Government to change the law.

The only other good parts of the Bill are those that the Paymaster General has told us he intends to remove from it. These are the provisions that offer some protection for those who will suffer the most direct impact. The measures that the Government propose to take are those that will at best do little to remove discrimination. At worst, they will do active harm to individuals at their place of work in various industries.

There is great fear about the effect of clause 5 when the Bill is enacted. It threatens the repeal of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act, 1954. The Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union is greatly concerned about the results of the clause when it becomes a section. It took that union about 110 years to get an Act on the statute book to protect its members and others, and in relative terms it has enjoyed the protection of an effective piece of legislation for a short time—about 30 years.

The Government pray in aid the views of two employers federations, which say that legislation is not needed and has no impact. If that is so, why remove it from the statute book? Employers have said that they do not think that there will be any major changes, so why are we getting rid of current legislation? Is it part of a legislative tidying-up process? If it is, it is hardly worth wasting the time of the House on the exercise.

Others are far more fearful of the consequences of that which the Government propose, including the bakers union. Some on the employers' side have estimated that about 2,000 jobs may be lost in baking as a result of the repeal. That is a considerable number of jobs, especially as the losses will occur in part in communities which are often hard pressed because of the loss of jobs in other industries. The hon. Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) looks quizzical. If he does not accept my arguments, I shall be glad to send him some of the documentation which is in my possession. There is great fear about the loss of employment opportunities.

I am sure that the Paymaster General recognises that there are voices of experience in the baking industry. I concede that the two months which the right hon. and learned Gentleman spent in the industry is longer than the experience which I can claim, but perhaps he will be modest enough to concede that changes have taken place and that the industry may be somewhat different now from what it was when he was working within it. Some have been locked into it for 40 years whereas the right hon. and learned Gentleman experienced it for but two months before moving off to new and certainly more rewarding pastures.

The baking industry ranks third in the table of industries with long working hours. The hours of those employed within it are exceeded only by merchant seamen and those engaged in the road transport industry. The bakers union can quote working weeks that sometimes exceed 60 hours. We know that there are agreements which take parts of the industry from the control of the current legislation, and it is feared that the unsocial hours and conditions that existed in the industry prior to the introduction of the present legislation will return once the Bill is enacted. That fear is only right and proper. It is a valid fear that individuals and groups of employees in the baking industry will suffer harshly once the Bill is enacted.

We know that shift workers are compensated by shift premiums, which make up in part for having to work shifts as opposed to regular days. Shift working is generally an extemely unsocial activity. It disrupts lifestyles and causes

unique strains, especially to an individual's social life. There are direct effects on those who work shifts, especially when they grow older. The argument that current legislation offers real protection should not be dismissed or pooh-poohed. The Government's case has not been proven. It is said that the lifting of the so-called burden will not do any damage, but that is not an adequate reason by any stretch of the imagination for repealing legislation which is genuinely popular among those in the baking industry.

It is felt by bakers and by some employers that the 1954 Act raises the average standard and protects better employers from unfair competition from the worst. It is important in any industry to prevent the worst employers driving down the standards of the average and the good, and we have not had an adequate response from the Government to that argument.

The same arguments apply to the impact of clause 4. There is not much to recommend that which is set out within it. The great principle of the avoidance of sex discrimination has allowed the Government to slip in provisions which will have a direct impact upon young workers, and I think that even Conservative Members will accept that the young have suffered severely as a result of the Government's recent legislative changes. In various ways they have seen their working rights eroded, and there is to be a further erosion of their rights in the interests, so we are told, of the avoidance of sex discrimination.

The Equal Opportunities Commission, which was prayed in aid in another place, was constructive in its approach to the problem when it recommended an equalisation of legislative controls. It did not urge that controls should be scrapped. It would have been possible for us to consider that in another light. It is sad that the removal of sex discrimination should be used as a guise for crude attacks and an attempt to manipulate the minimal protections that apply in the baking industry and some other industries where, because of relatively weak trade unions or the absence of unions, individual employees have little protection against unscrupulous employers.

The Paymaster General told us of the Government's intention to remove clause 3. It is remarkable that a clause that was inserted in another place with the intention of strengthening the Bill — in reality, it could do little damage to it — is to be deleted, especially if the Government are sincere in their view of what the Bill will do. However, the clause is to be removed because it offends the ideological drive of the Government in their attack upon employees in their places of work. They are not prepared to give the minimal amount of time that clause 3 would provide to allow for adequate and meaningful consultations to take place.

The Minister says that he thinks that it is merely a matter of further delay. Yet the Government delayed for six years before implementing the recommendations of the EOC. They sat on the recommendations and kicked them around for six years, hoping that they would quietly go away. They were suddenly forced into action by the need to introduce legislation following some reverses in the European Court. At best, it is therefore specious for them to say that a delay of a few more months would massively damage the legislation.

I turn to single-sex training. We wait to see the wording of the regulations, but the Minister said that a marginal change was being made, which made no real impact. I am no exponent of the European Community, but the Government refused money from the EC's social fund for single-sex training on the ground that it was discriminatory. Moreover, that happened in the not-too-distant past. We must be suspicious of any attempt to weaken the controls, and that is why I shall watch carefully to see whether the legislation gives protection that guarantees that single-sex training can be used only to enhance the rights of those who have been traditionally discriminated against on the ground of sex in certain areas of employment and training.

It is important to recognise the concept of positive discrimination. Positive discrimination should apply not only to the failure to allow for equality between the sexes but to racial discrimination and so on. Positive discrimination has a role to play in all those areas. Any erosion of that principle through allowing single sex training to be diluted and used wrongly should be deplored.

There is nothing really to commend the Bill to us. It is of rather dubious parentage. Many of its better features will no doubt be pruned back to ensure that any beneficial aspects left in the Bill as a result of consideration in the other place are not allowed to frustrate the Government's intentions. For that reason, I shall certainly join my right hon. and hon. Friends in voting against the Bill.

8.42 pm

Mr. Timothy Wood (Stevenage): I join with others in congratulating the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields) on her most excellent maiden speech. I was largely brought up in Nidderdale, so I, too, know the beauties of the north Yorkshire countryside. Having lived for the past 20 years in the south of England, I very much miss the grandeur of the north Yorkshire moors and the beauties of the seascape near Filey. It is a most attractive part of the world, and I envy her representing such a beautiful area.

One can sympathise with many of the principles underlying the desire for equal opportunities, but I sometimes wonder whether our legislation achieves what we have in mind. Curiously enough, I remember twice being aware of obvious sex discrimination and both times it was in favour of women. On the first occasion, I was a school governor. Although by law there should be no discrimination, by the time that I was involved in the selection process for a deputy head teacher, the only remaining application forms came from women. It was rightly thought that as there were two male deputy heads, it was appropriate that the next, at least, should be female. It was not made too public, but that discrimination occurred.

On the second occasion, I was involved in a voluntary group where the tendency was for many more males to take an interest in joining. There can be no doubt that discrimination in favour of women took place in the vetting of applications to join that group. Thus, it is sometimes advantageous to women to discriminate.

Unless we are careful, the way in which we deal with equal opportunities and sex discrimination may lead us into rather bizarre situations. I must confess that I have considerable reservations about the provisions in the Bill relating to employment in private homes. The limitations on choice for employment in private homes are far too strict. The examples given in speeches in the other place reveal the incredible difficulties that could arise. It is quite unreasonable to limit choice in that way when it comes to

[Mr. Timothy Wood]

employing one or two people in a private home. When the Bill is considered in detail, I hope that more thought will be given to the precise wording.

There is a case for changing the position affecting small firms, but I wonder whether the new provisions will markedly benefit women. In a small firm of two or three people, a prejudiced employer who has to employ a man or woman whom he does not wish to employ may make his life miserable until he chooses to leave. It may not be possible to afford any legislative protection against that. I am well aware that some small firms prefer to employ women. I know of some small firms doing minor electronic work that rightly or wrongly believe—far be it for me to judge—that women do the repetitive work involved more satisfactorily than their male counterparts. They may be right. I wonder whether it is sensible to impose constraints on such small firms that will be difficult to enforce in reality.

I have considerable sympathy with the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) on hours of work. However, I have received a petition from many women working for a large organisation in my constituency who want the restraints on hours of working to be removed because they are prejudicial to their interests and they want more freedom. I accept that that implies the possible freedom to exploit, but perhaps such exploitation is mutual. Therefore, while I have some reservations about the advantages of change, I accept the general proposition for it.

My right hon. and learned Friend said that legislation would be introduced in Committee to deal with compulsory retirement ages. That is highly desirable and I believe that it will be the most important item in the Bill. One paradox in our distinction in ages of retirement is that they were originally introduced about 40 years ago to provide protection for women. Today, women—quite reasonably in some instances—feel that it is not a protection but an inhibition of their rights and freedoms. I hope that there will be equality of treatment in both retirement ages and pensions so that men and women can retire at the appropirate age for them.

The Bill has a considerable amount to offer, and when it is amended in Committee it will have even more to offer.

8.52 pm

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): The Government have once again been forced to legislate because they have lost in the European Court. It is a habit of British Governments to lose in the European Court, and having done so they run screaming to the House, protesting all the way, to legislate to rectify all their unfair actions. They have lost over mental health, over housing and now over sex discrimination. No doubt in the not too distant future they will lose again and again.

There is one thing wrong with British legislation—it forgets that human beings are people. It does not matter whether they are black, white, Catholic, Protestant, male or female—they are all equal. We seem to forget that, so once again we have lost.

Although the Bill contains some good bits, it also contains some awful bits. The Government do not realise that when bathing a new baby, when they want to throw away the water they may throw the baby out with it. In this case, the baby is the baking industry, and I shall discuss that in more detail later.

I am a lawyer, and during the past 20 years an increasing number of women have entered the profession. That is especially true of the Law Society, which is rather more advanced in its attitudes than the Bar, and I have experience of both. Those women have brought to the profession an excellence that is second to none. Law Society examination figures show that at least 50 per cent. of new entrants passing exams are women. Anyone in legal practice knows the way in which women have developed techniques that are of great assistance to the public. Therefore, I am pleased that one good part of the Bill is the removal of restrictions on small businesses and partnerships. — My experience is that the careers of women have been blocked, especially in professional practices, by the failure of older male partners to take them into partnership, which should be the logical development of their careers. The removal of restrictions can only be to the betterment of the profession and, ultimately, will enhance the quality of service to the public. After all, the profession exists to serve the public. I am sure that many right hon. and hon. Members would agree that the quality of the profession has been enhanced during the past few years by the increasing number of women and the quality of service that they provide.

The most appalling part of the Bill relates to the baking industry. It is almost discriminatory against men because it takes away a protection for male employees. I know that some large companies would welcome the removal of restrictions so that their factories can churn through the night, the dough can flow and the bread can roll out of the ovens. It does not really matter how long people work through the night. In a civilised society, do we want to condemn people to work all night?

Mr. Gerald Malone (Aberdeen, South): Hear, hear.

Mr. Bermingham: The hon. Gentleman obviously agrees with me. Sometimes when I think about this House I wonder why we are condemned to work all night and why a little civilistation does not creep in occasionally. Perhaps when we have legislated for other sectors we will legislate to amend our working practices to have reasonable hours of work.

In 1954 an enlightened piece of legislation was introduced that placed a number of restrictions on the baking industry. For example, it provided that at night bakeries no one should work between 6 pm and 6 am for more than 26 weeks in a year, or for more than four consecutive weeks during those 26 weeks. The result was that families were not destroyed because the husband had to work all night. There must be a time for families to be together. That was a very sensible piece of legislation, which perhaps did not go far enough.

The matter was considered as recently as 1976, when a report of the Equal Opportunities Commission on health and safety legislation considered whether we should distinguish between men and women.

When night work and the number of hours which one can work in an industry are restricted, the people, male or female, who work in the industry are protected. Clause 5 takes away that sensible social protection. Why should we take it away? Those who work in the industry, and who will have to work much longer hours, do not want the clause. Why should we add it to a Bill which, on the face of it, is quite sensible?

The Bill provides a sense of equality regarding retirement. I am sure that all hon. Members have had

correspondence from female constituents — I have received correspondence from those who work in the gas industry, and others—saying that they do not want to retire at 60. Some women who are fit and healthy want to work longer, and they want freedom of choice. I agree with the hon. Member for Stevenage (Mr. Wood) that the Bill is enhanced by that provision.

Why should we add clause 5 to the Bill? Clause 5 devalues the Bill, because it takes away the protection that has existed in the baking industry for 32 years. The Government have decided to take away a measure which protects the employees of that industry. The Government have been forced into this legislation. Instead of introducing something worthwhile, they have added a stupid clause. Perhaps they will see sense.

9 pm

Mr. John Evans (St Helen's, North): I join other hon. Members who have paid tribute to the maiden speech of the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields). I compliment her on the remarks she made. It was entirely appropriate that she should make her maiden speech on the Sex Discrimination Bill. I endorse her comment that the House has had many noble sons of this land but not enough daughters. The truth is that the House has hardly any daughters of this land. I hope that, as the years roll by, that will be put right as more women take their place in the House.

The hon. Lady said that she was the first Liberal women Member of Parliament since 1951. I gently remind her that the hon. Lady who was a Liberal Member in 1951, Lady Megan Lloyd George, subsequently joined the Labour party and sat for many years in the House as a distinguished Labour Member. The hon. Lady said that she has an enormous knowledge of her constituency. I am sure that that will stand her in good stead in future in the comments and speeches she will make in the House about her constituency and constituents.

I was a little puzzled at the hon. Lady's remarks at the end of her speech, although I do not blame her for that. She was only carrying out the usual muddled instructions of the leadership of her party. Apparently, the Liberal party has decided that Labour's reasoned amendment does not go far enough. Therefore, it intends to vote against it. I find that rather odd. I should have thought that if the Liberal party thought the amendment did not go far enough, it would have supported it and sought, in Committee, to amend it and stiffen our opposition to the Bill. If the Liberals follow their usual track record, we shall see very little of them when we are in Committee.

Mr. Malcolm Bruce (Gordon) *rose*——

Mr. John Evans: If the hon. Gentleman wishes to intervene, I shall give way to him.

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975 was a landmark in the political and industrial life of our society. It sought to eradicate generations, even centuries, of discrimination and unequal status suffered by women. That unequal status touched almost every aspect of our society and was probably at its heaviest and worst in employment and economic activity. No one can deny that far too many women were relegated to the unskilled and most menial work and, for their pains, received less remuneration than unskilled men doing similar work. Very few women were promoted to positions of authority over men, or even to equality with them. Far too few young girls were offered apprenticeships in many of the craft industries. The position has changed somewhat over the past few years. As a sponsored member of the AUEW, I am proud of the fact that a number of young women have served apprenticeships and are craftsmen in our union. They enjoy all the facilities of our great union.

The 1975 Act is not perfect. No one ever claimed that it was, but it was a massive step forward in changing attitudes, especially among men, and it laid down an excellent framework which I expected that successive governments would improve and build on as the years went by and attitudes improved, especially among employers and men.

I certainly expected that, following the election of Britain's first woman Prime Minister in 1979, the cause of women's rights would receive a massive boost. However, as we have all learnt — and as women in particular have learned to their bitter cost —not only is this Prime Minister not remotely interested in promoting women's rights, but she has also presided over a Government who have constantly reduced and undermined the very modest gains that women have made since the passage of the Sex Discrimination Act and the Employment Protection Act.

In that context, it is interesting to note the White Paper that the Paymaster General introduced today; I draw particular attention to paragraph 7.6 which relates to employment law. Here again we see that the Government are intent on further diminishing the rights of women who have given birth to a child and could return to a job within 29 weeks, except if the firm that she worked for had fewer than five employees. The Government now intend to change this limit to fewer than 10. That is another example of how this Government are constantly seeking to reduce the limited rights that women have obtained—and this on the selfsame day as the Second Reading of the Sex Discrimination Bill.

However, when the Government announced their intention to introduce a new Sex Discrimination Bill to fulfil their obligations under the EEC equal treatment directive, all our hopes were renewed that this woman-led Government would at last do something positive to improve the quality of life for working women. We should have known better. As soon as the original Bill was presented in the other place, we saw with dismay that the Government were seizing the opportunity to introduce a deregulation measure to level standards and protection downwards rather than grasping the opportunity to level standards upwards.

In fact, this Bill has the potential to allow even more exploitation than it seeks to remove, while masquerading as a reform of benefit to men and women. In its original form, it was selective and niggardly in its concessions to the Government's obligations to the EEC equal treatment directive and the need to improve the Sex Discrimination Act after 11 years of operation.

Apart from the amendments made to the Sex Discrimination Act in line with the EEC recommendations, the Bill's idea of equality is to bring everyone down to the same level. It seeks to find the lowest common denominator instead of the highest common multiple. It is not rash to say that the Government sought to use the original Act to further their free market philosophy in terms of working practices and conditions. Indeed, when the Bill was first presented in the other place, it made the

[Mr. John Evans]

Government appear naive—that is a charitable view—foolish, indifferent or cruelly calculating, depending on one's political perspective, when one considers how much it would have left employers and employees to do to resolve differences over hours, conditions and work practices after the Bill had removed previous safeguards.

These points are worth making because the Bill as printed, although by no means perfect, was much improved, thanks to the success of several Lords amendments. I intend to make several points about each clause and to ask several questions to clarify the Government's intentions in relation to the Lords amendments.

Clauses 1 and 2 deal specifically with the objections found in the EEC equal treatment directive. We welcome that. The first is the way in which the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 exempted small firms of five or fewer employees from its provisions as well as employment in households. The clauses do so by removing the exemption for small firms and private households from section 6(3) of the Sex Discrimination Act and by extending section 7(2) to say exactly in what circumstances a man or woman can be considered for employment in a private household. There are few objections to this, although the other place had to force the Government to bring in an amendment to extend the removal of the exemption from small firms to firms with partners as well. Even here, the Secretary of State objected that small firms already had enough on their plates, as he put it, without having to consider legislation to cover discrimination.

Secondly, clause 2 amends section 77 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Section 77 made a contract or part of it void if it contravened the terms of the Act—that is, if it were discriminatory. Clause 2 extends this provision to cover the terms of collective agreements, those with trade unions for example, rules made by employers, other than employment contracts or agreements for entering or dealing with a professional or trade association or authority that confers qualifications.

The clause also amends section 77 to make such agreements or rules void where the effective contract of employment is set out in such a way as to contravene the Equal Pay Act 1970. In effect, this repeals section 3, which had provided for such eventualities to be resolved by reference to the Secretary of State or a Government body. Clause 6 actually repeals it.

There is also a provision to ensure that employers do not get round this simply by removing all rights for men and women—for instance, instead of providing equal holiday pay, the company could take away everybody's holiday pay. That would be a rough form of equal treatment. This clause was further strengthened by a Government amendment, following Opposition objections, to extend it to applicants as well as existing employees, as provided for in the Sex Discrimination Act.

On the surface, this all seemed quite good and reasonable, but a major bone of contention arose from the repeal of section 3 of the Equal Pay Act, which could mean that there would be no machinery for enforcement. The Government argued that, whereas previously disagreements arising from contracts, rules or agreements hingeing on the Equal Pay Act could be referred to the Secretary of State or the Central Arbitration Committee, and individual agreements drawn up accordingly, now such dealings will simply be void where they infringe the terms of the Equal Pay Act.

Presumably, the Government, somewhat naively—to put it at its kindest — assumed that employers and employees would come to some agreement simply because the force of the law is supposed to be behind the latter. Unfortunately, all the evidence, particularly in relation to wages council awards, blows something of a hole in that theory. Unless the employees are reasonably organised in trade unions, the evidence is that they will lose.

Why will the Government not introduce machinery to make the provisions of clause 2 enforceable? We shall be pressing the Government on that point in Committee, but I should be grateful if the Minister would deal with it tonight. The Government also point out that the reference to industrial tribunals will still be available, but tribunals were not set up for such a purpose — the Central Arbitration Committee was. Many employees find it difficult, time-consuming, expensive and often detrimental to their job prospects if they appeal to a job tribunal as well.

Additionally, we have the new proposition, in today's White Paper, that the employees have to find £25 if they wish to appear before a tribunal. However, if the Government think that the tribunals are a likely and suitable option, they must be assuming that such disagreements will arise. In the circumstances, why not retain the option of arbitration by the CAC?

In its response to the Bill, the Equal Opportunities Commission, in its briefing document of May 1986, said that the Government's approach

"relies on a combination of collective bargaining and individual litigation. This will be uncertain and random. The discriminatory provision will not be removed and there is no power to enforce renegotiation of the agreement."

The Opposition agree with that. In 1980, the Equal Opportunities Commission recommended that the Equal Pay Act should be amended

"to enable any discriminatory provision, whether direct or indirect, in a collective agreement, pay structure or wages regulation order to be referred to the CAC which should have the power to amend all discriminatory provisions therein."

The Government have not taken the opportunity to incorporate anything of that nature in the Bill.

Clause 3 was inserted in the Bill by the Opposition in the other place. It was designed to stifle, or at least to delay, the implementation of clauses 4 and 5 which seek to remove all restrictions on the employment of women in industry by amending or repealing the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954, the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1984 and the Factories Act 1961.

As for the Mines and Quarries Act, on Sunday I visited the marvellous exhibition at Wigan pier, "The Way we were in 1900". Many of those who saw photographs and descriptions in that exhibition of working conditions for women in industry, particularly in the mining industry, were shocked at the revelations. I am not suggesting for a moment that those conditions will ever return, but I remind the House, in particular the Government, that the battle to remove such onerous conditions on women was fought manfully for many years not only by women but by men, particularly in the trade union movement.

I agree with the powerful speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) who said that women have the right to be protected in certain industrial

conditions. I speak from knowledge of industries such as shipbuilding, ship repairing and steel. Many jobs in those industries can be done by women, but I do not intend to be patronising when I say that I should not like my wife, mother or daughter to have to do certain jobs in those industries. It is essential to retain protection for women in certain areas of industry.

Clause 3 would have retained protection for women until the Government had carried out consultations on the feasibility and desirability of their intentions. They would have been unable to produce a draft report for at least six months and a final report for at least 12 months from the date of Royal Assent. After consultations, the Secretary of State could have made, by statutory instrument, an equal protection order to amend various Acts in order to guarantee equal conditions for men and women at a more considered level than that which would be achieved simply by repealing those Acts, or part of them.

After the consultation procedure and producing a report the Secretary of State could have repealed the provisions of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954, or the recommendations of the Equal Opportunities Commission or the Health and Safety Commission and made an equal protection order to cover the provisions that had been repealed. The intention of clause 3 was not just to cause delay. It was a positive and beneficial clause. Any intelligent Secretary of State would have welcomed its provisions.

Clause 4 provides for the repeal of certain provisions in the Hours of Employment (Conventions) Act 1936, the Mines and Quarries Act 1954 and the Factories Act 1961 as they relate to restrictions upon women's hours of work. They are all subject to clause 7. Clause 4 will make it possible for women to be employed at all hours of the day and night, all week and in shifts starting and finishing at any time.

If I may put in a personal point here, in the light of the bus deregulation that is about to affect society, women who will not voluntarily move to the new hours but may often find that they are forced into working them will suddenly find that there is no public transport to take them to their homes. The Paymaster General may smile, but he knows as well as I do that that is a prospect facing many areas, particularly the more rural areas of the country.

The Opposition see the Bill as, at the very best, a wasted opportunity to balance the requirements of industry with women's needs and family commitments and to level up conditions of work with those of men instead of simply tearing down existing restrictions on women's working practices. At worst, it is an attempt to remove the protection that many women enjoy in their working conditions and leave the field open for exploitation by certain employers.

The Government apparently argue that so many exemptions have already been made to these provisions that they might as well be repealed. However, the exemptions are not the majority. It should not have been beyond the Government's capabilities to study which industries had made these applications, what their requirements were regarding women's working conditions and how women employees had fared in achieving levelling up.

The Government have argued that the gap in strict definitions of women's working hours and conditions will best be filled by negotiations between employees' trade unions and employers. Unfortunately—I hope that the truth comes home to them—women have a relatively poor record regarding trade union organisation. Clause 3 would have given the Health and Safety Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission an effective voice in the operation of clauses 4 and 5, particularly in relation to the protection of women workers.

Clause 5 repeals the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954, so removing the restrictions on the hours of work of men in the industry. An anomaly had grown up, in that, while male operatives were still prevented from working certain hours of the night—for their protection, according to the principles of the 1954 Act—exemptions to the Factories Act 1961 had breached those regulations for women. In theory, women can work longer hours in this industry than men. The same argument applies here, however. No strong body of opinion suggests that the 1954 Act is no longer necessary. The opportunity should have been taken to extend to women the protection currently afforded to men in the industry or some combination thereof, perhaps following consultation as under clause 3. This was the argument of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

As the result of the Government's unwillingness to countenance anything but wholesale repeal of existing protection for workers, the Opposition in the other place carried an amendment to protect existing rights of employees—clause 7. This of course is another clause that is to be removed in Committee by the Government.

As I have argued, while removal of existing restrictions on women's freedom to work certain hours removes an element of discrimination, it also removes certain protections previously employed. This applies especially to men in bakeries if the 1954 Act is repealed. In addition, simple repeal would fail to ensure that women continue to have control of the hours that they work to fulfil their domestic commitments. Clause 7, if it were retained, would ensure that employees continued to benefit from existing legislation, despite clauses 4 and 5, unless they agree otherwise in writing. They would also be protected from dismissal for refusing to work hours not countenanced before the Bill was drafted. In an earlier intervention, I pointed out that even under the Shops Bill the Government were willing to accept a clause protecting the rights of shop workers to refuse to work on Sundays without being sacked as a consequence.

The Government also argue that the removal of restrictions under clauses 4 and 5 will not lead to any wholesale changes in working hours and conditions. If that is the case, why bother to repeal the provision? Why not simply continue to allow exemptions where they are deemed necessary for the sake of the industry concerned, so long as workers' rights are protected?

Clause 8, another clause for the chop, arose from an Opposition amendment for the same motives. Assuming that clauses 4 and 5 are passed and carried into effect, clause 8 would have put on an employer the onus

"to consider the health, safety, welfare and interests of those employees (particularly employees with domestic and family responsibilities) and to make appropriate provision for their health, safety and welfare having regard to the nature and size of his business."

The clause would have empowered the HSC to draft a code of practice to enable it to fulfil its duties more efficiently.

The adherence of employers to such a code could have been taken into consideration if and when he or she was taken to an industrial tribunal by employees. Under the

[Mr. John Evans]

code, the employer's duties would have been separate and additional to his or her duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. The code would have fulfilled a long-standing demand of the Equal Opportunities Commission for a safeguard to be attached to the removal of restrictions on hours of work provisions of the legislation which they saw as being out-dated.

Once again, the Government opposed the amendment, although the code might at least have resolved problems and disagreements resulting from deregulation. The Government also complained that the HSC had no experience of accommodating the domestic arrangements of workers. The Secretary of State argued that it was not the responsibility of the employer to accommodate the workers in that way. Those arguments, especially the latter, can be taken with a pinch of salt, given the economic climate. Many people are willing to take any job, often in desperation. The measures outlined were designed to prevent precisely such exploitation after deregulation.

Although we welcome the Secretary of State's announcement about the pension rights of women, following the judgment in the European Court of Justice, we do not think that it goes far enough. The view of the Equal Opportunities Commission is correct. Although it welcomed the Government's proposal to give women the right to retire at the same age as men, the EOC warned that the Government's failure to tackle the wider problems caused by unequal state pension ages would only add to the confusion and the frustration faced by men and women over retirement.

The significant words of the EOC are:

"the Commission believes that a similar amendment will be needed to the Equal Pay Act to keep it in line with the amended SDA. The EOC also welcomes the proposal to give both sexes the right to claim unfair dismissal up to the age of 65, when no normal retirement age is in operation. . . . However, the Marshall ruling highlights once more the need to equalise the State pension age for men and women. Many men now stop work before 65 and find discrimination and hardship in not being able to claim State pension until they reach 65. The new proposals are likely to make the position worse. For example, a woman between the age of 60 and 64 will not have to pay national insurance contributions and her eventual State pension will be increased for each year that she works over the age of 60. A man will not have this option."

One would have thought that the Government would have taken the opportunity of a Sex Discrimination Bill to put that anomaly right.

The proposal to amend section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, is also mentioned in paragraph 7.7 of the new White Paper "Building Businesses—Not Barriers". Given the nature of everything else in the White Paper, we will consider carefully whatever amendment the Government table in Committee to see precisely what they are driving at.

The Bill as drafted was originally a bad Bill because of its likely effects for the work force. Those effects would have been mitigated as it was amended. However the Government, by announcing that they will remove clauses 3, 7 and 8—proposals which the Opposition will fight in Committee—have made this Bill as bad as it was when first printed.

We believe that the Government should scrap these plans for deregulation and proceed along the lines of consultation and worker protection embodied in the Lords amendments and the EEC directive. That is why we have tabled our reasoned amendment, which declines to give this inadequate and unsatisfactory Bill a Second Reading. I urge the House to vote for our amendment tonight.

9.30 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment (Mr. Ian Lang): When my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General and Minister for Employment opened the debate he said that the Sex Discrimination Bill was a further step towards equality of opportunity for men and women. During our wide-ranging debate today it has become clear that there are differences of opinion about some of the detailed provisions of the Bill. I look forward to interesting discussions on these when we consider certain parts of the Bill in Committee.

It is my pleasant duty to welcome the hon. Member for Ryedale (Mrs. Shields). She succeeds the late and sadly missed Mr. John Spence who served, as the hon. Lady said, with distinction in this House. From 1970 he represented the constituents of Sheffield, Heeley, then of Thirsk and Malton and latterly of Ryedale. For 13 years he was a member of the Chairmen's Panel and he was a member and latterly a Chairman of the Select Committee on Agriculture. If the hon. Lady matches her predecessor's dedication to the interests of her constituents, she will do well. She has already demonstrated a knowledge of her constituency and its problems. Her fluency in presenting that case does her credit. The House will look forward to hearing from her again.

I must begin by taking exception to the Opposition amendment. The amendment tries to hinder the Government from fulfilling our country's international obligations and especially our duty under the treaty to implement EC directives. The first two clauses remedy loopholes which the European Court of Justice found in the Labour Government's Sex Discrimination Act 1975. The Opposition introduced that Act and it has proved itself perishable in the extreme.

Since the Bill was published, the European Court has issued another ruling. This refers to retirement and it requires another amendment to the legislation. The Government have acted with great speed to implement the latest judgment. We issued a consultative document within five weeks of the court's ruling and we expect to have tabled a new clause to the Bill within four months of the ruling. The hon. Member for St. Helens, South (Mr. Bermingham) must realise that it is not this Government's record at the European Court that is bad. Rather it is the durability and adequacy of the previous Labour Government's legislation that is bad.

The Opposition's motion is not accurate.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister not agree that our track record before the European Court of Justice is appalling? It does not matter which Government introduced which piece of legislation. Some of the pre-1964 legislation has been successfully challenged; some of the 1970-74 legislation has been challenged and there are several cases pending against post-1979 legislation. That is all Tory Government legislation. Does he not agree that when we lose we ought to lose a little more gracefully than we have in the past, especially during the past four years?

Mr. Lang: The hon. Gentleman should recognise the speed with which we have reacted to the European Court's ruling. That was a ruling on the inadequacy of legislation passed by the Labour Government.

The Opposition motion is not accurate. It states that we have failed to apply the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 to collective agreements. That is not so. A copy of the Bill was sent to the European Commission when it was published so that they could see how we were planning to implement the judgment. We have not been asked to make any changes.

The Government accepted a number of proposals put forward for improving the Bill from another place. For example, there is the improvement which provides for provision in partnerships put forward by the chairman of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

The hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Weetch) accused the Government of yielding to European judgments with bad grace. However, that is evidence of the Government's flexibility in that matter. Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman said, the court ruling did not cover partnerships. That was an improvement to the Bill which my right hon. and noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment accepted in another place when it was put forward by Lady Platt. My hon. and noble Friend also made it clear that he opposed discrimination in any size of firm but recognised that small firms do not always have the administrative resources to deal with complex legislation.

The scope of the private homes provision, to which the hon. Member for Barking (Ms. Richardson) referred, has been clarified following expressions of concern that the original wording was imprecise and could lead to unnecessary litigation. I know that some hon. Members are deeply concerned over what they see as an intrusion by the Bill into private life, but I can assure the House that the Government, and indeed the EC, consider that the principle of respect for private life is fundamental. It will still be possible to choose an employee of a particular sex in circumstances where the job holder would be involved in the household's private life; for example, where the job is to give nursing care or companionship to a member of the family.

Clause 2 has also been improved in another place to provide that discriminatory rules by an employer in respect of applicants for jobs will be void.

There was another interesting debate on equal opportunities in the House last Wednesday. The Government asked the House to take note of three EC proposals on equal opportunities which we regard favourably and to endorse the Government's commitment to the principal of equal treatment. Again, the Opposition put down a quite inaccurate amendment referring to lack of commitment to the principle of equal treatment on the part of the Government, and in particular our so-called obstruction of equal pay for work of equal value. The Government were able to describe the array of provision we have made in all aspects of equal opportunities, in particular our record on getting women into jobs and on improving vocational training opportunities. We also pointed out that we had implemented the European Court ruling on equal pay for work of equal value, which resulted from a gap in the original Labour Government's Equal Pay Act 1970. The Opposition also attempted to criticise the Government for their failure to extend invalid care allowance to married women, which again was discrimination introduced by the previous Labour Administration.

The Opposition's amendment says that the Bill fails to act on collective agreements. The equal treatment directive requires that any provisions contrary to the principle of equal treatment which are included in collective agreements, individual contracts of employment, internal rules of undertakings or in rules governing the independent occupations and professions, shall be or may be declared null and void or may be amended.

The Government argued before the court that that requirement is already met in relation to collective agreements under United Kingdom law and they argued that on two main grounds. First, "void" must, in the Government's view, mean of no legal effect. Where a collective agreement is not legally binding, as is the case with the vast majority of collective agreements in the United Kingdom, none of its provisions, whether discriminatory or not, is of legal effect. Where exceptionally a collective agreement is made legally binding, section 77 of the Sex Discrimination Act makes void any term in it which will involve those carrying it out in an act of unlawful sex discrimination.

The court was satisfied that section 77 of the Sex Discrimination Act dealt adequately with legally binding collective agreements but ruled that the directive covers all collective agreements and that there should be corresponding provision for non-binding agreements. Discrimination arises when collective agreements includes single sex terms such as separate provisions for men and women or provisions applicable to one sex only. That is why the Government are proposing in the Bill to amend the Sex Discrimination Act so as to formally void discriminatory terms in present and future collective agreements, whether the terms occur in the same agreements or different agreements between the same parties. It is not thought that there are many such terms in existence today or that they are likely to be negotiated in future.

Therefore, I cannot agree that the clause on collective agreements will not work satisfactorily. Of course we hope that very few discriminatory collective agreements have been entered into. But in so far as they have, the offending terms will be void, and it is in the interests of the parties to negotiate a new non-discrimatory term to fill the void. Until they do, every employee who suffers discrimination as a result of the original term will be able to complain to an industrial tribunal under existing provisions and possibly be awarded compensation or back pay. No sensible negotiators will want to live in such an uncertain situation. But the Bill ensures that the delay in renegotiation will have no adverse effect on the employment contract of an individual employee.

I imagine that there may be interesting discussions in Committee about the need for the Central Arbitration Committee to be involved in enforcement of the provisions of clause 2. I do not want to anticipate those, but must say that having listened carefully to the points put forward by some hon. Members today I am not convinced that such an enforcement mechanism is necessary. We are convinced that we have implemented the European Court judgment and equally convinced that victims of sex discrimination have effective redress through our industrial tribunal system.

[Mr. Lang]

We do not need a new system of enforcement for sex discrimination cases, and the European court ruling did not suggest this. Its judgment was essentially a technical one and we are implementing it with this Bill. The court accepted that section 77 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 implemented the directive in relation to legally binding collective agreements, but held that the lack of corresponding provision for non-binding agreements meant that the directive was not fully implemented. In our view, the court saw a formal voiding provision as an important presentational measure which would set the tone for collective agreements and filter through to practical results on the ground. This change implements the court's judgment, and the Government do not see the need to establish a special enforcement procedure beyond what is required of us.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General said at the start of the debate that we wanted to hear the views of the House on the three substantial additions made to this Bill in another place. We have listened to the arguments put forward, but we are still not convinced that the additional clauses are necessary.

The hon. Member for Ipswich spoke about clause 3 which was introduced by an amendment tabled by Lord Wedderburn in the other place. In practice, it will impose further delays before the existing discriminatory restrictions on hours of work can be removed. If the Health and Safety Commission or the Equal Opportunites Commission were so minded, it could prevent the Secretary of State simply repealing legislation under clause 9(3) and force him to follow the procedure set out in the new clause.

This procedure involves a time lapse of at least a year during which a lot must happen. The Secretary of State must conduct extensive consultations with employers and trade unions and he must seek the views of the Health and Safety Commission and the Equal Opportunities Commission. He must also publish a draft report of interim proposals, and nothing can happen until a final report is published setting out the proposals for amendments. After all this, the Secretary of State may finally make an equal protection order amending any of the relevant enactments or may carry forward the necessary repeals. It is not clear to us what purpose this further delay would serve. The issue has been discussed for six years, ever since the Equal Opportunities Commission recommended the repeal of the restrictions affecting women in 1979.

Before 1979, the Equal Opportunities Commission had consulted widely and given the whole matter careful consideration. In 1979 the Health and Safety Commission was asked to consider the EOCs proposals on women's hours but has been unable to reach a consensus on how this discriminatory legislation can be reformed. That is why the Government have decided to act now. Further consultation is unlikely to achieve any greater degree of consensus than now exists. Indeed, it is more likely that at the end of the further consultation period that this new procedure would require, the Secretary of State would be no further on than he is now. He would still have to take decisions weighing in the balance the same arguments that the Government have taken into account.

We are not convinced of the case for keeping clause 7, introduced in another place by an amendment tabled by the noble Lord McCarthy. The clause aims to limit the discretion of industrial tribunals by giving new absolute rights to employees who, at the date of the commencement of the Bill, are subject to the restrictions on working hours and other working conditions which are removed by the Bill. The so-called protection provided by this new clause is to a great extent implicit in existing employment protection legislation, and we wonder whether Opposition fears are not out of all proportion to the size of the problem that this clause is meant to remedy.

The repeal of these hours of work restrictions will not lead to the wholesale imposition of dramatic changes in working hours. A manufacturer will only alter hours if he has the orders to justify it or if circumstances demand it. He is not likely to incur the additional costs that longer or unsocial hours usually involve without good reason, and is certainly unlikely to do so without fully consulting his work force.

Another difficulty stems from the uncertainties of the employer confronted by the new clause. What exactly does it require of him? If he lets things ride, then presumably his employees will continue to have their conditions dictated by the restrictions, and he must continue to shoulder the bureaucratic burden of record keeping, posting notices and so on. If he attempts to rid himself of this burden, he must secure the agreement of each of his workers, but they are unlikely to give this until they know precisely what they are letting themselves in for. Either way, the employer is stuck with the burden. As his work force turns over, new employees will be taken on and will accept employment on the terms that he offers.

Mr. Bermingham: Does the Minister not agree that in a society which has between 4 million and 5 million people looking for work, often the employers are in a better bargaining position to enforce changes of hours? Therefore, the employee will be in a worse position, because he will know that 10 or 15 people want his job and that one of them will get it if he seeks to stand up for his existing rights.

Mr. Lang: That is certainly not how we see the picture, nor does the evidence bear out the hon. Gentleman's case.

The employer ends up with a two-tier work force, some restricted, others not. That will create major administrative costs and will lead to greater inflexibility with all the negative effects that that may have on job creation. Nor is it clear how the rights given by the new clause would sit with the current systems of exemptions that employers have. Employees who are now working at times which would be prohibited, were it not for the special exemption order, will no doubt have those very restrictions incorporated into their contract of employment. The new clause thereafter allows more of the flexibility which the present far from perfect system offers.

In some ways the most worrying of the three new clauses is clause 8, introduced by Lady Platt's amendment in another place. The all-encompassing nature of the new clause on all employers, not just those who are at present subject to the hours of work legislation—which is the subject of the Bill—makes its implications all the more profound. My Department has always encouraged employers to consider the welfare and interests of their employees in the furtherance of good industrial relations.

We go much further than encouragement when considering people's health and safety. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 puts all employers under a

general duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees. But this amendment goes beyond that. It imposes as a new statutory requirement on an employer the duty to consider the interests of employees and, in particular, the interests of his employees with domestic and family responsibilities where changes in working hours are contemplated. It would be his duty to consider the health, safety and welfare of his employees, not only at work, but elsewhere.

There is no evidence to suggest that there is any need to place an inflexible statutory obligation on employers, requiring an approach which, to all intents and purposes, most adopt already. To do so would impose a burden on employers which, even if the duty were clear cut, would put further strain on the willingness of enterprise to expand and create jobs. That point has been impressed on us by several different employers federations since the clause was introduced in another place. For all those reasons, we remain unconvinced that the three clauses are necessary, but we shall give further thought to what has been said today before Committee stage, and we look forward to contributions from hon. Members in Committee.

Today we published a White Paper on deregulation. As it makes clear, the rights of people in employment must be balanced against the needs of those who are unemployed. I say that particularly to the hon. Members for Barking and for St. Helens, South, who referred to this publication. We believe that too-strict regulation of part-time work and return to work after giving birth works to the detriment of unemployed women, especially the one third of unemployed women who are seeking part-time jobs. In any event, only one twelfth of women exercise their right to return to work after maternity leave. Some small firms will continue to be able to accommodate that in future, but keeping a job open can be highly disruptive and expensive for a small firm. We do not want to discourage them from creating jobs or from offering jobs to women.

When the Bill is passed there will be no qualifying period in terms of size, hours or years for complaints under the Equal Pay Act 1970 or the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 by women who have won cases under the Sex Discrimination Act where they were dismissed for reasons associated with pregnancy when a man in ill health would not have been dismissed. The White Paper will contribute to a balance between job protection and job creation.

During the debate some hon. Members have argued that of all the restrictions on women's hours, one in particular continues to be needed, and that is the restriction on women's night work. They have been at pains to stress that, although night work may be necessary in certain limited circumstances, it is nevertheless bad for all employees, women and men alike. For that reason, they would have us believe that, far from removing restrictions on women's hours, we should extend legislative controls to men.

Yet an objective assessment of the available evidence does not justify the dogmatic statement that all night work is harmful. In reality, the evidence on the effects of night work and long hours is inconclusive. In 1978, Dr. J. Harrington conducted a critical review of the major references, including the work reported on by the ILO report, "Night Work", relating to shift work and health for the Employment Medical Advisory Service of the Health and Safety Executive. He concluded that the evidence of any major effect on health was slim. Since the publication of this report there has been no new evidence to change its conclusions. Certainly there is no evidence to suggest that the effects on health are different for women than for men.

We must not lose sight of the vital role played by the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. This comprehensive Act which outlines the new approach for regulating health, safety and welfare in the work place, recommended by the Robens committee, has now taken centre stage, leaving the older legislation such as the Factories Act 1961 and the Mine and Quarries Act 1954 to play subsidiary roles. The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act imposes on employers a general duty to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees at work.

I cannot emphasise strongly enough that the repeals which we envisaged would not have discharged employers from their responsibilities to consider the effects on employees of hours of work, including any changes even had the Bill emerged unchanged from another place.

Some claim that the repeals in clauses 4 and 5 of the Bill originate exclusively from our wish to remove the burden on business. They claim that, in our eyes, the removal of discrimination is very much by the way. That view misrepresents our position. We are committed to removing discrimination so that women enjoy the same opportunities as men. We are committed to erasing the out-of-date view of women enshrined in this legislation — the paternalistic view that women are not capable of deciding for themselves the hours they are prepared to work. We believe it is high time that women shed this somewhat second-class status. Women in factories deserve and want the same freedom of choice on hours as the men whom they work alongside. Surely there is no justification nowadays for different treatment regarding the hours that men and women work.

As well as distinguishing between men and women, the restrictions also mean that women are treated differently according to where they work. Today there are more than 9 million working women. Of those, some 7·5 million work where there are no legislative restrictions on the hours worked. This includes jobs in hospitals, in the police, hotels, catering and in the entertainment industry. With such work there are, inevitably, unsocial hours.

Mr. Evans: Low-paid jobs.

Mr. Lang: The other 1·5 million women work in manufacturing where there are statutory controls on the hours worked. The hon. Member for St. Helens, North (Mr. Evans) mutters, from a sedentary position, about low pay. He ought to be aware—I have told him on several occasions from the Dispatch Box—that the average pay for men has risen substantially above the rate of inflation in the past seven years but the average pay of women has risen by substantially more. The gap is closing considerably.

Mr. Evans: Will the Minister concede that, notwithstanding that what he says may be true, the average wage of women, particularly in the industries that he has mentioned is still substantially below men and that such jobs are officially classified as low-paid jobs?

Mr. Lang: The average wages for women are indeed lower than the average wages for men, but that is because they tend to do different jobs which are in themselves inherently lower paid than those for men.

[Mr. Lang]

I repeat to the hon. Gentleman, yet again, that as we have escaped the controls of the Labour Government's wage control policy and the distortions that that created, the wages of women have substantially advanced and the divergence between the advance of women's wages and men's wages has been very much to the credit of the Government.

We have also been accused of over-emphasising the need for deregulation. It is claimed that we are obsessed with that principle, even at the expense of removing protection from what some see as vulnerable sectors of the work force. The restrictions on women's working hours do encumber those employers who have to run their businesses under such controls. The system of enforcement is bureaucratic in the extreme. It requires employers to keep numerous records, post forms and notices which need continuous updating to show any minor changes.

The system of exemption imposes another burden. Some 200,000 women work at times which would be prohibitive but for the existence of special exemption orders. Of that figure, some 80,000 are working at some time during the night. The restrictions have little practical effect and the paper chase involved in obtaining an exemption is just the sort of red tape which should be cut away. It achieves nothing positive and only hampers the employer and costs the taxpayer money to administer.

Much of today's debate has hinged on the baking industry. I was interested to learn of the talents not only of my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General but also my hon. Friend the Member for Langbaurgh (Mr. Holt) who demonstrated considerable skills and knowledge of the industry.

We have heard arguments pressing us to extend the coverage of the Baking Industry (Hours of Work) Act 1954 to include women instead of repealing it. We believe, however, that extension would be nonsense. It has been argued that repeal will remove a valuable protection for health and safety of the industry but the Act originated not so much on grounds of health and safety as to resolve long-standing problems that the industry had experienced in reaching sensible and workable agreements on hours of work. There is no observable evidence that the Act's provisions have in any way improved the health and safety of bakery workers; nor is there any evidence that its repeal will have a detrimental effect. More than two thirds of the industry's work force is now covered by the terms of collective agreements which bring exemption from the provisions of the Act.

The hon. Member for St. Helens, North spoke of workers in the baking industry working for 60 hours a week. That figure is simply not accurate. We have received representations from the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union saying that the average working week in the bread, flour and confectionery sector is 49·9 hours. Even if the hon. Gentleman's figure were correct, it would tend to prove that the 1954 Act has served not to protect the interests of bakery workers. There are at least four other sectors of manual wages for which the average weekly working hours, including overtime, are higher than those in the bread and confectionery industry.

There is no reason to believe that, without the underpinning given to the collective agreements by the Act, employers will seek to impose substantially different hours of work. In our consultations with employers, the Federation of Bakers assured us that there was no prospect of the sort of job losses that the bakers' union fears. There is simply not the level of overmanning in the industry which such numbers would imply. It seems to us pointless to extend the Act to cover women. On the contrary, we believe that the Act is largely redundant and ripe for repeal.

My hon. Friend the Member for Leicestershire, North-West (Mr. Ashby) welcomed what the Government have done—and the fact that they have done it quickly—as a result of the Helen Marshall case concerning state and occupational pensions. I appreciate that the House is eager for progress towards equality in state and occupational retirement pensions. The European Court of Justice ruling in the Marshall case did not affect either. Even if it had, no Government could have produced a workable legislative solution on so complex a subject in the space of a few weeks, as we have done with the immediate issues raised in that case.

Hon. Members who were in the House last Wednesday evening will know that a draft EC directive on equal treatment in occupational social security schemes is under discussion in Europe and likely to be adopted soon if certain amendments favoured by the United Kingdom and other member states are made.

As for our proposal to abolish the requirement for training bodies to obtain designation under section 47 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, some anxiety has been expressed that this will open the floodgates to training for women only and therefore deny men opportunities to train for the work of their choice. Section 47 also allows the provision of training for men only in work in which they are under-represented. It is true that all the bodies designated so far have applied to us with women's training in mind. That is no doubt because traditionally male jobs are often more skilled and higher paid, and women are more likely to aspire to them than men are to, say, typing.

Some people feel that this past discrimination should be overcome by insisting that a quota of jobs should be reserved for women. We do not accept that. Jobs should be filled only on grounds of merit, not of sex. Nevertheless, if women are to have the opportunity to compete for jobs and contribute to the economy on equal terms, they may need special training.

The Government want there to be an economy in which firms, large and small, can expand and thereby win extra business and create new jobs. To this end, we are already winning the battle against inflation. If we are to exploit our successes, we must free enterprise. Unnecessary restrictions and regulations are a positive hindrance to a firm's ability to make the most of its opportunities and therefore create jobs. We must ensure that we create the right environment in which enterprise can thrive and prosper. I believe that the Government's record on freeing past discrimination about women's right to work has been creditable and to our advantage.

It is just over 10 years since the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts came into force. We do not claim that this second Sex Discrimination Bill will be as far-reaching as the first, but it is another step forward on the road to genuine equality of opportunity between the sexes and I believe that we should all welcome its introduction to the House. I urge my right hon. and hon. Friends to reject the Opposition amendment and to support the Bill's Second Reading.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—
The House divided: Ayes 68, Noes 155.

Division No. 194] **[10 pm**

AYES

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Bermingham, Gerald
Boothroyd, Miss Betty
Boyes, Roland
Brown, N. *(N'c tle-u-Tyne E)*
Buchan, Norman
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Clarke, Thomas
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Cocks, Rt Hon M. *(Bristol S)*
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*
Corbett, Robin
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cunningham, Dr John
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*
Deakins, Eric
Dewar, Donald
Dormand, Jack
Dubs, Alfred
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*
Foster, Derek
Heffer, Eric S.
Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Hoyle, Douglas
Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Janner, Hon Greville
Lamond, James
Leighton, Ronald
Litherland, Robert
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McDonald, Dr Oonagh
McKelvey, William
McNamara, Kevin
McTaggart, Robert
McWilliam, John
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Nellist, David
O'Neill, Martin
Patchett, Terry
Pike, Peter
Prescott, John
Raynsford, Nick
Richardson, Ms Jo
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Rooker, J. W.
Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Skinner, Dennis
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Straw, Jack
Tinn, James
Wareing, Robert
Weetch, Ken
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Allen McKay and
Mr. Mark Fisher.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Beaumont-Dark, Anthony
Beith, A. J.
Bellingham, Henry
Best, Keith
Bevan, David Gilroy
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Buck, Sir Antony
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Carttiss, Michael
Clarke, Rt Hon K. *(Rushcliffe)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Coombs, Simon
Cormack, Patrick
Crouch, David
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
Durant, Tony
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Favell, Anthony
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forth, Eric
Franks, Cecil
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Gale, Roger
Galley, Roy
Gardiner, George *(Reigate)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Ground, Patrick
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hampson, Dr Keith
Hancock, Michael
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Harvey, Robert
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawkins, Sir Paul *(N'folk SW)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Howarth, Alan *(Stratf'd-on-A)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Jessel, Toby
Johnston, Sir Russell
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Kennedy, Charles
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Kirkwood, Archy
Knight, Dame Jill *(Edgbaston)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Meadowcroft, Michael
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Moate, Roger
Moynihan, Hon C.
Murphy, Christopher
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Normanton, Tom
Ottaway, Richard
Owen, Rt Hon Dr David
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Price, Sir David
Raffan, Keith
Rhodes James, Robert
Rowe, Andrew
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Silvester, Fred
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Allan *(Eastwood)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Temple-Morris, Peter
Terlezki, Stefan
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thorne, Neil *(Ilford S)*
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
van Straubenzee, Sir W.
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waldegrave, Hon William
Walden, George
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Ward, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wells, Sir John *(Maidstone)*
Wheeler, John
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Michael Neubert and
Mr. Peter Lloyd.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 41 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading), and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time, and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

SEX DISCRIMINATION BILL *[Lords]* [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Resolved,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Sex Discrimination Bill *[Lords]*, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase which is attributable to so much of that Act as relates to retirement or unfair dismissal in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other Act.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith pursuant to Standing Order No. 79(5) (Standing Committees on Statutory Instruments, &c.)

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (Quota and Other Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 787), dated 1st May 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 1st May, be approved.

That the Customs Duties (ECSC) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 3) Order 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 813), dated 8th May 1986, a copy of which was laid before this House on 8th May, be approved. —*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

Question agreed to.

LAND REGISTRATION BILL *[Lords]*

Order for Second Reading read.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 69(6) (Second Reading Committees). That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time and committed to a Standing Committee pursuant to Standing Order No. 42 (Committal of Bills).

DHSS Offices (North-West)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Sainsbury.]*

10.12 pm

Mr. Terry Fields (Liverpool, Broadgreen)L: The topic of this Adjournment debate is the staffing in the Department of Health and Social Security offices in the north-west. However, the argument could equally apply throughout the country, although I shall confine my remarks to the north-west. I am sure that the workers and claimants at those offices wish me to express my gratitude to you, Mr. Speaker, for selecting this debate, as opposed to the lottery that takes place in the Lobby.

The debate has been prompted by, first, workers in DHSS offices and members of the Civil and Public Services Association, both regional and national. I was fortunate to attend the CPSA conference a fortnight ago, when I was able to discuss the problems at the DHSS offices with some of its representatives. Secondly, and perhaps more tragically, it is prompted by the continuous and increasing pressure on my constituents and those of other hon. Members——

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): Where are they?

Mr. Fields: Exactly. It is opportune that we should discuss this matter, given the Fowler review that went through the House only last week, and which is now on its way to another place. However, the importance of the issue goes far beyond that piece of legislation. It involves recent history at DHSS offices and the seriousness of the crisis in them which demands immediate action by the Government. That may appear a vain hope, given the Government's record in other areas of legislation, but the issue must be aired and highlighted so that we can expose and warn of the calamity facing claimants and DHSS employees alike.

The DHSS offices in the north-west are living on borrowed time. While unemployment has tripled during the past five years and claims for social security benefit have mushroomed, the staff numbers have been ruthlessly cut. One in four — that is, 25 per cent. — of social security claimants are being paid too little. That was shown in a study done only 18 months ago. An even larger proportion of people face long delays in receiving payments. Members of the CPSA employed in the offices have suffered because of cuts in jobs and have been the victims of the Department's crisis management. Massive abuse of overtime has taken place to cover up staff deficiencies in those offices.

While the problem centres on the north-west it has implications nationally, to a greater or lesser degree. Statistics that hide the human misery that exists on both sides of the DHSS counter, but especially that of the customer, nevertheless underline the scale of the problem. I shall cite a few statistics. In the Breckfield road office of the DHSS, which is in my constituency, people must queue for an average of two and a half to three hours a week to receive attention at the supplementary benefit reception. The reception frequently remains open until 5.45 pm, which is well beyond its closing time. Overtime has been worked solidly in that office since October 1974. There is a high staff turnover — 32 per cent. — which causes problems. Staff are unable to tackle the demands for unemployment benefit and other benefits. There has

been a diminution in the service that can be provided to the public. Since July 1985, 1,600 supplementary benefit clerical visits have been abandoned.

One cannot even get through to the office on the telephone. As a Member of Parliament representing thousands of people in the area, I cannot even make contact with DHSS offices. I cannot make contact with the Breckfield road office because of the crisis there with problems in the working routine. Frequently, members of staff take a days sick leave because of the pressure place on them. On average, there is a backlog of 400 cases for supplementary benefit.

Let us consider the number of hours of overtime worked in the Huyton office and in offices in other parts of Merseyside. In 1983-84, 2,235 hours of overtime were worked. In the six months April to September 1985, 12,950 hours of overtime were worked. That increased overtime kept the offices afloat. Without it, the offices would have gone under. The claims are piling up. One has only to visit some of those offices to see their needs and the amount of work outstanding.

A massive increase in supplementary benefit work load has been put on the backs of DHSS workers. The inadequacy of staffing arrangements has led to serious problems in the offices.

The nonsense of the Department's complementing system is clear. I shall compare offices in the Merseyside area with those in Cheshire — the St. Helens and Warrington offices. Since May 1980, the St. Helens office has had an increase of 9,098 supplementary benefit claims which has been accompanied by an inadequate increase of 15 staff. Warrington has had a greater increase—that is 9,237—of additional claims in the same period and has had a cut of four staff.

One might think that the problem is peculiar to the north-west; it is not. Even the offices which are on the doorstep of the House of Commons, such as Bloomsbury, Westminster, Chelsea, and Kensington, have a high staff turnover. I am told that Bloomsbury has an 80 per cent. staff turnover. Instead of trainees receiving the requisite 13 weeks' training, they are given only two weeks' training. They are then asked to shore up a crumbling system which is causing problems inside and outside the offices. When 50 people go inside the Bloomsbury office, the office closes and no further people are dealt with. People go along to that office at 7 o'clock in the morning and queue up outside, in all sorts of weather, to have their claims dealt with. A similar picture applies nationally.

The unions have campaigned for more staff. They were told by management and the Department that the system for establishing the needs of their offices was unscientific and should not be considered with any seriousness. They have been told that on the complementing system 2,000 jobs are already in post, over and above the needs of the Department. How is that figure arrived at? Management says that the unscientific way in which these numbers are computerised is absolutely wrong, but two major disputes have created a backlog within the DHSS system, and these distort the statistics that management and the Department use. The major disputes referred to are in Newcastle and Washington in the north-east.

Secondly, there has been no updated complementary review since 1980 or 1981, or no firm base to commence the calculation. Therefore, if management and the Department are accusing the unions of wrong analysis, the same argument applies to them.

At local office level there is also inadequate validation of statistics because of pressure, fewer workers and the work load with which the reduced number of staff is expected to deal. Unrecorded work is carried out because of the pressure of the increased number of claimants, and there is lack of training in the offices to which I am referring because of stretched resources. A high turnover is adding to the problem.

A management report, which confirms what the workers are saying, underlines and adds to the confusion that is now occurring in the DHSS. The management report on the inadequacies of the system and the way in which the numbers are computed says that misrepresentation of, or lack of attention to, instructions is a major contributory factor in the inaccuracies of statistics; that instructions were contained in several different codes that were sometimes confused and contradictory; that codes were not widely available to all staff concerned; that peripheral sections were often forgotten; and that staff were inadequately trained in statistics. Therefore, the fault lies with both management and the Department for not allowing the time or the manpower to deal with the problems affecting those in the DHSS offices.

Overtime worked in the Department is an absolute scandal. On the one hand the Government tell the Prison Officers Association that it must cut overtime because it is a restrictive practice, while in DHSS offices they are advocating overtime to cover up staff deficiencies. Such deficiencies are clearly shown by the use of casual workers in DHSS offices. In the north-west region, the number of casuals employed in the period ending 17 December 1985 amounted, on management's figures, to 16,062 man days in the red, and overtime amounted to 73,694 man days in the red. Massive overspending is taking place in respect of overtime and casual workers, as a result of which the lack of full-time workers is being masked. Thee should be more permanent jobs in those offices, not to put bottoms on seats but to deal with the backlog of work—current work and the increasing work brought about directly by the policies of this Government who are creating unemployment at every turn.

I am aware—and the Minister will no doubt point out—that nationally it has been agreed that 5,000 jobs should be introduced into the DHSS. But this is only an interim measure, and on analysis it is not the true figure. As I have already said, 2,000 of those jobs are already in post, although the Department claims that they are supposedly in addition to complement.

Of the remaining figure, 500 have already been designated — according to reports, with a ring fence around them — to deal with fraud in the DHSS. In reality, we are, therefore, talking about only 2,500 jobs nationally.

However, it has been calculated that the north-west needs 2,100 jobs. Therefore, the number proposed by the Department will in no way match up to the needs of the claimants and those already working in the industry. This is based on direct experience at the sharp end of things, not on fanciful, dreamt-up and inaccurate figures conditioned by Treasury restrictions on the DHSS. Workers and management have assessed the needs in the Department and feel that 15,000 jobs are required to cope with the situation, and they have proved the need for these people. The amount of overtime and casual work being done is outrageous.

[Mr. Fields]

The Fowler review will not be reported for another 18 months, and on current analysis that review, given the background that I have set out, will not match the needs of the DHSS and the claimants. A decent level of manpower in the Department can be arrived at only by a working out and analysing of the problem by the departmental managers and the trade unions representing the workers, not by anticipating or forecasting.

To date, there has been good will from the staff, but it has been undermined by the crisis of management. I am informed by those representing the workers that good will will cease soon if management continues to exercise discipline in a macho way, and to cut back on various practices.

The Fowler review has prompted the enrolment of 20,000 casual workers to deal with the interim arrangements, but as the situation becomes more critical because of the Government's policy, the 15,000 necessary extra jobs in the Department seem impossible to achieve. This has been exacerbated by two upratings in the recent past, and by the chaos and further pressure on the reduced numbers working in the offices. We are told that technology is coming in, but both workers and claimants in the offices feel that this removes the personal approach in dealing with what are often complex matters, about which the general public is not aware.

Workers in the industry are on extremely low rates of pay and on average their take-home pay is between £80 and £85 a week. The annual salary starts at £2,898 and if one works for 20 years, one's salary can rise to about £7,000 a year. Such low pay, coupled with ill health because of the demands of the work, is putting pressure on the workers, who want action.

Claimants are feeling the effect as well. They are not getting that to which they are entitled, and are suffering because they are those least able to look after themselves. Nobody willingly goes along, cap in hand, to the DHSS asking for a handout, having to be means-tested before getting that to which he is entitled. The effect on claimants is catastrophic for families, particularly in my area. The Government and the system that they represent are creating the bad situation and punishing the people who fall into it for crimes of which they are not guilty. That is another factor that underlines my point.

Have the Government anticipated in their review of the DHSS system the fact that already staffing does not match up to the 4 million unemployed, and that that number will increase, with the expected loss of work in shipyards, British Rail and other industries? How do the Government think that the offices will cope with an increasingly bad situation, in which there is no hope for British industry, more and more redundancies, and more people coming into the offices?

On behalf of the people whom I represent I warn the Government of two things. First, there has been a build-up of opposition to the Fowler review, and the cuts in benefits that will result. Secondly, not only are the workers in the offices distressed about this, but pensions organisations, young persons, one-parent families, the unemployed, students and the trade unions in general are beginning to mount a campaign in opposition to the Government and the Fowler cuts, which will affect them, their families and lifestyles.

If this problem is not tackled, the trade unions that represent those who work in DHSS offices will respond on behalf of the overworked, underpaid and, in some cases, abused members, and will defend the health and well-being of those whom they represent by resorting to a call for industrial action. The workers have had more than enough. Their health is suffering because of an insufficient number of staff to deal with the increasing workload. That will force the Government to act in the interests of the claimants.

I am not precipitating this action. I am merely explaining the position. I do not know whether the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State visits many DHSS offices, but he ought to visit the Merseyside area and the north-west. He would see that piles of claims are not being dealt with, which means that those who rely upon DHSS finance just to exist are suffering extreme deprivation and poverty.

Last year there were 200 strikes in DHSS offices, but this year it will not be the so-called militant areas that will take industrial action. Moderate areas — Wales, the south-west—and places such as Woking will be taking industrial action. The call for industrial action is coming from people in Surrey, Hampshire and Lewes on the south coast. They are demanding that the unions should do something about the crisis. The CPSA has a 10:1 majority in favour of industrial action. It accepts the interim 5,000 jobs—or the 2,500 jobs, to be perfectly honest, given the fiddling that is already going on. However, it is prepared to struggle on behalf of its members.

I warn the Government that my constituents, those in other constituencies in the north-west, the claimants and the trade unions are demanding that the Government should act before a complete breakdown occurs within the system and in society in general. Unless the Government accept their responsibilities, industrial action will have a most damaging effect on those who rely upon social security benefit.

10.32 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): The hon. Member for Liverpool, Broadgreen (Mr. Fields) has raised important matters in this Adjournment debate, and I am glad that he has done so.

During his speech he made some contentious remarks with which he would not expect me to agree, and I do not. However, I hope he will permit me to say that I congratulate him upon the moderate and reasonable way in which he put his case. He touched on many matters that are of concern to him, to my hon. Friend the Minister for Social Security and to me. He referred to his concern about staffing levels in local offices of the DHSS and, understandably, he concentrated his remarks on the offices in the north-west with which he is most familiar.

The hon. Gentleman may be surprised to hear that I agree with some of his remarks. He and I agree that the Government must obtain and sustain a modern, effective and efficient social security system. That objective is at the root of many of the Government's policies. It was at the root of the social security reviews that resulted in the Social Security Bill which received its Third Reading earlier this week.

We regard the delivery to the public of an efficient, effective and, above all, modern social security system as a critical part of the Department's plans for the next few

years. That is why we have embarked on the largest computerisation programme that western Europe has ever seen. The reform of benefits must be matched by the modernisation of operations. We are making quick progress with our strategic plan to computerise social security operations. By doing so, we aim to increase efficiency, to reduce administrative costs and, above all, to provide a better service to the hon. Gentleman's constituents and to the constituents of every right hon. and hon. Member. Better conditions for the staff and a better service for the public underlie the great structural changes that we are seeking to make in the operations of the systems.

Contrary to what the hon. Gentleman implied — although I am not sure that he said it directly — it is my experience, having spent a lot of time visiting local offices up and down the country, that by and large staff seemed to welcome increased computerisation because they see it as the door to a better service to the public, to which they as well as we are committed.

In the general realm of providing a better service, we are currently examining the national and regional organisation staff complement and the means of distributing that complement to every local office. It involves an in-depth review of a large sample of local offices to study the manpower requirements. This is being done in about 20 per cent. of all our local offices.

I wish to make one point relating to the social security review at the outset. I understand that there are legitimate points of political controversy in the social security review about which the hon. Gentleman and I would not agree. However, there is one point on which we might agree. Whatever levels of benefits and other contentious matters may be attached to that review, the structure of the changes in the social security system that we propose has been broadly welcomed not only by both sides of the House but by trade unions and by the staff. That is a great advance if we are in the business of improving the service to the public and the conditions of service of the staff.

Mr. Terry Fields: The Minister mentioned the review of 20 per cent. of offices. Does he not realise that the use of computers takes away the personal aspect in dealing with people's claims? Can he give the assurance that, when the review is undertaken, the CPSA and other representative bodies will be brought in to make an analysis, because they are at the sharp end? A thorough job must be done because the figures do not match the needs.

Mr. Major: When the hon. Gentleman talks of personal service, he overlooks one important point. The most important expectation of a man or woman arriving at the counter in a DHSS office is to receive a response to the request being made and the assistance that is needed. One of the great difficulties at present is that, without a modern computerised system, it is frequently not possible to track down the case papers and give an answer or deal with the client's needs and claims as swiftly as possible. Computerisation, far from being impersonal, it is the key to providing the standard of service that both the hon. Gentleman and I would wish to see become available to the public. I am bound to say to the hon. Gentleman that in my judgment that is the overwhelming view not only of the politicians and administrators but of the staff who work in the local offices, to whom I have spoken in recent months.

The hon. Gentleman spoke of the staffing level and rather disparagingly, if I may say so, of the increase in complement. He is correct that there is an increase in complement of 5,000 staff in the local officers. These were given recently in two stages. The first was in February and the second was announced by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in early March. Of that complement, the north-western region has received 661 posts, which is a substantial share of the increase. The hon. Gentleman mentioned Breckfield in his constituency and some of the difficulties there. Before October 1985 the complement was 134. The October 1985 figure was 142. The proposed allocation for 1986-87 is 164 posts, an increase of 30 posts in a period of six months before we have completed the in-depth complement review that is in hand. We recognise the special circumstances that exist in some inner London and inner city areas. The hon. Gentleman's constituency may have similar pressures. We have sought to reflect that in the increase in staff complement by 5,000.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman may to a degree be reassured about the in-depth complement review that is under way and that we hope will produce results early next year. The 5,000 staff are "on account" of that complement review. Although the hon. Gentleman may not regard that as sufficient, I hope that he will at least acknowledge that it is a significant indication of the Government's determination to support the delivery of benefits through local offices.

The size of that substantial increase was not just plucked out of the air, nor has the distribution of the additional staff been accomplished without a recognition of the problems faced by particular types of local office in particular localities. Both decisions were based on first-hand assessment. They were not just guesses, although inevitably, pending the results of the complement review, there must be elements of judgment at this stage.

The hon. Gentleman touched on the fact that a great deal has often been made of the increased workloads with which local offices have had to deal. Of course the hon. Gentleman is correct in saying that in some parts of the social security system there has been a substantial increase in workloads. I would not deny that for a second. But it is also true — and the hon. Gentleman did not mention this — that there have been reductions in workloads elsewhere, notably the equivalent of 3,342 posts following the introduction of statutory sick pay and 2,445 post following the introduction of the housing benefit scheme. To obtain a true picture of the work/staff ratio, the hon. Gentleman and everyone else who wishes to have a true bill in these matters must take into account those changes as well.

I and my colleagues remain absolutely committed to matching staff to workloads. We have put that on record before, and I am happy to reaffirm it to the hon. Gentleman this evening. The injection of 5,000 staff is only the culmination of several increases in recent months — an extra 3,800 staff to offset the effects of the Newcastle strike, an extra 1,900 staff through the normal operation of the complementing system mainly directed towards the increased supplementary benefit work that the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and an extra 733 staff to match increased workloads.

I shall come to a premature conclusion because we are running out of time. Many of the problems were due in no small part to the extraordinary complexities of the present

[Mr. Major]

social security system. Those complexities will be alleviated significantly by the changes to be brought about by the Social Security Bill which had its Third Reading in the House earlier this week. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will welcome that.

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at eighteen minutes to Eleven o'clock.

House of Commons

Friday 23 May 1986

The House met at half-past Nine o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

PETITION

Plessey Company (Takeover)

9.34 am

Mr. Neil Thorne (Ilford, South): The Plessey Company was founded in my constituency in Vicarage lane, and is now the subject of a takeover bid. The staff are particularly worried that their livelihood may be threatened, and present a petition to the House—Mr. Eddie Lewis has collected more than 1,500 names—which states:

"That the undersigned object to the proposed takeover of the Plessey Company plc by General Electric Company plc because such a takeover would result in very heavy job losses, serious harm to the research and development in which the Plessey Company plc has up to now been involved and the creation of a monopoly which would limit the choice facing major customers in the electronic and defence markets.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that your honourable House do urge the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to take all such steps as are open to him to prevent the said takeover."

I have pleasure in presenting the petition to the House, in the hope that the appropriate authorities will take note of my constituents' anxiety, and that the Plessey company remains free and independent.

To lie upon the Table.

London Residuary Body

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Maude.]*

9.36 am

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): Mr. Speaker, may I be the first to wish you a restful Whitsun recess.

For the benefit of future generations of insomniacs who may stumble across the *Official Report* of this debate, I shall give a brief account of how the London Residuary Body came into existence and what it is expected to do until the general election, when a Labour Government will abolish it.

In short, the LRB is the Government's dumping ground. It exists in a vain attempt to clear up the appalling mess left in London following the Government's ill-conceived, ill-considered and ill-finished abolition of the Greater London council. The main responsibilities of the LRB are set out in a written answer to me from the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment. They are:

"—to make compensation payments to staff of the GLC who were made redundant or employed on less favourable terms at abolition;

—management of the GLC's debt, and superannuation fund;

—to close the GLC accounts;

—to sort out records and files for onward transmission to successor bodies, and to tidy up unfinished business generally."—

there is a deal of that—

"—to manage inherited property, and unextinguished rights and liabilities not transferred to functional successors;

—to provide certain specialist services, including computer services, scientific services, research and intelligence, and miscellaneous transport services (all at the request of London boroughs), and Urban Traffic Control, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport;

—to plan the onward transfer, disposal or sale of property and for the continued provision of any of these services that remain necessary after the residuary body has been wound up."—[*Official Report*, 21 April 1986; Vol 96, c. 67.]

In other words, its object is to try to make sense of abolition, which all objective and thoughtful people—of course, I exonerate the Under-Secretary of State from such accusations—continue to regard as one of the crudest acts of party political spite in recent years.

Those functions must all be completed in five years, had the LRB five years to look forward to, but since it has only until the general election, perhaps the whole matter is academic.

I have said in the House on many occasions, and I suspect that I shall say it again before the next general election, that the abolition of the GLC had nothing whatever to do with the efficiency of local government. The Government are still unable to tell the House how much money will be saved by abolition or how much money it will cost. They do not know how many jobs will be lost or how many jobs abolition will create. They are unable to make accurate figures available to the House, for the simple reason that they do not know. The abolition of the GLC was all about the Prime Minister's personal hatred of county hall. It revealed her as petty-minded, vindictive and autocratic, and it has left London as the only capital city in Europe without citywide government.

Abolition of the GLC also removed from Londoners a sizeable chunk of their democratic rights and vested control of GLC services in a bewildering complexity of successor bodies: quangos, joint boards, joint committees,

[Mr. Tony Banks]

Government Departments and borough councils. Few, if any, of the GLC's services have been abolished. However, the democratic accountability of those who administer many of the services has been abolished.

The Government have said, among many other things, that they are taking those services out of the political arena. They are weasel words. What the Government are really doing is excluding from those areas of activity everybody's politics but their own. Disraeli's words about a Tory Government being an "organized hypocrisy" are just about as true today as when he uttered them in the middle of the 19th century.

Whatever their prostestations, the Government dislike democracy, and they certainly mistrust the people. The test is there. If the GLC had been so unpopular, why were the Government not prepared to let the people of London decide at the ballot box whether they wanted to kick out Ken Livingstone and his colleagues? The Government were not prepared to do so, because they could not trust the people. Instead, they are seeking to take more and more services out of the hands of democratically elected representatives and put them under the control of Tory trustees: business men, bankers, accountants and the like, who do their business behind closed doors and away from the glare of public scrutiny and public accountability.

The London Residuary Body is a typical example. The Secretary of State picks seven people who are completely beholden to him for their very lucrative appointments and are answerable only to him for their actions. Then he appoints as chairman of the London Residuary Body a true blue Tory whose Conservative party allegiances are beyond doubt. If the Labour party, when in government, had done that, they would have been a great row in Fleet Street. There would have been accusations about "jobs for the boys", but because the jackals of Fleet street serve mostly the interests of the Conservative party, they have uttered not a peep.

The chairman of the London Residuary Body, who is elected by no one and is accountable only to the Secretary of State, then makes a serious of partisan political statements attacking the GLC and its democratically elected councillors. As an elected representative I consider that to be the height of impertinence.

If all this were free for Londoners — the studied insults, the pay-off to Tory friends — the ratepayers might not have such a major area of complaint. But this particular Tory stooge who chairs the LRB is being paid a salary of £50,000 a year. That has to be compared with the salary of the last director general of the Greater London Council, who received £44,000 a year. I admit that was not a bad screw, but it was for a very full working week, for controlling three times as many staff as those for which the LRB is responsible and for a budget twice the size.

The chairman's salary of £50,000 a year should also be compared with the £7,000 a year that Ken Livingstone received. Whatever people may think of him, Ken Livingstone worked very hard on behalf of London, and he did it for a pittance. The money that he received in taxable expenses and allowances ought to be compared with the remuneration of the part-time members of the LRB. They are doing very well indeed. They are receiving £6,000 a year for one day's work a week. That is an insult to all those GLC councillors, both Labour and Tory, who gave up their job prospects to run London's services and received very little for doing so.

I want to ask the Minister a series of questions. First, when will the LRB salaries be reviewed? One knows that they will be reviewed upwards but, when they are, will a public announcement be made, or will it be similar to what happened to the salary of the chairman of the board of London Regional Transport? His large salary increase was revealed only through an answer that I received to a parliamentary question. It came as a great surprise to LRT workers, who were being asked to take a cut of £50 a week in their fairly low wages, to find that the chairman of LRT had received a salary increase of no less than £7,500 a year. That was done secretly and behind closed doors. There was no public scrutiny and no public announcement. That is the way in which this Government behave. I want to be told that that is not the way in which the salaries of the members of the London Residuary Body will be treated.

I was also intrigued to learn that no women have been appointed to the LRB or to any of the seven residuary bodies that were set up after the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan county councils. In reply to my question, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold), the Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, told me that no fewer than 10 women were included in the 220 people who had been considered for appointment. But of course none of them was chosen. One can only conclude that the previous Secretary of State was a closet misogynist.

We know that the hand-picked men on the LRB employ over 4,000 staff and that they are responsible for a budget of £600 million. Beyond that, we know very little, if anything, about their day-to-day activities. That has to be contrasted with the GLC which, despite its faults—I am prepared to admit that it had a few — conducted its business in the full glare of public scrutiny. The press and the public had full access to all the deliberations at county hall. Despite that, the GLC was grossly misrepresented in both Fleet street an this House. The Minister is a living witness to that fact. There he sits today in his present position by virtue of the action he took in attacking the GLC, when the more thoughtful of his colleagues expressed public and private reservations about the Government's proposals to abolish the GLC.

In contrast to the GLC, the London Residuary Body holds its meetings in secret and its minutes are not made available. I have asked the Minister many times in the past, and I ask him again now, whether those minutes can be placed in the House of Commons Library. All that he has said to me is that it is a matter for the LRB. Naturally, the LRB refuses to disclose its minutes. They are made available only to Ministers and to Department of the Environment officials. This is offensive and undemocratic.

The Government have abolished democratic accountability over a large number of London services. They have set up a quango, called the London Residuary Body, and then refuse to answer questions in the House about its activities. What are the Government trying to hide? Why will the Minister not tell me how much London ratepayers' money is being spent by the LRB on, for example, consultancy fees or expenses, or its general running costs? Why does the Minister not tell us more about payments to ex-GLC staff? Why will he not tell us how much it has cost

Londoners for the London Residuary Body to remove the GLC insignia from buildings and vehicles? That was a priority programme for the LRB, because it moved very swiftly to do just that after midnight on 31 March when the GLC was abolished.

Ministers are not consistent. I have asked questions similar to those that I have just asked about the activities of the London Docklands development corporation and about the South Bank board and I have received very full replies. I am not encouraging those Ministers who were courteous enough to give me those full replies to adopt the same attitude as the Minister at the Dispatch Box. I want that Minister to start following the example of other Ministers who are prepared to come to the House and give full information to hon. Members who are trying to carry out their democratic responsibilities. The London Docklands development corporation and the South Bank board are also non-departmental public bodies, like the LRB, and I do not see why the LRB should be treated differently.

When I started asking questions about the activities of the LRB I received from the Under-Secretary silly, glib non-answers. Then, I am pleased to say, older and perhaps wiser counsels prevailed and the replies became slightly more forthcoming. I am marginally grateful for that, but the position is still far from satisfactory. In a letter dated 29 April to my hon. Friend the Member for Blackburn (Mr. Straw), the previous Secretary of State said:

"Residuary bodies' day-to-day policy concerns are matters on which it would not be usual or appropriate for me to intervene or comment."

Why not? The Government set up these wretched bodies to replace democratically elected councils; surely it is their responsibility to answer for the actions of their creatures.

In the same letter, the Secretary of State spoke about

"a degree of independence that residuary bodies have from Ministers."

Yet in an answer to me on 11 April the Under-Secretary said that his Department was in regular contact with the London Residuary Body about the discharge of its functions. If the LRB is as independent of Ministers as we are told, why are there so many meetings? Why is Parliament not informed of what is transacted at those meetings? In his reply of 21 April the Minister said that no central record was kept of all the meetings.

Again I ask: why not? Why are central records of these meetings not kept? It was Parliament that decided to abolish democratic control of many of London's local government services, and Parliament should also be prepared to make itself accountable to Londoners for the efficient running of those services. Of course, Parliament and the Government have not been prepared to make themselves accountable, and that is an insult to London and to democracy.

According to a reply that I received on 11 April from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Londoners have very few rights in respect of LRB activities. He said that, subject to statutory requirements, it was for the LRB itself to decide the information it makes available to members of the public. Imagine a local authority being given that sort of right, being able to pick and choose the information that it made available to the press and the public.

In reply to further questions from me, the Under-Secretary said that residuary bodies had been asked to prepare their first annual reports for the past year from their establishment to 31 March, 1986 and to adopt the financial year thereafter. This means that the first LRB report will cover the period from 12 August 1985 to 31 March 1986—a period prior to the abolition of the GLC, when the LRB had no effective responsibilities for London's government.

I hope that messages will continue to flow from the civil servants to the Minister, so that he will be able to answer some of my questions. It seems that the earliest the House will receive the inadequate first report of the LRB will be in about the autumn. That means that we are not likely to receive the post-abolition report until the autumn of 1987. I understand that to be the position, but the Minister can correct me if I am wrong. We might have a general election before then, in which case the matter is academic, but I suspect that that report will be hushed up, because it will be too politically embarrassing for the Government to reveal it in the run-up to the general election.

The whole situation is unsatisfactory and smacks of a cover-up. When will the first and second reports of the LRB be laid before Parliament? Will Parliament have a full opportunity to examine and discuss these reports on the Floor of the House? What matters will be covered by the reports? As I understand it, the content of the reports is a matter for consideration.

This is the first opportunity that the House has had to debate the affairs of the LRB, and because of that I should like to ask the Minister another series of questions about the board's current activities. First of all, what percentage of ex-GLC staff have received redundancy pay? How many of them have received their redundancy pay in full?

Is the Minister aware that a number of ex-GLC staff who have received neither redundancy pay nor unemployment pay are being refused unemployment pay at Department of Employment local offices because officials in those offices are trying to establish whether any of the staff received pay in lieu of notice? We all know that no staff received pay in lieu of notice. I hope that the Minister will speak to his right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Employment in order to ensure that those ex-GLC staff receive some money to live on, because the Government are responsible for the economic distress of those people.

Secondly, is the Minister aware of the appallingly low morale of LRB staff? How many staff have quit the service of the LRB since 1 April? Is it true that so many staff are leaving at the moment that the LRB is having to rely on agency staff and outside consultants to do its work? The notes keep coming and I hope that that will continue, because the Minister is cleary in need of information. Thirdly, is it true that, on the 10 completion teams that have the job of trying to tidy up the mess after abolition, there are 109 vacancies, about a 30 per cent. shortfall? If that is true, what reasons can the Minister advance for such an unsatisfactory state of affairs?

Fourthly, is it true that the sum of £1·4 million or thereabouts has been made available for selective pay increases to staff who are proving difficult to retain in the service of the LRB? Fifthly, is it true that all the notepaper with the heading, "The LRB—An Equal Opportunities Employer" was destroyed on the instructions of the chairman of the LRB? If that is true, why was it done? Is the LRB not an equal opportunities employer? How much did that little exercise cost London ratepayers?

Sixthly, has the Minister read *Building* magazine dated 9 May? That quotes the Building Employers Confederation which says that its members are owed a

[Mr. Tony Banks]

total of £500 million for completed work and that the LRB's paperwork is in complete disarray. When can those contractors expect payment? Clearly, delays in payment have serious consequences for the future of their businesses.

Seventhly, what is the current disposals policy of the LRB in respect of GLC property? I understand that the Minister's Department has issued draft guidance notes advising residuary bodies to consult successor bodies before disposing of any property. I assume that that will cause considerable delay, because time must be allowed for those consultations to take place. I do not moan about such consultations, but I should like to know what the situation is at the moment. The Minister should now be able to tell the House about the projected sales figures for property disposal by the LRB in its first and second years.

Eighthly, why have the Government delayed the announcement of the distribution to the London boroughs of some £18 million of GLC balances? I understand that the distribution was agreed by the LRB on 28 April but was then vetoed by Ministers.

Ninthly, why is the LRB being allowed to sell off the Elephant and Castle shopping centre for less than its commercial value to a company called Land Securities plc? I thought the LRB was there to get the full market rate for properties that it sold privately, so that the benefit would go to London ratepayers.

Tenthly, when will the LRB be able to make an announcement about the future of Hampstead Heath and Covent Garden? Those matters need to be sorted out. It is over two years since abolition was first proposed, and we still do not know about the future of Hampstead Heath and Covent Garden. I am particularly concerned about Covent Garden, because I would like to know whether the Covent Garden Area Trust will be allowed to purchase all the ex-GLC property, or whether the Minister will allow property speculators to make a fat killing in this prime area of London.

My 11th question concerns what is happening about Thamesmead, because that intrigues a number of people. Is it true that the Thamesmead Trust expects to receive Thamesmead for nothing, plus £15 million from the LRB, and that the LRB is refusing to oblige? We understand that this is what the chairman of the trust is expecting. Is the Minister prepared to publish the study by the Department of the Environment on Thamesmead, drawn up by Coopers and Lybrand?

Finally, what is happening about county hall? When are the consultants due to report to the LRB? I am sure that the Minister is aware of the great anger that will arise in London should the LRB, with his approval and that of his colleagues, sell off county hall for a hotel development. Is he aware—if he is not, he should be, and so should a potential purchaser—that if county hall is sold as an hotel and goes into the private sector, the Labour Government will compulsorily purchase county hall and return it to public service?

The Minister should answer these questions. I am not so naive or optimistic as to expect that he will give me a fulsome reply now to all these questions, but I hope that he will be prepared to write to me. I shall keep returning to this matter and asking these questions. It is not just me being nosey. The Minister and his Government have set up this unelected, unnacountable quango, and it is incumbent on them to answer for the actions and policies of that quango—here, where it matters, in the House of Commons. I shall be returning to the House time and again to ask questions on matters relating to the abolition of the GLC and the work of the LRB, because in that respect, my patience and determination are infinite.

The Government have a duty to answer these questions. If they do not, the accusations that are being made—that they are not interested in open government, that they want to take more and more powers from local authorities and vest the powers in unelected, unaccountable quangos made up of hand-picked political trusties and passing out of the public domain—will be seen to be true. Such a course of action would be anti-democratic. It is the antithesis of everything that this place is supposed to stand for, and of everything that the Government mouth from the Front Bench, but one gets used to that level of cant and hypocrisy from this Government.

The Government will curse the day when they decided to abolish the GLC. As I correctly predicted before the elections on 8 May, the GLC factor, which ran heavily through the elections in London, and which was one of the reasons why the Conservatives were so badly beaten in the elections, will continue to affect the people of London. The Minister may care to reflect on the fact that I now represent the only one-party borough in the country. That is a reflection of the trust and faith that the people of Newham have in the Labour party.

When we occupy the Government Benches, we shall amply reward the people, and we shall look after our friends just as the Tories have looked after theirs. The Government now know and understand that they made a monumental error of judgment in abolishing the GLC. That fact will haunt them right the way through to their certain humiliation at the next general election.

10.4 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mr. Richard Tracey): I join the hon. Member for Newham, North-West (Mr. Banks) in wishing you a happy and refreshing recess, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is always a great pleasure to listen to one of the delightfully restrained performances from the hon. Gentleman, to which the House has become accustomed. No one doubts that he was one of the most highly political chairmen of the Greater London council—an office that had traditionally been a non-political position. He will never lose an opportunity to re-run what has begun to sound like one of the old movies that one sees flickering on the television screen—the story of the GLC that has now gone.

However, for the second time in two months, I have to disappoint the hon. Gentleman. When he secured the Adjournment debate on 27 March this year, his forecast of chaos and disaster when the GLC was abolished was wrong, and it is still wrong—even more so that it was then.

The truth is that the hand-over of functions to successors went extremely smoothly, and as we have always said, the boroughs and other successors were perfectly capable of taking on their new responsibilities. After all, the boroughs have run over 80 per cent. of the local government of London and are now, quite rightly, running the rest as well. All the excessive advertising that was going on when the GLC was spending London ratepayers' money has, quite rightly, stopped.

The number of redundancy claims submitted to the London Residuary Body suggests that we were right to estimate that about 3,500 posts would eventually be saved. We have just announced that the number of claims was 3,000. Additional posts will be saved, for example by voluntary early retirement and by further redundancies. There have been widespread and significant reductions in rates—nobody can be in any doubt about that—and they are directly attributed by many of the London boroughs to the abolition of the GLC. Voluntary bodies have found, as we never doubted, that the overall funds available are perfectly adequate for their needs.

It is hardly surprising that, in the hon. Gentleman's disappointment, abolition is bringing about all the benefits that we said it would, with none of the chaos that he forecast, the hon. Gentleman should turn his attention to the London Residuary Body as a target—as he sees it, the fresh ogre. The hon. Gentleman has painted what one can only describe as an imaginative picture of some secretive, all-powerful organisation running out of control.

The truth is rather more modest. The LRB's role is limited, technical and transitory. Its role is limited and technical because its sole purpose is to wind up the affairs of the GLC. We always recognised that, in bringing to an end an organisation of the size and complexity of the GLC, there would be residual issues that would need to be resolved and which could not readily be transferred to successors. These include disposing of surplus property, making compensation payments to GLC staff made redundant or re-employed by successors on less favourable terms, managing debt and superannuation and dealing with certain oustanding legl rights and liabilities.

The hon. Gentleman has read out a written answer that I gave him in the *Official Report*, which spelt out in precise detail the role of the LRB. Its task has been likened to that of the executor of an estate. It is to finish or liquidate the transitional items and return any cost incurred, and, more particularly, the receipts and surpluses generated to the ratepayers of London, where they rightly belong.

When formulating the LRB's powers and duties we also recognised that there would be a limited number of common specialist services and other functions which successors would find useful but for which there would be no time to make permanent arrangements before abolition. The Act therefore provides for the LRB, if requested to do so by successors, to act as a temporary home for these services, provided that there is a prospect of permanent arrangements being made in due course. The services which the LRB has taken on include research and intelligence and scientific services, which are being run at a level agreed with the boroughs and on a recharging basis. The LRB is also maintaining on a temporary basis the GLC's former central computer service. In addition to these services, the LRB is acting as a temporary home for Thamesmead which will pass to the elected local trust later this year. As the hon. Member has mentioned it, perhaps I can take this opportunity to say something about the LRB's role at Thamesmead.

The hon. Gentleman criticised the way in which the LRB has acted, but he has been very unfair. The LRB has temporary ownership of Thamesmead. By agreement, the day-to-day management of the area is already being undertaken by Thamesmead Town, which is the private company controlled by residents, and which will assume full ownership very shortly. Thamesmead Town is currently using the LRB staff who were previously employed by the GLC on the Thamesmead operation. Everyone concerned agreed that it was better for the new company to become immediately involved in running Thamesmead from 1 April to make for the simplest and smoothest transition from the GLC. Residents and staff have benefited from this arrangement.

The company will shortly make offers of employment to the LRB staff at Thamesmead. There will be no compulsion on the staff to work for the company, but there is every indication that the large majority of them want to do so. Mr. Clive Thornton, the company's chairman, has been greatly encouraged by this support and by the commitment shown by the staff to the new company and to continuing to work for the good of Thamesmead.

The process of selling Thamesmead is a matter for the LRB and Thamesmead Town. The valuation process is now proceeding. The LRB and the company are anxious to finalise matters as quickly as possible so that Thamesmead Town can become fully operational and serve the residents to the best of its ability. The LRB has taken an enlightened and practical approach to the problems of Thamesmead and I am pleased to be able to endorse it.

I have said that the LRB's role is transitory. The Act requires the LRB to endeavour to wind itself up by the end of five years but, in practice, most of its work will have been completed long before then. The task of making redundancy payments is virtually complete already. The common specialist services will be handed to the boroughs before long. The LRB's property disposal programme is already under way, particularly in respect of individual sites and properties. Of course some groups of properties must be considered together and their future must be considered more carefully, but even here the LRB is making progress.

The LRB is already discussing in detail arrangements for the disposal of Covent Garden with those directly concerned — the City of Westminster, the London borough of Camden and the Covent Garden Area Trust. This is a quite proper concern for local anxieties about the future of the area, and gives the lie to claims that the LRB has embarked on some reckless asset-stripping programme. In short, the LRB is pressing on with its duties in abusinesslike, speedy, and effective manner.

The hon. Member asked whether all of this does not cost a lot of money, is not the LRB's budget huge and does it not employ a vast army of people.

Mr. Banks: I never said that.

Mr. Tracey: Once again, I fear that I must draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the facts. The LRB's budget for 1986-87 provides for net revenue expenditure of about £480 million. But, of that, some £300 million is accounted for by debt charges. Most of this sum relates to housing stock already transferred to the boroughs. The boroughs were paying for that anyway, and it did not feature in the GLC's budget. A further £100 million is accounted for by charges to the boroughs and other successors for services provided by the LRB on their behalf. It is imposing a levy on the boroughs of £48 million—equivalent to a 2·5p rate, block grant apart. That should be put in the context of GLC budgeted expenditure of more than £700 million in 1985-86, and a precept of 34p, although I readily accept that the LRB's functions are more limited.

Mr. Banks: That is generous.

Mr. Tracey: Apart from those figures, there are substantial balances in the GLC's accounts. The Budget forecast that these balances would amount to at least £116 million. The LRB has just announced that it is distributing a further £18 million to the boroughs. That shows the extent to which the GLC took money endlessly and, unnecessarily from Londoners, who will get it back.

We expect even greater capital receipts to accrue from sales of surplus GLC property. The LRB has forecast some £30 million net coming from this source in 1986-87 alone. The bulk of those receipts will be returned to London's ratepayers. The Act enables my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, to provide for certain of these receipts to be paid over to a trust for the benefit of voluntary organisations in London. We shall shortly be consulting on the terms of an order which will require the LRB to make over funds to the trust for London, which is presently being set up by the City Parochial Foundation. We intend that some £10 million will be paid over for this financial year.

On staffing, one has only to consider the facts to realise how groundless are the claims that have been made. The LRB employs about 4,300 staff at the moment. That includes staff required for a short time to clear up the GLC's offices. For its own requirements, the LRB employs fewer than 2,000 staff, and many of these are needed for only a short time.

The hon. Gentleman made much of the fact that members of the LRB are not directly elected. That is a funny old criticism coming from him when one bears in mind the jobs-for-the-boys antics that used to go on in the GLC. I think especially of London Transport before it was rightly changed to London Regional Transport.

What the hon. Gentleman said is quite untrue. The LRB is not a local authority and does not exercise local authority functions. As I have explained, its role is defined precisely in the Act and it is limited and technical. Parliament has accepted that it would not be appropriate to have an elected board of management to run the LRB. It is best managed by a small body of members appointed for their expertise and understanding of the job that the body has to do, in much the same way as development corporations are managed. It is always open to Ministers to review salaries, but we have no present plans to do so.

The LRB must be subject to public scrutiny and accountability. It has gone to some lengths to discover the views of boroughs about various aspects of its activities. I assure the hon. Gentleman that a report will be lodged in the Library. The first one will be in September and they will follow annually.

Ministers are answerable to Parliament for those of the LRB's affairs over which they have control. The fact that I am here today, and that Ministers have answered more than 50 questions tabled by the hon. Member alone about the LRB's affairs is proof of that. On those matters over which Ministers do not have direct control, the LRB is quite ready to respond directly to questions and requests for information from hon. Members and the public at large. I do not need to tell the hon. Member that the LRB has responded quite openly to the seemingly endless stream of questions he has put to it from time to time. Furthermore, the Act requires the LRB to produce an annual report which, as I have said, will be lodged in the Library of the House. We have subjected the LRB to the scrutiny of the Parliamentary Commissioner.

The LRB will handle public money, and must be accountable for it. Therefore, the Act requires it to publish an annual statement of accounts, which will be laid before the House. These accounts will be subject to audit in the same way as local authority audits and any report the auditor makes will also be published.

You will agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that these are clear, firm and effective measures for ensuring that the LRB is fully accountable for its actions to Parliament, to the London boroughs, and to the public. It is frankly difficult to see what additional safeguards the hon. Member for Newham, North-West could reasonably expect there to be provided.

Once again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must disappoint the hon. Gentleman. There is no chaos, no disaster. The LRB is in place, performing its limited and short-lived duties economically, and openly. We shall respond by letter to the hon. Gentleman's detailed questions and we shall presumably continue to receive a stream of parliamentary questions from the hon. Gentleman, to which we shall also respond.

In my concluding remarks on 27 March, I said that in a very short time people would be asking what all the fuss over abolition was about. Given the hon. Gentleman's contribution to today's debate, they must already be doing so.

Palace of Westminster (Members' Access)

10.21 am

Mr. Jerry Wiggin (Weston-super-Mare): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This morning, I was forced to come to the House by a circuitous route as I was prevented by the constable on duty from entering Birdcage Walk. I am aware that rehearsals for trooping the colour were notified in the all-party Whip, but the presence of my vehicle would not have disrupted the tail end of the parade. If, on a Friday morning when the House is sitting, it is necessary to have rehearsals, constables should be told of the Sessional Orders. I hope that Mr. Speaker will draw this matter to the attention of the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman has been inconvenienced. I shall cause immediate inquiries to be made.

Cornish Tin Industry

10.22 am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): The House of Commons Library computer tells me that this is the 14th occasion on which I have raised the issue of the Cornish tin crisis, with special reference to Geevor mine in my constituency, since that crisis broke on 24 October—almost six months ago. I am grateful for the opportunity to return to the subject, because this may be my final plea to the Minister given certain circumstances which I shall mention later.

I am grateful for the tremendous support that I and my colleagues from Cornwall—the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) and my hon. Friend the Member for Falmouth and Camborne (Mr. Mudd)—have received in the matter. We have been supported by hon. Members on both sides of the House—an enormous number of who, six months ago, hardly knew of the existence of the tin mining industry in Cornwall. They have expressed genuine anxiety for the industry's future and especially for the future of the miners who, unfortunately, are in a serious positon today. There has also been an enormous upsurge of support in Cornwall for the industry. That has shown once again that the industry is special to Cornwall and is part of its heritage. The industry goes deep, not just into the soil, but into the minds of the people of Cornwall.

I pay tribute to those who have waged an unceasing campaign to save the industry, especially in Cornwall. I begin with the management of Geevor mine. The chairman, Mr. Wallis, and the deputy chairman, Mr. Gilbert, have worked tirelessly with their staff to prepare applications to the Government and have done their utmost to ensure that the mine survives, as I hope and pray that it will. I pay the greatest tribute to the men, who have worked extra time at the bottom of Geevor mine—not a pleasant thing to do. They worked an extra hour a day when the mine was operating. They have not given up hope, and my plea to the Minister is to hold out some hope for the future of the mine and those men.

Those of us who took part in the march through London in February — the Cornish tinners' march, as it will become known in Cornish history—were proud to do so. It was a tremendous occasion that brought home to the city of London, to Fleet street and to the House the plight of the industry.

The facts are well known, and I shall not take up too much time relating them. We all know how the crisis broke upon the industry with the suspension of trading on 24 October on the London Metal Exchange, and of the attempts, in which the Government took the lead, to try to put together a rescue package for the International Tin Council. Unfortunately, that attempt failed. Once it failed, because of the attitude of other countries, that which we feared happened: the price of tin crashed disastrously, and, during Easter, Geevor was forced to take the drastic step of laying off most of its 375 employees. It has now turned some of the layoffs into redundancies, partly because some of the men wanted it that way, and partly because there was pressure to do that. I cannot praise the management of Geevor strongly enough for its responsible attitude and the way in which it has had the welfare of the staff at heart. That is appreciated and acknowledged in west Cornwall.

I need not rehearse the importance of the industry to the economy of west Cornwall, because that has been said many times. The social life of that part of west Cornwall,

[Mr. David Harris]

which is about seven miles from Land's End — the Pendeen and St. Just area—depends on Geevor, and its closure was the biggest blow to that part of Cornwall for many a long year. Dare I suggest that it is the biggest blow this century to that part of Cornwall, with its already high unemployment. The communities of St. Just and Pendeen have taken the blow, as one would expect, with great fortitude, but with a feeling of uncertainty about the future. One of the worst effects of the closure is the uncertainty about the future, which has lasted for six months.

At the outset, I said that this might be my final plea on the matter, and I wish to explain what I meant by that. As is well known, on 9 April, Geevor submitted an application to the Government for assistance to carry out a development programme and to maintain full production and employment at the mine. After meetings with the Government, Geevor was asked to submit a new application, and that will be sent to the Minister this weekend. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Minister for that. After pressure from me and others, the Government agreed to make available £40,000 to the mine, in addition to the £40,000 that was made available by the county council—I pay tribute to the county council for doing it —to enable the pumps to continue at Geevor while the revised application was drawn up and considered. That money will run out in the first week of June. At a meeting with the county council a week before last my hon. Friend the Minister said that he expected to be in a position to come to a decision before the money ran out for the care and maintenance operation.

Therefore, if the application goes in this weekend, as I understand that it will, there will be no occasion between then and the decision, if the Minister takes it on time as he thinks he will, for me to raise the matter again in the House as it will be in Recess. That is why I am particularly grateful to have this opportunity.

There has been a development today in that Geevor has issued a statement which, for the sake of greater accuracy, I want to quote. It says:

"The Directors of Geevor Tin Mines announce that they have reached a conditional agreement to acquire Marine Mining Cornwall Consortium in exchange for the issue of 2,200,000 new ordinary shares".

Later in the statement, the company says:

"As has already been announced, Geevor requires to invest in completing the present Victory Shaft Sub-incline extension and opening a new auxiliary mine at Botallack so that it is able to compete on even terms in the tin market once the depression brought about by the collapse of the International Tin Council's buffer stock has lifted. The proposed recovery of tin from sea bed dredging"—

that is the marine mining operation—

"will also require some capital expenditure and the total programme now envisaged is some £25 million spread over 5 years. The programme would provide continuing employment for about 200 of the existing Geevor Marine Mining workforce, rising in due course to 500 when market conditions enable dredging to begin followed by the resumption of underground mining."

The statement goes on to announce that the company is proposing to try to raise £2·5 million through a rights issue.

The attempts to come to some arrangement with Marine Mining, a company which has rights to carry out dredging operations to recover tin waste from the bed of St Ives bay, is something which, it is fair to say, the Government were keen that the company should explore. I am glad to see my hon. Friend the Minister nodding his head.

That has involved a tremendous effort on the part of Geevor. Geevor's executives have worked night and day in drawing up the revised package, including the hoped for deal with Marine Mining because part of that deal would be that the mill at Geevor would be used to process that tin from Marine Mining.

Therefore, the utmost has been done to try to meet the suggestions put down by the Government for the revised application. It is no exaggeration to say that the issue of whether Geevor will survive will depend on the decision taken, probably in the next week, by the Minister and, presumably, some of his colleagues and those who advise them.

I do not minimise for one minute the difficulties of the decision that they face. I do not go along with those who simply suggest that all the Government have to do is to write a blank cheque to the Cornish tin industry. That would be nice if it happened, but we know that it will not happen and I believe that the Government are right in setting down the guidelines that they have—that they will consider viable projects to enable the industry to stand on its own feet once the price of tin recovers.

The difficulty is that no one can say when the price of tin will reach a reasonable stable level, or, indeed, what that level will be. Therefore, I appreciate fully the difficulties which the Government, and the Minister in particular, face in considering the application. But my earnest plea to the Minister is that he should consider that application with flexibility, with urgency, because it is important to bring the uncertainty to an end, and with sympathy.

I end by quoting the concluding paragraph of the report by the Select Committee on Trade and Industry which carried out a deep investigation into the crisis. That Committee concluded its report by saying:

"It is of supreme importance that the Government should begin negotiations with the industry and conclude them without delay. We believe that the Cornish tin industry is worth saving."

That is the view of Cornwall and of a lot of people way beyond Cornwall.

10.35 am

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): I have not checked with the House of Commons computer, but if the hon. Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has raised this issue 14 times my number must be similar.

I want to protest that the only way in which we have been able to raise the issue on the Floor of the House is by using our ingenuity as Back Benchers, through Adjournment debates and such like. Here is a major financial collapse and an industry in massive difficulty, yet not one second of time has been given in the normal manner on the Floor of the House to discuss that. In an odd way, that reflects the disadvantage that Cornwall feels it has—that, as a result of its remoteness, Britain's real establishment is not that interested.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): Will the hon. Gentleman accept that every time anybody has asked to come to see me for a meeting on this matter, I have always acceded to that request immediately?

Mr. Penhaligon: I would not quibble with that. I have said before that the Minister is more than willing to have

meetings. I have sometimes wondered how much he studied the issue between meetings, but he is undoubtedly willing to have them.

I want to set the problems of Geevor in the context of Cornwall's economy. Cornwall's economy is flat on its back. For a long time, we had the dubious distinction of having the lowest wage structure of any county in Great Britain. But on top of that western Cornwall has 25 per cent. male unemployment, and that was so before the crisis started. Answers to questions that I have asked show that a full 10 per cent. less of Cornwall's female population is in work than anywhere else in the country. I know that the unemployment figures are much the same but now only a person who has never managed to find a job cannot be unemployed under the present scheme.

For six or eight months of the year the main income of a large number of towns comes from state benefits in one form or another. That is the background of our economy. Therefore, one can understand why the loss of an industry which has put £50 million into the county's economy and provides between 2,000 and 2,500 primary jobs is not greeted enthusiastically by the county.

Hard rock mining represents about one third of Cornwall's mining, and it is obviously in some difficulty. It is worth remembering just how much the Government get out of the other two-thirds of Cornwall's mining—china clay. The ECLP company last year declared a profit of £75 million. I recognise that not all that comes from Cornwall, but between £40 million and £45 million does. The Government's take on that has been substantial. All that Cornwall is really asking the Minister at this moment is to put back into Cornwall what came from Cornwall and to put back into Cornish mining what came from Cornish mining. That is what the county is asking for and what the hon. Member for St. Ives has just argued for so articulately.

When we meet the Minister or exchange letters and read whatever information somebody else has obtained, the question that is constantly raised is viability. I have no great complaint about that, but in this particular case viability is even more difficult than it is in some other circumstances. The mines can make a fair guess about sterling costs per tonne of tin. They never quite know what the ore quality will be 3 yd in front of the drill, but they can make a fair guess. They have been in the business for a long time and they are not foolish. Secondly, they must guess what the sterling exchange rate will be over the next couple of years. If anyone thinks that that is difficult, I must tell them that that is the last easy calculation that can be made because from there on the calculations are impossible.

In January last year, tin was exchanging hands freely at £10,000 a tonne. At this moment, it would be difficult to get £3,500. That is the extent of the fall. There cannot be 5 per cent. of mines in the world that are making a profit with a price of £3,500 a tonne. Therefore, anyone who knows anything about economics can confidently predict that international tin prices must rise. That begs two questions—rise to what and how long will that take? One calculation is how much tin the world uses and at what cost the world can produce it. The marginal price is about £6,500 a tonne. No one has any idea of whether that price will be obtained in six months—I fear not—two years or even longer, but in the long run it must get back to its marginal production costs.

The Minister has said at several meetings that we cannot have a subsidy for tin because the EEC will not allow that. I am as pro-Europe as the Minister—perhaps more—but assertions from Ministers about what the EEC will or will not allow have taken a severe dive in popularity in Cornwall. We were told that a large swathe of Cornwall could not have development area status because the EEC would not allow more than 35 per cent. of the population within that designation. However, we now know that that is not true.

I can persuade my Cornish miners to accept no subsidy from the Government—and that is a generous offer that must make any Conservative Government prick up their ears—if he can persuade the EEC not to allow any subsidised tin into the Community. The companies could then take a deep breath and somehow finance themselves through what would, I believe, be a short-term crisis.

Sometimes the Government are accused of knowing the price of everything but the value of nothing. I am not absolutely sure that that is true, but it is a rather nice line of rhetoric. The Government face a difficult decision—whether to save the Cornish tin industry. I believe that the arguments for doing so are overwhelming. When the Minister makes his decision in the next few days, I ask him to raise his sights a little above the absolute short-term figures on paper, which are probably wrong anyway because there are so many unknown quantities. He must decide whether he wants to give a traditional industry in one of the remoter parts of this country a chance to survive. I have no doubt that he should do so. The Cornish people want him to do so and subsequent generations will thank him for doing so. Of course, the Minister has the power simply to switch off the industry and to end hundreds of years of history. I cannot believe that he wishes to be remembered for that.

10.43 am

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Like most hon. Members, I am sad that we have to debate this matter yet again because we had all hoped that, by now, there would have been some positive action. I must emphasise that when considering the cost of providing support it is important to balance that with the cost to the Government of not providing it, and it is even more important to consider the cost to the subregion of not providing it.

We have already heard of the 1,300 jobs that are directly involved, but they are only a fraction of the jobs that will be lost if the industry is abandoned. Indeed, almost twice that number could be lost in the secondary effect of the decline of the tin industry. If the Government allow the industry to disappear, that may cost the Exchequer at least £18 million, and possibly more than £20 million a year as a result of the unemployment that will flow. Over a five-year period—the same period for which certain evaluations have been discussed at a commercial level—the Government will incur a cost of about £100 million for doing nothing and for keeping the people in Cornwall doing nothing.

As we have said before, there is another aspect to the issue at a time of oil surplus, decline and manufacturing deficit. We must remember that the tin industry has, year in and year out, made a positive contribution through import substitution—although I accept that that is not the major case. In terms of national accounting, it is small figures, but at least it is positive figures. Far more important must be the localised effect on the community.

[Mr. Alan Williams]

Local authorities have pointed out that those working in the industry spend £18 million a year of their wages in their communities, helping to generate demand for other people's produce and thereby maintain employment. The mines also contribute £8 million of contract work into the communities—and those are only direct contributions. If we remember the number of jobs outside the industry that will be lost, we can understand the downward spiral into which that part of Cornwall could be thrust. However, bad as that multiplier effect may be, even worse is the loss of opportunity and hope for an area and its people.

Throughout our debates on the future of the industry, hon. Members have emphasised that one cannot judge by ability in an extractive industry on the same basis that one judges by ability in a manufacturing industry. As the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) said, what is a fair price as against the current market price? With everyone offloading tin, it is being sold at an enormous loss, so the industry's viability in the short term is an utterly improper yeardstick for the Government to use.

Cornwall is ill-fitted to deal with the aftermath of allowing the industry to disappear. Like my part of the country, Wales, and like Scotland and the north, Cornwall has suffered a massive cut in regional aid. It is down to about one third of what it was when the Government took office. Like parts of west Wales, Cornwall must deal with the problem of remoteness. Most of our assisted areas are peripheral in the European context, but west Wales and Cornwall are the most peripheral of all. They must overcome the gravest difficulties of communications. They have the greatest cost disadvantage for which they must somehow compensate would-be investors to persuade them into the area.

We all know that the reality is that if the industry disappears, under the present regional aid regime there is no chance of any new industries moving into the area. There simply would not be the incentives, even if the Government were operating a growth economy, which they are not. Cornwall is left absolutely defenceless against the impact——

Mr. Harris: I wish to set the record straight on that point. I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will agree that Penwith, where Geevor is situated, has had its status increased under the redrawing of the regional map. It has gone up to the top tier, and I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will wish to bear that in mind.

Mr. Williams: When I set up the special development areas in the 1960s the top tier received 25 per cent. investment grants. Now, the top tier has been abolished and the highest grant is 15 per cent. All that the hon. Gentleman is saying is that something was given but the top was lopped off and it is now worth only a fraction of what it used to be worth. Clearly, that was more of a cosmetic sop than a practical gesture. When the matter was debated I have no doubt that the hon. Gentleman went into the Division Lobby against the Government to protect his locality.

Communities will go into decline. They are already under pressure. Decline in this sense is selective. Decline means the loss of skilled workers and of the young. Those who can get out, will do so in desperation. If we allow the industry in Cornwall to decline further the young will be even more under pressure to leave their communities. They will leave behind gradually aging populations with heavy social costs.

Even for those who stay there will be no hope. For 50-year olds there will certainly be no hope. For 40-year olds there will be little or no hope and even for 30-year olds there will be little hope if the industry is allowed to disappear. Such people do not have the option of getting on their bike, or even on the high-speed train. Many of them are inevitably rooted because of home ownership. They cannot contemplate the costs and upheaval of selling and moving elsewhere. Those who do not own their own homes know that if they try to move away there is little or no hope of finding rented accommodation, particularly in the public sector now that that is so diminished.

We are not dealing only with the problem of a couple of mines, important as they are in terms of their historic significance and their direct link with Cornwall's character. We are talking about the survival and the viability of communities.

Unless the Government act quickly Cornwall will face a decade of despair with no hope for those who are thrown out of their jobs. The Minister will express his support for the area and his concern. We will be taken trip by trip on each of the journeys that he has made to Cornwall. We do not doubt that he likes the communities or that he has been to Cornwall. However, much as we like the Minister as a colleague, bland reassurance is no substitute for a sense of urgency. Quick and positive action is needed above all.

10.56 am

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): I am delighted that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) has managed to draw our attention yet again to an important issue for him, his constituency and for Cornwall. It is also an important national and international matter which has not only grabbed the headlines but captured the imaginations of many people. If this were the 34th rather than the 14th occasion on which he had raised the matter I should have been happy to respond.

Of course, I agree with my hon. Friend and with the right hon. Member for Swansea, West (Mr. Williams) that the issue is not just about tin, but about the regional implications of tin. As the right hon. Gentleman was kind enough to say, I know Cornwall well and have been there. Unlike some hon. Members, I knew about tin mines well before the current crisis. I apologise to the right hon. Member for Swansea, West for reminding the House about that.

The right hon. Gentleman, my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives and the hon. Member for Truro (Mr. Penhaligon) told us about the high levels of unemployment in Cornwall. They are very high. In Penzance and St. Ives unemployment is 21·2 per cent. In Redruth and Camborne it is 22·2 per cent. Relatively, in Truro the level is a little lower, at 12·2 per cent. I accept the serious regional implications.

Tin mining in Cornwall is not a new phenomenon. The industry has managed to survive through good and bad times for about 2,000 years. The current crisis started in the latter part of October last year when the genuine uncertainty began. Between then and early March negotiations took place in an attempt to come to an agreement with all the parties, including the international sector, in an attempt to resolve the crisis. As my hon.

Friend, the Member for St. Ives said, if agreement had been reached the current price of under £4,000 per tonne would have been higher. It is impossible to say by how much. If it had been higher it would have been in the interests of the Cornish tin mines.

The £50 million figure which has been bandied about by several hon Members was not for the London Metal Exchange, but to restore an orderly market in tin. That would have been in the interests of the Cornish tin mines.

The hon. Member for Truro said that it would be difficult to decide at what price tin would be trading in the years ahead. It will be difficult. It would be difficult to decide at what price any commodity will be trading in five years. Let us take, for example, a hotel room in St. Ives. The price of that room will vary from season to season and from summer to winter. To have a stab at reckoning what that price will be in five years' time would be difficult, just as difficult as would be to guess the precise price of tin.

The right hon. Member for Swansea, West talked about uncertainty. I accept that the uncertainty has continued for a long time and that that in itself is debilitating. The right hon. Gentleman was a distinguished Minister in the Department of Trade and Industry, so he knows that one cannot approve an application which has not been received. I make no complaint about the time at which the applications were received because that depended on the outcome of negotiations involving the International Tin Council. The first application, from Geevor, was received on 9 April. Like my hon. Friend, I pay tribute to Mr. Wallis and Mr. Gilbert and all their employees for the enormous amount of work which went into their applications.

The RTZ application was received on 9 May. We could start to operate only after those applications were received. I am sure that all hon. Members who have been closely involved will accept the importance of my Department's role since the applications were received—and prior to that. My Department could not have done more work than it did both before the applications were received and since.

Dr. David Owen (Plymouth, Devonport): Everyone understands the urgency of the matter, but can the Minister, before the House goes into Recess, tell us clearly when he expects to make a decision on Geevor and RTZ? We must have a firm timetable.

Mr. Morrison: If the right hon. Gentleman had been a member of the delegation that I saw the other day, he would have heard what I had to say on that matter. I shall come back to it later.

Let me underline the efforts that are being made to process the applications. The second application for Geevor will be received over the holiday weekend and arrangements have been made for my officials to look at that application during that weekend. The test will be viability and I was glad that both my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives and the hon. Member for Truro agreed that viability should be the test.

In response to the right hon. Member for Plymouth Devonport (Dr. Owen), I remind hon. Members that I told the recent delegation of Cornwall Members and representatives of Cornish town and district councils that I intend to do everything in my power to respond to the Geevor application by 1 or 2 June. I do not want to be forced into a rigid position, because if I cannot respond by then there will be problems about the pumps, care and maintenance and so on.

The chairman of Geevor referred, in a letter to me yesterday, to the generosity of the Cornish town councils and the Government and the £40,000 that was made avalable to ensure that there was time for the second Geevor application to be made and for the Department to process it.

I do not think that the right hon. Member for Devonport would want me to give a precise date on the RTZ application. I should prefer not to do so, because if I am tied to a specific date, proper consideration may not be given to the application. Hon. Members would not appreciate that. They will want us to give proper consideration to the application.

We all love to visit Cornwall; millions of people take their holidays there. However, the transition from traditional manufacturing and mining processes to more modern methods of production will be very painful for Cornwall. The Government have done a lot for the area, but unemployment remains high. It is with that consideration in mind, and having regard to the important test of viability, about which there is a consensus in the House, that we shall be reviewing the applications as quickly as possible.

Nuclear Power Stations (Safety)

11.3 am

Mr. Jeremy Corbyn (Islington, North): I wish to discuss the safety of nuclear power stations. There has been considerable debate—much of it well informed—over the past few months about the plans of NIREX to find a series of sites for the dumping of nuclear waste, which I believe to be the consequence of the nuclear industry; the debate is rather short-sighted, because we should be discussing the causes of nuclear waste rather than the places where it can be dumped.

There has also been considerable discussion of the Chernobyl disaster and the atmosphere that it has created in this country. Initially, the disaster was misunderstood. It was dismissed as something to do with a peculiarly Soviet design of power station, but it became clear subsequently that a similar disaster could happen in many other places throughout the world.

Earlier this week we heard about the accident that affected a number of workers at the nuclear power plant at Cap de la Hague which is about the same distance from London as Chernobyl is from Kiev and is probably closer to London than some of our own nuclear power stations.

In recent years there have been regular statements to the House about nuclear discharges from Sellafield and the safety of that plant. A few years ago we witnessed the tragedy of Three Mile Island and the near-disaster there.

All those events have changed the atmosphere of the discussion of nuclear power and the safety of nuclear power stations. For the first time, many people have understood the indivisible link between nuclear power stations and the construction of nuclear missiles. The plutonium that is required for nuclear warheads cannot be manufactured except in nuclear fission reactors. That was the original basis for the construction of a number of nuclear power stations in this country, particularly Calder Hall.

Over the past few weeks there has been much more media coverage of the problems and safety of nuclear power. Those who complacently talk about the safety of nuclear power stations and say that British nuclear power stations are the safest in the world should examine the record and the changing technology of the past 20 years.

Since the Windscale disaster in 1957, there have been continual changes in the safety procedures, but the technology is always behind the ability to pollute and the ability to create nuclear waste. The television film last Saturday about the disaster at Idaho Falls in 1961, an accurate reconstruction of what happened, showed that technology was far behind the ability to pollute the atmosphere.

Workers were sent in to clean up the plant and were not adequately briefed, protected or prepared. A number of them were army personnel, and when the medical community at Idaho Falls wished to trace them, the army denied it information about their whereabouts. Many people in the United States may be suffering long-term genetic cancers, as a result of the Idaho Falls accident, and they may not even know that they are in danger. People in other parts of the world have had the same experience.

The nuclear industry, which is supposed to be entirely safe, has had 151 reported accidents in 14 countries since 1971. Every time an accident happens we are told that the British industry is the safest in the world and nuclear power is the safest form of power generation. Comparisons are made with deaths in the coal mines.

Nuclear power represents the end of a long chain which starts with the exploitation of workers in Namibia, the denial of aboriginal land rights in Australia and the activities of the major mining companies that take uranium from the earth. The chain ends with nuclear power stations surrounded by the tightest security and with enormous implicit dangers to the people of this country and of the northern hemisphere. There are few nuclear power stations in the southern hemisphere, and the fact that there is little interchange of air between the hemispheres means that the dangers from Chernobyl and other such places tend to affect mainly the northern hemisphere. It is interesting to examine the production of electricity by fuel type. Electricity produced by nuclear power in United Kingdom has increased from 28 terawatt hours in 1973 to 49.9 TWh in 1983 and it is planned to rise to 126 TWh by the year 2000. The production from solid fuels, mainly coal, has gone up from 174.6 TWh in 1973 to 194.7 TWh in 1983 and is planned to be 193 TWh by the year 2000. Already, 20 per cent. of our electricity is generated by nuclear power but only 4 per cent. of our total energy needs are met by nuclear power, causing enormous danger to the British people in the process.

France is often compared with Britain as a country obsessed with nuclear power, which is true. According to equivalent data, in 1973 the French nuclear industry generated 14.7 TWh, by 1983 it had increased to 144.3 TWh, by 1984 it had increased to 191.5 TWh, by 1990 it is planned to increase to 274.9 TWh and by the year 2000 it is expected to be 384.6 TWh—enormous increases by any measurement.

The increase in nuclear power generation is largely a western European phenomenon. It goes hand in hand with the attempt to end Britain's coal production and, even more so, to stop the use of coal reserves in France. The Department of Energy should question the EEC on this because the EEC's statistics explain coal production in terms of productive capacity, not in terms of total reserves. Every time a mine is closed, its reserves are denied as being available for use. That is yet another example of the propaganda that nuclear power is the only way forward for Britain and for Western Europe.

A Commission document on new Community energy objectives, which was published on 28 May 1985, listed several objectives, including:

"to maintain, and if possible increase, the market share of solid fuels;

not more than 10 per cent. of electricity to be generated from oil and gas;

approximately 40 per cent. of electricity to be generated from nuclear power;

a tripling in new and renewable energy production by the end of the century."

Forty per cent. of electricity generated by nuclear power will represent for western Europe a massive increase in generating capacity from nuclear power. Only France, Belgium and West Germany have reached that level.

I shall compare production of nuclear power in western Europe with production in other countries. The 1985 "BP Statistical Review of World Energy" shows, giving million tonnes oil equivalent figures, that in 1974 in the United States nuclear energy produced 28·8 MTOE, by 1978 it had increased to 75 MTOE and by 1984 it had increased to 89·4 MTOE. It is true that capacity has

doubled since 1975, but it is interesting that the planned growth was much lower than in western Europe, because of the effects of Three Mile Island and campaigning by people in the United States who realised the dangers of nuclear power. We, too, should learn from those lessons.

Looking at the centrally planned economies, we find that China does not produce any nuclear power and that the USSR has increased production from 4·5 MTOE in 1974 to 12·5 MTOE in 1979, to 20·5 MTOE in 1982 and to 25 MTOE in 1984. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union is now planning a massive increase in nuclear power generation. I believe that Britain, France and the Soviet Union are wrong to increase nuclear power generation. They are planning that massive increase because they believe that it provides them with cheap unit cost electricity.

On the face of it, nulcear power is capable of providing cheap electricity. Unit costs can never calculate the backward and forward chain effects of having nuclear power. They cannot meausure the disastrous effects on the lives of people in Namibia, Western Australia or anywhere that uranium is produced, nor can they measure the dangers to people living in Britain or elsewhere in western Europe when a nuclear disaster of the Chernobyl type occurs. Accountants cannot measure death, long-term pollution or the amount of land that will be taken up through the building of nuclear disposal sites as we continually expand the nuclear industry.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): My hon. Friend has said that nuclear energy provides only 4 per cent. of our total energy requirements. I understand that we are capable of producing twice as much electricity as we need. Is not the production of nuclear energy a fairly good cover, not only in Britain but in America and Russia, for the production of plutonium for nuclear weapons? That is really what it is about.

Mr. Corbyn: My hon. Friend is correct. That is a very valuable point. The complex of power stations around Chernobyl in the Ukraine is dedicated to the production of plutonium. A large part of the production of the British nuclear industry is also involved in plutonium production. That plutonium is stockpiled at Aldermaston, then exported to the United States and then re-exported to Britain in the form of cruise and Trident submarine missiles. There is an inextricable link between the production of civil nuclear power and the warheads that result from it.

The debates in the past few weeks have convinced more people than ever before that the nuclear industry is essentially dangerous. We are dealing with technology that cannot adequately deal with the dangers of nuclear power. We are dealing with a problem that cannot be resolved because there is no known method of providing long-term safe disposal of nuclear waste, as was shown by the debate a few days ago on the NIREX sites.

If nuclear waste is to be continually dumped, it must be dumped in places from which it can be retrieved. Obviously, there must be security around those sites. Do we want Britain to be riddled with razor wire fences around nuclear sites where dumping will take place year after year? The half-life of some of the intermediate and high-level radioactive waste is much longer than the technology that is designed to protect us from that waste. We must seriously take account of that fact. There are a number of nuclear power stations in Britain — from Hartlepool in the north-east to the Sizewell sites in Essex and Dungeness on the south coast — and an enormous complex of nuclear power stations around the Severn estuary, including the Hinkley and Oldbury power stations. People are now thinking twice about all those areas, because they realise that the Chernobyl disaster occurred only 84 miles from Kiev, which is only slightly more than the distance between London and the proposed Sizewell nuclear reactor site. Many French nuclear power stations are closer to London than British power stations are.

On 15 June 1985, a conference was held in Liverpool on pollution and militarisation of the Irish sea. A day conference, called "Irish Sea — Nuclear Cesspool", listed nuclear installations near the Irish sea — Wylfa nuclear power station, Capenhurst fuel enrichment plant, Springfields fuel manufacturing plant, Heysham nuclear power station, the Windscale reprocessing plant and the Chapel cross nuclear power station.

All those installations discharge liquid radioactive wastes of varying degrees into the Irish sea, making it the most radioactive sea in the world. The figures in the report are taken from the 1984 Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food report, which gives an analysis of samples taken in 1982. It considers the emissions from those power stations and the half-life of the waste borne into the Irish sea, which varies from eight days to years and hundreds of years.

The conference did not receive much publicity. Those who question the basis of the nuclear industry always find it hard to get any publicity. However, I hope that that will now change. The conference sought to examine the fallout of waste into the Irish sea and the conclusions that could be drawn from it. In a preliminary statement, Mrs. Susan Schafer said:

"Evidence of child leukæmia in Cumbria, and Northern Ireland is dismissed as 'unproven', despite the results of the accident of 1957 at Windscale which are still being assessed. No other explanation of the exceptionally high proportion of Down's Syndrome babies born to mothers who had lived in Dundalk and Maryport at the time of the fire has been offered. As well as leukæmia and Down's Syndrome, there is the high incidence of Hodgkin's disease in the Isle of Man.

It emerges from the work of Dr. Bertell and others that what is wanted is a comprehensive survey of all the actual and possible health hazards that arise from three generations of abnormally high radiation exposure on the Irish Sea coast."

In relation to the Clean Seas Campaign, a Dublin-based organisation, a Whitehaven fisherman said:

"They sort the fish into three boxes at Whitehaven. The ones with tumours, scabs and diseases are taken away by the nuclear people. The dodgy ones are thrown back and we sell the others."

Although emissions from Sellafield have been reduced and although the nuclear industry recognises that pollution of the Irish sea poses a serious problem, that pollution has already occurred and the long-term damage has already been done. There will still be discharges into the Irish sea and so dangers will still arise.

I shall quote from a glossy piece of information put out by the information services branch of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority entitled, "Nuclear — Safe Power". It says:

"In Britain before a nuclear power station can be licensed the owners must show that it is safe. How safe is safe? One design target is that the chances of a sequence . . . occurring and releasing uncontrolled radiation to the environment must be less than one in a million for each year the reactor is in operation. Put another way, if all Britain's electricity came from nuclear power stations such an accident would be expected less often than once

[Mr. Corbyn]

every 10,000 years. To achieve these standards, all conceivable occurrances, including earthquakes and crashing aircraft, are considered in the design of a reactor. The designer also assumes that equipment will fail and that operators will make mistakes. Protective systems are therefore duplicated or triplicated. . . . Reactors normally run smoothly for months at a time. A Magnox reactor at Sizewell ran for 653 days before it was shut down for the regular biennial check. Other stations have similarly impressive records."

I am sure that those who design and operate nuclear power stations have safety very much in mind. But do we have the technology to protect us from the sort of accident that happened at Chernobyl? Estimates have been put together based on the Department of the Environment bulletin, which on 9 May 1986 listed dose averages across the country. It is not clear how they were compiled, except for the comment that the data refer to the period 2 to 8 May.

Aggregation of the data presented gives a total average dose of 0·0723 mSv, assuming the radiation hazard due to radioactive milk is calculated as three sevenths of the peak radiation hazard during the seven days for which the data are presented.

Risk estimates for cancer and other hazards due to various authors can therefore be calculated. Using the figures of the International Commission on Radiological Protection, it is likely that there will be more than 100 fatal cancers as a result of the fallout. There will be many more non-fatal cancers, and total effects may go well over the 200 mark. Using the figures put together by Dr. Gofman in a book that he prepared some years ago, the total is much higher and the danger is much greater.

The Government must come clean about what the danger from the Chernobyl disaster is. I hope that they will monitor the situation carefully and publish all the figures. Using the Department of the Environment's data for radiation risks to the United Kingdom population from the Chernobyl disaster for 2 to 8 May, it can be stated that between 100 and 1,700 people will suffer from long-term cancers. Those figures are not designed to alarm people. They are given because I believe that it is important to understand just how dangerous one accident at one power station a long way away was to the people of this country.

As a result of the Chernobyl disaster, there was a high degree of fallout. The weekly science magazine *Nature* is well respected. The edition that came out yesterday reported on the actions that had been taken by various Western European Governments following the Chernobyl incident. The Austrian Government's decision has been to dismantle the only nuclear power plant that it has. The plant has never been in operation, but it has been decided to abandon it altogether. The Netherlands has decided not to expand its nuclear industry, and Sweden may bring forward its 2010 deadline for the closure of its nuclear power stations. It is possible that other actions may include the Long Island Lighting Co. in the United States not being given a licence to operate a new nuclear plant, because of the lack of any convincing plan to evacuate local inhabitants in the event of a disaster.

The safety of nuclear power stations is vital. The doses that people in the Soviet Union received from the disaster at Chernobyl were considerably higher than those that people received here. The doses received in Poland and Sweden were also considerably higher than those received here. However, it is not good enough simply to say that the Soviet Union had a different type of nuclear power station and that an accident could not happen here. Sizewell is 84 miles from London, which is the same distance as separates Kiev from Chernobyl.

We need to know what inquiry the Government will mount into the safety of the nuclear industry as a whole and the long-term health damage to our people as a result of a continuing nuclear power programme, and about the link that exists with the nuclear weapons industry. Without that information or inquiry, there will be a continuing campaign by many people in this country who are frightened and worried about the implications of nuclear power. Many people in the United States are turning their backs on it. Indeed, there is opposition to nuclear power development in the Soviet Union. Moreover, there is opposition to it throughout Western Europe.

It is time that the Government recognised that nuclear power is inherently dangerous. They should also recognise that we must develop our basic fuel reserves of coal, oil and gas, as well as alternative energy sources. But the Department of Energy chooses to spend much more on research into developing nuclear power than on developing alternative energy sources. Indeed, its booklet on alternative energy sources is about half an inch thick and seems to represent the sum total of the Department's interest in the subject.

A document produced by the Nuclear Electricity Information Group asks whether there could be an accident like Chernobyl in Britain. It says:

"Not an accident like Chernobyl, because we do not have that type of nuclear reactor. A British team studied the Chernobyl design in 1976 when our own nuclear programme was being reappraised. . . But if you mean, could there be a major accident in a British nuclear power station, the answer must be 'yes' although the chance of an accident on the scale of Chernobyl is so small it might happen once in a million years. Nuclear engineers continually assess and re-assess the chances of accidents, taking the most remote events and assuming they happen together."

I just do not believe that the nuclear industry is anything like as safe as those who run it and who stand to make a great deal of money out of the development of nuclear power stations seem to believe. It has a fundamentally corrupting influence on us. I read the first English edition of *Pravda* on the Chernobyl nuclear power station. It chronicles the events and says that five large farms and 30,000 people had been evacuated from the area immediately around the Chernobyl plant, and describes the events that took place. That could well happen in the United Kingdom unless we do something now about nuclear power stations.

In the *New Scientist* of 15 May 1986 an article entitled: "The unanswered questions of Chernobyl" states:

"It is still not clear exactly what went wrong at reactor number four of the Chernobyl nuclear power station in the Ukraine late last month. The information that the three experts from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) have brought back from their trip to the Soviet Union last week has posed as many questions as it has answered.

The accident happened at 0123 hours . . . on Saturday 26 April. The reactor was in the process of being shut down for routine maintenance at the time, and was running at around 7 per cent. of its maximum output of 1000 megawatts.

The core of the reactor exploded without warning, ripping open the top of the reactor vault. Morris Rosen, director of the IAEA's Division of Nuclear Safety and one of the three to visit the stricken reactor, said this week: 'The initiation was rapid. There were no precursors to the explosion recorded in the data that have been recovered from the control room.'"

It has since become clear that the reactor was running at less than 7 per cent. of maximum output when the disaster occurred. Those who continually criticise Soviet technology and say that such an accident could not happen here, should remember that the Soviet Union is technically advanced. Moreover, court action is at present being considered against the manufacturers of the sensors that should have shown the approach of the disaster. Those sensors were manufactured not in the Soviet Union but in France, which is supposed to be advanced in technological matters.

The nuclear power industry is fundamentally dangerous to our people. The problem of waste disposal can never go away. The debate on NIREX earlier this week is the start of debates that we shall have year in, year out, so long as we continue this lunatic, headlong rush towards developing a nuclear economy.

11.31 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy (Mr. Alastair Goodlad): I am grateful to the hon. Member for Islington, North (Mr. Corbyn) for raising this important issue, in which he takes great interest. It has, understandably, raised deep anxiety in the United Kingdom and elsewhere in the wake of the tragic accident at Chernobyl. That has led to calls for closer international co-operation in the IAEA framework, including the establishment of an international mechanism for early warning and mutual assistance in the event of any future accidents. We fully support those objectives, and the United Kingdom is playing its full part in international discussions and actions.

The United Kingdom already has a formal agreement with France for the exchange of information in the event of an accident at a nuclear installation. The relevant parts of our civil nuclear emergency plans would be implemented in the event of any risk of significant radioactivity reaching this country from France or elsewhere.

At the request of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, an emergency meeting of the board of governors of the IAEA was held in Vienna on Wednesday to discuss the Chernobyl accident, its consequences, and the measures initiated as a result, as well as further measures which the agency may take for improving international co-operation on the safety of nuclear installations. There was a very full attendance. Throughout the discussion it was clear that there was universal concern at the Chernobyl disaster and its implications for the safe development of nuclear power. all sides of the House share that concern, and I repeat our expressions of sympathy for those who suffered as a result of the accident, especially those who are gravely ill and the families of those who have died.

The IAEA has provided an important channel of information about the course of events at Chernobyl. Dr. Blix, the agency's director-general, and some of his senior colleagues flew to Moscow at the beginning of the month to obtain a report. The IAEA has now agreed to hold a post-accident review meeting with experts from different countries. The soviet authorities have agreed to provide a full account.

There were many constructive, practical suggestions on possible additional measures to improve co-operation on nuclear safety. These measures need to be carried forward urgently. With the full support of the United Kingdom, an outline programme was drawn up. It has two main elements. The first is the establishment of expert groups to draft two binding international conventions, one on reporting and exchange of information on nuclear accidents with possible transboundary effects. There was general agreement on the need for this convention, to which the United Kingdom attaches the highest priority, and which, the House will remember, was called for by the Tokyo summit. The second convention is to be on co-ordinated emergency response and assistance in the event of nuclear accidents which could have transboundary effects.

All the board members confirmed that, even before new conventions on the exchange of information and mutual assistance came into force, their Governments would inform potentially affected countries, the IAEA and other appropriate international organisations, such as the World Health Organisation, immediately in the event of a significant release of radioactivity within their territory.

The second element of the programme will be a conference of governmental representatives to review the full range of nuclear safety issues, in the light of the Chernobyl disaster. An expert group was established to consider, over the long-term, additional measures to improve co-operation on nuclear safety, including nuclear safety standard.

The agency's director-general has been asked to prepare detailed proposals to implement this outline programme. His proposals will be further discussed at the next regular meeting of the board of governors which begins on 10 June.

Detailed information on the causes of the accident and subsequent events is still awaited, although from a summary description by the IAEA experts who visited Chernobyl and from statements made by the Russians themselves, the accident appears to have been caused by a sudden surge in power which led to an explosion in the core, and was not the consequence of an outside event.

The nuclear industry in this country will obviously wish to learn everything it can from this accident. The full presentation on the causes of the accident which the Soviet Union expects to give within three months will naturally be of the greatest public interest throughout the world. It is important to understand exactly what caused this horrifying event. As has already been noted, the Chernobyl reactor is of a different design to any operating in this country, and would not have been licensed here.

We have in this country a sound system of nuclear safety licensing in which the onus is on the electricity utilities to put safety first. That is their prime responsibility as owners of the plant. The licensing authority, the nuclear installations inspectorate, is a wholly independent watchdog which makes sure that those responsibilities are met. We can be proud of the safety institutions we have in this country. They have stood the test of time and they operate well.

In the view of our nuclear experts, the Chernobyl reactor design suffers some inherent flaws. I understand that the graphite moderator runs very hot at over 700 deg C—far higher than is the case in our own reactors. At such temperatures there is a risk of a graphite fire if air gains access. All reactor systems are designed in one way or another to deal with changes in the conditions of coolant. In the Chernobyl reactor, if steam pockets form in the coolant, fuel element activity levels rapidly increase, making control more difficult.

[Mr. Alastair Goodlad]

There are particular safety considerations for a pressure tube reactor. More than a decade ago consideration was given to building a pressure tube reactor called the steam generating heavy water reactor in the United Kingdom. It would have been moderated, not by graphite, but by heavy water. British technical experts decided that it could meet the British safety standards only at such great expense that it was impossible to make an economic reactor of this type which also met our safety rules. The project was abandoned.

A major issue that has been raised is containment. In the accident at Three-Mile Island, there was a partial core meltdown, but there was no significant harm to the public because virtually all the radioactivity was retained inside the containment building when the primary pressure containment was breached. The Chernobyl reactor accident, on the other hand, has led to a large release of radioactivity. People, therefore, naturally ask what containment there is on British Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactors. I am advised by the CEGB that all nuclear fuel in British civil reactors is enclosed in sealed cans, referred to as fuel cladding, which forms the first barrier against the escape of radioactivity in any reactor. The fuel, together with the other components of the reactor core and the primary coolant, whether it be water or gas, are enclosed within a primary pressure circuit, which "contains" the pressure of the system. In practice, however, this barrier cannot be complete since there must be pipes penetrating this barrier, for example to get the coolant and control rods in and out.

The golden rule of safety is that we must assume the worst — that anything which can go wrong will go wrong — and that there could be a complete failure of the pipes. In that event there is a need to ensure that no harm comes to employees or to the public. In the case of water-cooled reactors, steam would escape from any breach of the primary pressure circuit. That steam would be radioactive, because waterborne corrosion products are irradiated in a reactor core. It must therefore be contained so that the radioactivity is not released into the environment. For this reason, in this country a water-cooled reactor would be required to have a third barrier in the form of a containment building, or secondary containment.

Gas-cooled reactors behave differently when their pressure circuits are breached. Carbon dioxide cooling gas is relatively free of radioactivity, because radioactive corrosion products are not readily transported by the gas and great care is taken to ensure that no damaged fuel remains in the reactor. The environment of the fuel elements would change only relatively slowly and there are numerous devices to ensure that the coolant would be kept circulating past the fuel. In those circumstances, I am advised that leakage of radioactivity from the fuel, if any, into the coolant would be small. There would not, therefore, be the same danger in releasing carbon dioxide gas into the atmosphere as from steam from a water-cooled reactor.

Mr. Tony Banks: Since radioactive pollution is no respecter of national borders, are the Government satisfied that the radioactive leak at Chernobyl has been completely contained?

Mr. Goodlad: I do not think that our information is sufficiently complete for me to be able to say that with any confidence.

There have also been allegations that the older Magnox stations are operating beyond their original 20-year design life. The operation of all nuclear power stations in this country has to be licensed by the nuclear installations inspectorate. That is a fully independent expert body, which is part of the Health and Safety Executive. Nuclear reactors are shut down for routine maintenance examination every two years and they cannot start up again without consent from the NII. Therefore, they are subjected to a continuous process of review and reassessment as part of the very high standards of safety applied to nuclear plants in this country. The NII would certainly not tolerate a situation in which nuclear stations were operating beyond their design parameters. The so-called 20-year life of Magnox stations was, in fact, merely the period over which the original cost of building the stations was amortised. The operators were, however, requested some time ago by the NII to carry out major in-depth reviews of the longer-term safety of the Magnox reactors. So far, neither this work, which is still going on, nor the regular supervision of the stations by the NII, has revealed any reason to suggest that Magnox stations cannot continue to operate safely. The NII will continue to monitor the progress of the reviews, and has announced that it will publish its conclusions at the end of each review.

Mr. Corbyn: If the reviews indicate, when they are published, that Magnox stations are unlikely to be able to operate safely beyond the recommended initial construction period, will the Government be prepared to close down those stations?

Mr. Goodlad: The Government will certainly follow any NII recommendations that are made as a result of the review.

In this country, nuclear facilities and materials in transit are subject to uniformly high standards of physical protection.

At the design and construction stage, nuclear plant operators are required to consider all security risks attached to their proposed operations and to take advice from the security authorities. The average amount of radiation received by the United Kingdom population from discharges of nuclear waste has been estimated by the NRPB to be one tenth of 1 per cent. of the radiation we receive from all sources.

Stress was laid by the hon. Gentleman on the future potential of renewable sources of energy. The Department is supporting a major research and development programme to develop and promote renewable energy technologies which have the potential to make an economic contribution to this country's energy supplies. In the 12 years since the inception of the programme, over £90 million has been invested by the Government in research, development and demonstration activities in renewable energy field—a very substantial increase on the sum invested by our predecessors. The Department is advised on the content, application and amount of the research programme by the independent Advisory Committee on Research and Development under the chairmanship of Sir Sam Edwards. Current advice is that the application and amount of the funding is appropriate.

I believe that our response to Chernobyl must be one of continuing care and vigilance. It wold be folly to turn our backs on a source of energy whicy has provided a valuable element of diversity and security to the country's energy supplies and is emerging as the prime source to meet the needs of the world in the 21st century. It is already an important component of the energy supplies of western Europe; 65 per cent. in France, 55 per cent. in Belgium and 25 per cent. in Germany.

The growth in energy demand in the next century will depend on a number of factors: among other things, economic growth, world population and energy prices. We in the developed world currently consume over three quarters of the world's annual energy, although we have only a quarter of the population. By contrast, three quarters of the world's population in the less developed world consume less than a quarter of its energy. In the 21st century world energy requirements will almost certainly increase dramatically. At the beginning of this century, the world's population was about 1 billion. It is currently about 4·7 billion and it is growing at close to 1·7 per cent. a year. By 2025, the world's population will exceed 8 billion. The population of the less developed world, which uses a fraction of our energy per capita, is likely to have doubled. World economic growth at similar or faster rates would put even greater pressure on energy supplies. How are we to meet an increasing need for energy from an increasing population? The situation is already urgent—we have seen the devastating effects of deforestation in several areas of the world. Increasing demand will intensify the pressure on available supplies. Yet demand must be met cheaply if the less-developed world is to have any chance of establishing its industrial base and if the poverty and degradation which is daily before us is to be alleviated. Increased economic activity — leading to better health, education and so on—cannot be achieved without cheap energy.

Each country will judge how best to satisfy its energy needs in the light of its own particular circumstances. For some, a major step forward in living standards would be obtained through the introduction of simple methods, such as stoves burning dung with improved efficiency.

At present, nuclear power is used for the generation of base load electricity. It cannot supply all the energy needs met by oil and gas. It can, however, reduce the pressure on hydrocarbon reserves and help the transition to using fossil fuels more for purposes for which there is no convenient alternative, such as petrochemical production and transport.

To establish new industrial bases throughout the world, large reliable supplies of electricity would be required. It would not be responsible for the developed nations to turn their back on nuclear power and pre-empt all the world's diminishing resources of fossil fuels.

Looking to the future, this Government decided that there should be the fullest possible inquiry at Sizewell. that inquiry took more than two years to complete. The inquiry report, written by the distinguished inspector, has so far taken 16 months to write and has still not been completed. We can complain about the frustrations that such democratic processes bring, but they have been accompanied in this country by a remarkable record of safety and care which should be a cause of confidence in the future use of nuclear energy, to our environmental and economic advantage. We shall consider that report when we receive it.

With skilled and dynamic leadership, Britain's nuclear industry is providing over 100,000 jobs, making a considerable contribution to our balance of trade, reducing the nation's energy costs and using and developing the scientific and engineering skills of the British people. We benefit from the use of radioactive materials in medicine, university research and industry, as well as from the generation of electricity. For those of us with a deep desire to improve Britain's economic performance and eradicate unemployment, using forms of energy that safely provide our industries with low-cost electricity must be the right policy.

Sub-Saharan Africa (Aid)

11.48 am

Mr. Colin Moynihan (Lewisham, East): Despite domestic tensions and the international rhetoric of division, famine over the past three years has broken down barriers between East and West in an attempt to unite the generosity of the developed world to relieve the poverty of the mass of the people of Africa. Witness the Polish helicopter crews working alongside the Hercules team from RAF Lyneham in the Ethiopian airlift. Witness the response to the outstanding work undertaken by Bob Geldof and his team as the marathon runner Khuliya globe-trots from capital to capital.

It is fitting that the torch that Bob Geldof carries was lit from the embers of a dying fire in a refugee camp outside Omdurman — not a camp for families from another country who gather under the conditions of assistance provided by the United Nations but a camp of Sudanese migrants whose plight has been no less severe in their trek from the arid heartlands of their country—geographically a country compatible in size to Western Europe. Yet any assessment of the famine which, at its most acute, affected at least 30 million people, claiming several million lives, renews the deep anxieties among those of us who have a special interest in this subject. Unless the Western world can establish with the emergent nations of Africa a new recognition of participation towards common goals for development, I predict that the famine of 1984-85 will pale into insignificance compared to the much greater disasters the world will witness before the turn of the century.

In the 15 years since 1970, Africa has moved from a position of self-sufficiency in food to the current massive deficit that it now faces. During the same period food imports rose sevenfold from 1·9 billion dollars to 12·4 billon dollars. The root cause of such appalling deterioration are the policies of many African Governments. Unrealistic pricing policies discriminate against farmers while the urban population, exercising direct influence over the political elite, seek prestige projects, and a means of satisfying the consumer market, usually backed up by unrealistic exchange rate policies. Government investment that is much required in the areas of infrastructure, irrigation, training and regional agricultural projects finds its home in what Robert McNamara has called "an over-protected and inefficient industrial sector".

Too often the Western-oriented development of Africa's cities has taken precedence over the 80 per cent. of Africa's population, the rural poor, whose need for good prices for the food they produce and for skilled assistance in developing their local skills and pastoral systems have been low on the list of priorities. Equally, western producers have too often sought outlets for highly sophisticated agricultural equipment from stock rather than appropriate technology for the recipients. As Robert McNamara said in the Sir John Crawford memorial lecture:

> "The destruction of Africa's ability to feed itself need not have occurred. The fact is that agriculture, which accounted for a third of the continent's gross national product (GNP) in 1982, has been discriminated against for decades."

The key importance of agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa must not be underestimated. It is a labour-intensive sector in which most of these countries can enjoy a comparative advantage, particularly relative to industry. A vigorous growth in agricultural production and exports is an absolutely essential condition for the creation of significant employment and earning opportunities for the rising rural core.

The average African who depends critically on agriculture for a living is poorer today than he was in 1970. If the problems of agriculture are not addressed more effectively, he will be poorer in 1990 than he was at the time his country became independent. What is even more ominous is that the disastrous famines that are currently restricted to years of drought and to only a few countries will become everyday occurrences affecting a majority of the sub-Saharan nations.

Such problems are intensified by a population problem that needs close attention by all those anxious about the future of sub-Saharan Africa. Of Africa's population of 453 million, 363 million are from sub-Saharan countries. In those countries, there is the highest population growth rate in the world, of 3·2 per cent. If that continues in sub-Saharan Africa, that 363 million will double in 22 years, quadruple in 44 years and will rise eightfold in 66 years. Through an educational process, we need to break down barriers and assist Governments to recognise the importance of breaking down such barriers in countries where populations have a culture and a tradition which mitigates against smaller families. For many family heads, daughters are currency. High premiums are placed on fertility. Even the best possible predicted average rate of growth of 2·5 per cent. will come well below the number of mouths that will need to be fed. That will inevitably mean high levels of malnutrition in future, and the incidence of famine will be inevitably increased. Of course, there is the additional burden on social services, on primary health care and on education. It is interesting to note that in China there is a 70 per cent. use of contraception and in India there is a 30 per cent. awareness of its importance and use and less than 5 per cent. in sub-Saharan Africa.

The 1984-85 Kilimanjaro plan for action which included 36 African countries went a long way towards recognising the importance of making family planning services available to all couples and individuals and backed the concept of non-governmental organisations assisting in the distribution of contraceptive supplies. The consequences of high population growth are only too clear. Greater strains are placed on the socio-economic structure, cities are ringed with slums and, unfortunately, the effects of high population growth entrench illiteracy, malnourishment and ill-health, encouraging environmental mismanagement and land exploitation. It is on land exploitation that anyone assessing the problems of Africa must concentrate. There has been far too much over-grazing, destruction of woodlands and land clearance. Vast amounts of international relief aid have rightly been spent in attempts to alleviate the immediate short-term needs of rural populations by providing emergency assistance. The importance of such aid is recognised by all hon. Members but if the regions affected are to retain even a small degree of self-sufficiency, a much more fundamental long-term approach to the conservation and rehabilitation of the rural environment is required. If self-sufficiency is not a target, the amount of relief aid required will increase as the size of artificially supported populations increases in and around urban areas.

A major difficulty facing sub-Saharan Africa apart from south-east Asia, China or India is that the whole region comprises one of the most sensitive and delicately balanced ecological systems in the world, whose natural resilience to the extremely arid climate has been seriously impaired by man. A proper understanding of the region's natural environment and the inter-dependency of its separate components must be a prerequisite to a coherent strategy for the sustainable management of its resources.

An overriding issue is the way in which the natural resources of the region are managed. The unrealiable and erratic rainfall in the region is one of the main constraints on plant production. Others are the inherent poor fertility of the soil, low livestock productivity, the high incidence of attack by pests and diseases and the susceptibility of stressed plants and animals to such attacks. Traditional rural settlements and lifestyles suffer constraints for carrying capacity imposed by the harsh realities of the immediate environment and the poor reliability of water resources. Until recently, they appeared to be self-sustaining and in some ways able to cope with drought. In the recent past, planning strategies appear to have been based on the assumption of maximum availability of natural resources. By contrast, the more traditional systems seem able to have retained their viability when resources were at a minimum and could respond when more favourable conditions arose. Traditional systems are not now working as effectively as in the past. New systems, whether Government or private, are not effective replacements. Traditional cropping systems that revolve around the long-term cycle of cultivation, fallow and natural regrowth, are collapsing. Pressures on growing by decreasingly nomadic populations have extended the cultivation period by several years and shortened the fallow season. The soil then becomes too impoverished to recover. Over-grazing during fallow periods prevents tree seedlings from becoming established. The pressures of growing numbers on marginal land leads to deforestation. Africa is losing 2·7 million hectares of forest each year, a land area equivalent to the size of Czechoslovakia.

The clear picture that emerges is one in which it is, first and foremost, the responsibility of the 19 countries that constitute sub-Saharan Africa to implement national policies to tackle environmental rehabilitation, population control and make agricultural policies priorities for development. They need the assistance and expertise of the West, of the international lending agencies, of the World Bank and of donor Governments throughout western Europe. They also need the growing expertise in such bodies as the European development fund. When he was writing about Africa, Geldof recognised this and said:

"In the 20th century, famine can no longer be regarded as a natural phenomenon; it is the mismanagement of drought and it is no coincidence that the five African governments, which have suffered most from famine over the past twelve months — Ethiopia, Sudan, Chad, Angola and Mozambique—also happen to be the five African countries engaged in the most bitter civil wars.

Ethiopia, the country whose starving millions aroused the conscience of the world, spent an estimated 47% of its total annual income in 1984 on arms. . . . Sudan is the biggest country on the continent and it is sadly appropriate that its mess is a microcosm of the mess of all Africa . . . If ever there was proof that famine is an act of man rather than An Act of God it is there in the Sudan . . . On the good side, the British left Sudan with one of the best railway systems in Africa. Yet in the 30 years since independence — more than half of them under Nimeiry — there was little maintenance and no real investment in the railway . . . Nimeiry's neglect of the railway system, which subsequently became one of the most corrupt and inefficient bodies in Africa, was to prove a crucial element in the failure of the famine relief effort".

Ethiopia has the highest population in the low income countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In 1980 it stood at 37.7 million. By 2025 it is estimated that it will reach 105.8 million. One policy related to population patterns and movements that has come in for special consideration is the resettlement programme. One of the most important papers written about this subject, produced by Mr. Constable for the FAO in Rome, in December 1984 was the "Ethiopian Highlands Reclamation Study". Extrapolating the statistics for soil erosion against current population patterns, Constable concluded that 10 million more people will, by the year 2010, be unable to cultivate the land that they now farm. His important findings confirm the essential soundness of the agronomical reasons for such a programme. The emphasis on directing the programme in areas of high soil erosion and over-population—Wallo, 60 per cent., Tigré 16 per cent. and Shoa 24 per cent., with no movement from Eritrea—confirm the view that the movement of the resettlers has not been motivated primarily for political reasons, aimed at denuding the rebel areas of Eritrea in particular.

An assessment of the movement from the provinces of Wallo, Tigré and Shoa reflect the fact that these are areas that will never sustain the current, let alone the anticipated, levels of population predicted for them. Self-sufficiency of these areas is not a viable proposition. The resettlement programme is not new. It was initiated in 1973 on the basis of the Brown report. Sites were identified and early resettlement from overpopulated and ecologically eroded sites to more fertile areas in the south-west of Ethiopia took place.

The first phase of the project came in 1974 under Emperor Haile Selassie, and a slow and relatively insignificant number of people moved in 1979. A third and major phase, involving 600,000 people began in December 1984. An accelerated programme of resettlement took place under the glare of approbation from both western donors and the aid community. During the third and by far the largest phase of relief, the relief rehabilitation committee aimed to resettle 1·2 million people.

Medicins Sans Frontieres was expelled from Ethiopia after claiming that as many as 100,000 deaths resulted from the resettlement. The European Parliament has called for investigations into the conditions under which the resettlement programme was implemented. The European Commission has pledged that the European development fund will not be used to support resettlement.

Concern, which is a major voluntary organisation in Ethiopia, has been working hard on the programme. It has received first-hand experience of the appalling conditions in the transit camps. Divided families and coercion has been documented, but international assistance has been increasingly forthcoming — for example, an Austrian non-governmental organisation is operating in Illubabor near Gambella, the Dutch, Italian and Canadian Governments have all pledged financial support. Strong advocacy was made by Concern of the need to influence the Government from within rather than outside the project. Meanwhile, REST remains implacably opposed to

[Mr. Colin Moynihan]

the programme, citing examples of refugees in camps. Evidence is available that up to 1,200 of the 600,000 may have left the camps for refugee sites in the Sudan.

Nevertheless, the conditions of the journey south for those resettled last year and before have been inhumane. When I went last year to visit Ethiopia, it was clear that in overcrowded and unpressurised cargo holds in Soviet planes, the new settlers were flown to Addis to be decanted into buses to continue the journey westwards. RAF Hercules crews armed with brooms, swept water polluted with cholera, known as 001, away from their supplies on the airstrip as the hosed effluent from the holds ran down the camber of the airstrip towards them. Lack of food and medical care awaited many travellers on arrival, and the prohibition of international agency doctors and nurses from travelling with the settlers was wrong.

However, the programme, due to a considerable amount of international opposition, was temporarily brought to a halt on 31 December 1985. It was due to a considerable amount of representation, made by Kurt Hansen the United Nations co-ordinator for relief in December to the Government, that a moratorium was placed on any further movement as from 1 January.

Both my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester), whom I am glad to see in the Chamber, and I believed that it was important to report to the House our assessment of the situation. To that end, we have recently visited resettlement areas and we had discussions in Addis Abbaba with a wide cross-section of experts and representatives from the voluntary sector. Our initial findings have been reported to the all-party parliamentary group on overseas development.

The theory of resettlement is one that we would support. Its implementation in the phase to 31 December deserves no support. That phase was flawed by a wide range of problems, including violation of human rights, and rightly brought no backing from western donors. However, subject to substantial reform, the Ethiopian Government accepting new conditions, and effective international monitoring, the Western aid donors should assist the new programme through non-governmental organisations.

Many people are in desperate need of help at both ends of the programme. However, the criteria necessary for any such involvement by the west should include recognition of the suitability of land for human and animal use, sufficient rainfall to support development, adequate soil and land conditions, accessibility and sufficient land for effective land use planning. More important for the population concerned, there should be demonstrable and verifiable limits for heads of families favouring resettlement and from the local communities to allow families to travel with their dependants, thus avoiding split families.

Such a resettlement programme should be accompanied by the rehabilitation of lands deserted, including reforestation work, land reclamation, control of cattle sites, planting of suitable crops and extension and development services to revitalise once over-populated and eroded habitats. This is particularly relevant in the case of Ethiopia, where substantial overpopulation exists in the areas where the resettlement is targeted.

Additionally, we propose that the International Red Cross be permitted to undertake a full tracing exercise to reunite separated families, as well as a programme for orphans, and that charities should be allowed to assist in the resettlement programme, encouraged to establish primary health care units, educational services and, above all, assistance to those in transit.

Therefore, we support the view taken by *The Economist* in its 8 February edition this year—

"The aid agencies working in Ethiopia, swallowing their distaste, should try to get into the 77 resettlement sites in order to make life a bit easier for the people there. This humanitarian aid should continue, where it prevents things getting even worse for the victims of Colonel Mengistu's experiments. But the money the Colonel gets for his grander plans, he should be told, will stop unless he stops his forced removals."

The same cannot be said for villagisation. That is an experiment in the blatant collectivisation of farmers and families in traditional areas to square-built village camps. This collectivisation along Soviet lines frightens the Ehiopian people and destabilises the historic patterns of agricultural patterns and rural life. It is undertaken under strict party control in every aspect and it has gone nationwide, in the Hararge experiment. The programme deserves no support. Rather it deserves the outright condemnation of the western world.

Ecological degradation is reinforcing the depletion of woods and land cleared of vegetation. Soil erosion accelerates. Rain runs off, rather than seeps into, the ground. Less water is retained, less evaporates, fewer clouds are recharged and rainfall diminishes. We need action to promote conservation and to promote new farming practices and policies, better terrace designing and more research into drought-tolerant trees.

On the financial side, we must look for a lead role from the World Bank, to ensure that the donor agencies are co-ordinated, to ensure swifter implementation of project cycles, policy dialogue rather than policy monologue, to fight against famine fatigue and to work towards famine relief alongside long-term development programmes.

Politics is the ordering of priorities. It is therefore remarkable that the outstanding ability of Band Aid worldwide to raise £60 million is equivalent to the Europen Community's five-month cost of destroying surplus fish, fruit and vegetables, its four-week cost of storing surplus Community production in public intervention and less than one week's expenditure on export refunds. That is a common agricultural policy which, in its own right, does substantial damage to the development of indigenous Third world agriculture.

12.11 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): It is a great pleasure to be able to support my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan). He and I have shared experiences in Africa which it is important for us now to share with our colleagues, although we would prefer that a few more were present to hear us talking about them.

In the David Davies memorial debate on international affairs, Maurice Strong said:

"No analysis of Africa's crisis can begin to convey the immeasurable human costs it has imposed on Africa's people —the tragedy of those who lost the desperate struggle for survival and the untold sufferings of those for whom the struggle continues. About 70 per cent. of the total African population, and close to 90 per cent. in some of the poorer countries, is either destitute or below the poverty line."

It is an almost unimaginable statistic that, even in normal times, the lives of some 4 million African children are claimed by starvation each year. I welcome the report

entitled, "Within Human Reach" produced by UNICEF, which showed how we could start to solve some of those problems.

The debate is timely. We have the Race Against Time over the weekend when those who feel strongly will be mobilised. My hon. Friend the Minister for Lewisham, East is young and fit and I am sure that he will be running. I shall be waving them on. I hope to make a contribution to that marvellous effort. The Race Against Time shows that there is far wider interest in the problem than some politicians realise.

I should like to mention two other voluntary organisations which do remarkable work but do not get the publicity of Sport-Aid or Band-Aid, valuable though they are. Water-Aid, pioneered by the Thames water authority, enables people paying their water rates to contribute. People who recognise the importance of water in their lives can contribute through the technical skills of our water engineers to help Africa find water. Engineers fpr Disaster Relief comprises engineers who have put their name on a register. When there is a crisis which requires engineering skills, they go whenever and wherever necessary. When I was in a camp at Umbala in western Dafur, I was taken round at 5.30 am by an engineer from Humberside. He showed me the roads and drains that he had provided for the camp, which were vital as they stopped 20,000 people from getting diseases such as cholera. There is a great deal of voluntary effort which should be recognised.

None of that detracts from the basic responsibility of Governments and international agencies to provide substantial support to meet the crisis. This weekend, John Denver will lead a run in Nottingham involving, I hope, hundreds of thousands of people who will raise money for Sport-Aid. I read in my newspaper that, on the same day, the United States Congress is likely to cut all aid to Africa except Egypt. That is a terrible irony.

I hope that we will take the lead at the UN conference in mobilising world opinion to support international agencies, especially UN agencies, in their valuable work. As we assume the presidency of the European Commission, I hope that we shall take the lead with an early initiative to link the skills and resources of the 12 to reach into Africa on long-term developmental issues. I hope that we shall make an early initiative an important part of our presidency.

My hon. Friend talked about resettlement. I have the constant vision of the destitution of 250,000 people living around Port Sudan in accommodation which cannot be called accomodation, with no water supply and only such medical supplies as can be provided by Sudan Aid and dedicated volunteers. They have no hope for their future, no idea of what can be done and no hope for their children. Those people nevertheless reach out in every possible way to make the best of their lives.

I should like to leave the House with the vision of parents working with scraps of timber and other bits of material, some provided through voluntary agencies, trying to put together a school so that their children might get something of an education.

This is an extremely important subject and I welcome the opportunity to take part in the debate.

12.16 pm

The Minister for Overseas Development (Mr. Timothy Raison): The House is grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East (Mr. Moynihan) for introducing this debate. He showed his great knowledge and commitment to the subject. The same is true for my hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Mr. Lester). My hon. Friends have contributed enormously to our understanding of Africa's problems. The House and others should be grateful to them for what they have done.

This is a timely debate. We have the great Sport Aid activity over the weekend. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister will meet the Sudanese athlete, Omar Khalifa, as part of Sport Aid's series of fund-raising events for African relief. The Race Against Time is a kind of prelude to next week's special session of the United Nations on Africa's economic problems. I welcome this opportunity to say something about our actions and policies.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East rightly stressed the need for wise policies to tackle the problems of agriculture and population. We have to face the fact that, in the two decades before the drought smote east Africa, total food production increased but per capita food production fell by perhaps 20 per cent. A growing number of Africans are therefore seriously under-nourished.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe spoke movingly about the plight of African people. Governments have all too often followed policies which have inhibited and discouraged farmers through resettlement, ill-judged villagisation or unrealistic pricing and over-controlled marketing of agricultural produce.

There is also the problem of population growth. Having more mouths to feed puts ever increasing pressure on agriculture and other sectors, and per capita incomes must dwindle. Some African countries have population growth rates of 4 per cent. a year, so that the population doubles every 17 or 18 years. There is large-scale migration from rural to urban areas. Governments therefore come under inescapable pressure to ensure supplies of low-priced food in the towns and are therefore rather reluctant to implement proper food production and pricing policies. The Government have substantially increased aid to population-related activities in recent years, from £1 million in 1977 to £12 million a year now. That is a great improvement.

There are also problems of soil erosion, deforestation and the advance of the desert, partly as a result of climatic change but magnified by the pressure of growing population on marginal land which is often poorly farmed. Meanwhile, nomads are pushed into land that cannot support their animals, and this leads to deforestation as bushes and trees are cut down for firewood or to create farmland. They are significant factors in what is happening.

As my hon. Friends said, the crisis in Africa has deeply affected people throughout the world, awakening a new public awareness of the problems facing that continent and awakening a great desire to help to overcome them. I add my tribute to Band Aid and the other voluntary agencies for the immense work that they have undertaken. I also pay tribute to the ordinary citizens of Britain who have given on such an unprecedented scale. I understand that Band Aid and Live Aid have so far spent £26 million on famine relief. That is a notable achievement alongside that of the other voluntary arganisations.

The British Government's contribution to famine relief has been substantial—about £190 million through the bilateral programme and our share of European Community expenditure in the past two years. We

[Mr. Timothy Raison]

responded swiftly to the urgent need for assistance to help the victims of famine in Ethiopia, Sudan and other drought-affected countries in Africa. Much of this aid, both bilateral and through the European Community, has been given in close co-operation with international agencies and voluntary organisations. In 1984, the Government allocated bilaterally and through the European Community, £81·4 million for drought relief in Africa. In 1985, this fugure rose to £96·5 million. In the first three months of 1986, we committed a further £27 million. We are ready to continue provide assistance towards famine relief where it is needed.

At the same time, the European Community has played an increasingly effective role. It was slow to get its emergency procedures going, and I pressed hard for improvement. But once under way it has delivered substantial quantities of grain and other supplies and worked hard in the difficult area of transport, providing among other things a notable and insufficiently noticed airlift operation in the Sudan last summer which did good work.

On this year's food aid requirements, as the House knows, most of the countries in Africa which suffered drought and famine in 1985 have had a much improved harvest. Many of them have produced surpluses of grain. However, some substantial needs for emergency food aid persist, notably in Ethiopia and Mozambique; and other countries, notably Sudan, need external assistance to deliver surpluses from one part of their territory to another.

In 1986, the British Government are delivering 37,000 tonnes of wheat to Ethiopia, in close co-operation with the world food programme. This includes 6,500 tonnes due to be loaded in Hull next month. In Mozambique the world food programme is completing delivery of 14,500 tonnes of maize which the Government have purchased in Zimbabwe. We shall continue to watch needs as they arise. The Community is providing substantial quantities of products.

As I have said before in the House, food aid is a double-edged weapon. Even in an exceptional year like 1985, only about 10 per cent. of Community food aid expenditure went to help victims of famine. During the British Presidency of the Community in the second half of 1986, we intend to work hard for reforms in the EC food aid programme designed to make it more responsive to the needs of developing countries. It is not easy to use food aid to promote agricultural and economic development; but it can be done. Next week's meeting of the governing body of the World Food Programme in Rome will be asked to approve the allocation of a further $76 million during the next three years to food for work projects in Ethiopia designed to rehabilitate forest, grazing and agricultural lands devastated by drought. This work will be based on the experience accumulated in similar schemes in recent years. A world food programme evaluation concludes that in general they have gone relatively well. But there is no doubt that the sheer size of the conservation problem, especially the need to control the grazing of livestock and the implications for the water table, still needs much attention.

Rehabilitation work after the 1985 famine has also been a special focus of attention by the European Community. The Development Council of November 1985 approved proposals to spend about £70 million from the European development funds in rehabilitation work in the eight countries most seriously affected by famine. Nearly all of this has been committed to specific projects; this, too, will be discussed at next November's Development Council.

In the longer term, the third Lomé Convention, which came into force on 1 May, will provide greatly increased aid resources during the next five years for the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East said, Ethiopia and Sudan present us with special difficulties. There is a self-evident need for assistance to victims of famine in Ethiopia. We have given food, vehicles, spare parts and equipment to improve port handling facilities and we have helped in many other ways. We are also helping in Ethiopia by paying for some of the monitors working under the world food programme.

We are also concerned with rehabilitation after the famine. I informed the House last November that we had allocated £3 million to help with such rehabilitation in Ethiopia. Some of this has been spent on seeds and hand tools. An ODA team is in Ethiopia at the moment identifying other uses for these aid funds. They are talking with the Ethiopians about how we can best help.

However, although we provide our share of Community long-term development assistance, we do not feel able to offer the Ethiopians any bilateral assistance with longer-term development, apart from some technical co-operation. This is partly because of the factors mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, East—the programmes of resettlement and villagisation, which continue to cause us great anxiety. Under the recent resettlement programme, about 600,000 people have been moved, we believe, from the northern provinces of Ethiopia to the south and west of the country. There have been many reports of force being used and families being split up.

On several occasions I have expressed our concern to the Ethiopian Government and did so to the United Nations Co-ordinator in Addis Ababa, Mr. Michael Priestly, when he called on me in London earlier this year. Those expressions of concern by Britain and several other countries have been an important factor behind recent statements by the Ethiopian authorities that the resettlement programme has been brought temporarily to a halt.

I recognise that the longer-term effects of population growth and the degradation of the environment may make it necessary for some people to be moved from one part of the country to another. But such moves need to be well prepared. They need to be carried out with proper consideration and respect for all the people concerned. Above all, resettlement must be on a voluntary basis.

It is important to make sure that there will be sufficient land with adequate rainfull in the chosen resettlement areas. Transport must be adequate. I have seen for myself Ethiopians being herded for resettlement on to Russian Antonovs and have heard of the horrifying conditions experienced by some of those who have made those journeys. It is important that families should be kept together. All those matters must concern us.

However, the villagisation programme causes us even greater concern. Last month the Ethiopian Government released figures showing that nearly 3 million people have already been relocated. Villagisation involves the relocation of a scattered rural population in newly constructed villages, usually located close to existing

roads. The reasons given for the policy are that the move will facilitate rural development and the provision of social services.

However, there are clear dangers that any benefits gained will be more than offset by the losses to production caused by the time and effort involved in covering the distances between the new villages and the farm lands. We understand that in some areas people have been moved at particularly inappropriate times in the farming calendar and harvest yields reduced in consequence.

There is also the fear among many that the speed with which this exercise has been carried out, and the life style forced on people in the new villages, means that its purpose is to give the Ethiopian Government the means to exercise a tighter control over the rural population. Thousands of people have fled, some to refugee camps in Somalia. Many of these refugees allege that corruption has been used in implementing the villagisation programme, homes have been burnt and livestock confiscated.

Both those policies, but especially villagisation, cause us serious problems when it comes to considering what we can do in the longer term in Ethiopia, substantial though our shorter-term contribution unquestionably has been and is today.

There are also daunting problems in the Sudan. Much of western Sudan suffered further drought in 1985, and a major relief effort is now taking place. Much of the south is affected by renewed civil war. Sudan's economic and financial difficulties are immense, including external debts exceeding $9 billion. The task of longer-term development, in what is the largest country in Africa, remains a complex and formidable one.

We are concentrating our support for the relief effort this year on the distribution of food supplies in the remote region of Darfur in western Sudan. Logistical problems there were bad last year. We have provided £6 million for the distribution of food in the west, which is being undertaken on our behalf by the Save the Children Fund. It is too early to judge whether all the targets have been met, but it is working hard and recent reports have been encouraging.

The Sudan also needs a great deal of longer-term development and there we are actively involved. As my hon. Friends will know, our emphasis nowadays is particularly on rural development projects of exactly the kind that are needed to deal with the situation there. My hon. Friends have seen some of the projects and I hope that they will agree that what we are doing is extremely worth while.

In the background, we must hope that Sudan's return to democracy, which we welcome, will lead to some solution of Sudan's enormous problems, especially the problem of the south, because at the moment it is making development in that part of the country difficult.

Let me deal in the remaining minutes with the special session of the United Nations General Assembly. My right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and I will both be attending that special session. At the Tokyo summit we joined with our partners in recognising that the needs of Africa should be accorded high priority. That is reflected in the care with which we are preparing for the special session. The session will give us a real chance for a detailed analysis of the nature of the long-term problems besetting Africa. A wide convergence of views already exists. My hope is that that will provide the opportunity for agreement at the session on what needs to be done. The United Kingdom Government will certainly be working for a positive outcome.

A major theme emerging from the papers produced by the African countries is the concept of development as a partnership. We welcome this. The African countries, as sovereign states — which, of course, they are — have made it clear that they have the prime responsibility for their own development and perhaps for their own shortcomings. But we on our side must also play our part.

I welcome the fact that in a number of African countries the difficult process of policy reform is getting under way. Difficult political decisions have to be made as we all know. Those who make those difficult decisions, often working in conjunction with the IMF, the World Bank and other donors, can count on our support. The work must be done. The economies of those countries must be strengthened and helped to carry out the structural adjustment that is necessary if they are to get away from the burden of debt.

It will be the commitment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Foreign Secretary and myself to do all that we can to see that the conference in New York is a success and that it justifies the hopes that have been placed on it by so many people across the world.

Chess

12.35 pm

Mr. Jeremy Hanley (Richmond and Barnes): The few extra minutes taken by my right hon. Friend the Minister for Overseas Development on the important and moving previous debate were willingly donated by lovers of chess as their contribution to Sport Aid.

This debate on the noble sport of chess is the first in the history of Parliament — a surprising fact when one recognises that it is the only game legally able to be played in the Palace of Westminster, and indeed one for which a room and equipment are specifically provided in the midst of the main Chambers of state.

It has been said that chess is a game of kings and pawns, played by kings and pawns alike. Indeed, many right hon. and hon. Members have struggled in a friendly and competitive spirit across the tables next to the Smoking Room. It seems appropriate, therefore, for my annoyingly talented opponent on many occasions late at night while waiting to vote — my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) — to share the time allocated for my contribution in a spirit of companionship and understanding fostered by this game of chess.

Indeed, about a year ago my hon. Friend and I approached the then Minister with responsibility for sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Sutton and Cheam (Mr. Macfarlane), to ask if he would support a proposal that the world chess finals should be held in the United Kingdom. His reply was that since chess was not a physical sport, it was not covered by his portfolio, and that it was, in fact, the responsibility of the Department of Education and Science. We were referred to the then Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South (Mr. Brooke), about whom I shall say a few words later. I warmly welcome to the debate his successor, my hon. Friend the Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

Not a physical sport, said the then Sports Minister, and indeed it is not a game that requires physical prowess. In fact, it cuts across physical barriers and can be played by men, women, the old, the young and even the handicapped with total equality. Yet, only a week after the Sports Minister had made that statement, a headline in *The Times* announced that the then world champion, Anatoly Karpov, had had to retire from the world chess championship as he was physically exhausted. It may not take brute strength to play chess, but the effort and concentration required by the greatest players in a world chess championship match the exertion of any sportsman in the world.

Chess cuts across racial, sexual and cultural barriers; it encourages logical and independent thought; it fosters a disciplined mental approach and, furthermore, schoolchildren and students who play chess have been proven to attain even higher academic standards than they might otherwise have achieved. Chess develops capabilities for pattern recognition and is therefore an excellent training ground for the development of the related areas of computer studies and mathematics. In that respect, chess helps English students to compete with the Japanese and the Americans in this vital technological area.

Chess is an inexpensive and easy activity; it requires little space and modest equipment and can even be played on the move, while travelling on trains and planes, between strangers with no linguistic connection. I first learnt the game while working abroad, and it proved to be an absorbing and fascinating diversion, filling the boring evenings away from my family. I wish to pay tribute to my teacher, mentor and friend, Mr. Mervyn Frankel of Jersey, whose patience and good humour have given me a love of chess that will remain with me all my days.

But chess is not just a game; it bears an international significance. As it is the Soviet national sport and is highly popular in the rest of eastern Europe, British excellence at chess is assisting in creating cultural and personal ties with those areas. One might even suggest that it plays its part in assisting detente. Indeed, the importance of chess to the Russian people is perhaps based on the belief that prowess at chess is seen as tangible validation of a nation's or institution's intellectual status. The pride that the Russian people feel at possessing the world champion can clearly be seen, but as with all good chess players they are good losers too.

I wish to deal with the state of chess in Great Britain, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West will deal with the international context.

It is staggering fact that only 15 years ago the United Kingdom had no grand masters, the highest level of chess achievement. Britain was so lowly that we finished in the C-finals of the chess olympics—the third division. Since then, the change has been dramatic. On a patient and ever-growing basis, the improvement in our nation's fortunes has been second to none. England won the team silver medal in the last chess olympics held in 1984 and the English team won the four individual gold medals in the same event. England now has 10 grand masters—Tony Miles, Ray Keene, Michael Stean, John Nunn, Jon Speelman, Jonathan Mestel, Murray Chander, Nigel Short, James Plaskett and Harry Golombek. That is a roll of honour.

In 1985 Nigel Short became the first English player to qualify for the candidates' tournament, which is the play-off for the world individual chess championship. At 20 years of age Nigel has a realistic chance of challenging for the world title itself within the next 10 years. He is already among the world's top 10 players, the other nine of whom are all significantly older than he is. By his pleasant and pleasing manner he is an inspiration to young people and is rapidly becoming a sporting superstar, such is the growing interest in chess.

Indeed, interest in the world at the tensions, the intrigue, the international competitiveness, the skill and the drama of chess must have been recognised by Tim Rice and his colleagues from Abba when they wrote the new musical "Chess". There is no doubt that it will introduce to millons of people who have no direct experience of the game, the thrills and delights of the sport, and perhaps even foster an interest in it.

Britain is second or third in standing in the world and we have been given a unique recognition by the international chess fraternity in being able to hold the first half of the world chess championship later this year.

I shall leave it to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West to inform the House of this remarkable honour to Britain. It is the first time that two Soviet grand masters have consented to play for the title outside Moscow, let alone outside the Soviet Union. It is the first time that the world championship finals have been held in a western European capital since 1910, apart from the momentous occasion in Reykjavik. This is also the

centenary match which will, when associated with the premier of the musical "Chess", make London the focus of the chess world in August.

It would not be right to finish my contribution without recognising the efforts of those who have brought Britain's chess to its current high standard. The grand masters—the international ambassadors of British chess — and particularly Raymond Keene, OBE — are the driving force behind Britain's position in world chess, and certainly owe their position to their own skills. But the encouragement given by education authorities, particularly in Inner London education authority, and the funding from many private companies and other organisations such as Lloyds Bank, Kleinwort Grieveson, National Westminster Bank, Acorn Computers, the London Docklands Development Corporation, Foreign and Colonial, Duncan Lawrie — who sponsors the English olympic team — Halpern and Woolf and the Department of Education and Science, all help in this valuable activity. Chess publishers such as Batsfords are regarded as the best in the world.

I could not end my contribution without asking the Minister whether he will consider additional funding for further developments in British chess.

Mr. Clement Freud (Cambridgeshire, North East): The hon. Member has compiled a full list of sponsors. Will he bear in mind that the Reykjavik world championship was saved by Mr. Jim Slater, without whom it would not have taken place?

Mr. Hanley: I willingly recognise that. Indeed, when I visited Reykjavik I was pleased to see that the table upon which the world championship was played, and signed by both Fischer and Spassky was in a place of honour in the national museum. I willingly pay tribute to Mr. Slater for his generosity.

I hope that the Minister will consider additional funding, in spite of the generosity shown by his Department in the past, for further developments in British chess. His predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for City of London and Westminster, South now Minister of State, Treasury, with my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young), now the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, the present Minister and Westminster Council all helped to secure the world chess championship here in London, following the passing of the GLC.

I ask that we should increase the contribution to the general running costs of the British Chess Federation, the Scottish Chess Association and the Welsh Chess Union. We should like to see national chess centres and our most ambitious project would be to hold the world chess olympics, which would require a gross budget of £1 million.

I submit that the Department of Education and Science has already seen rewards for its encouragement of chess. It is an investment which is capable of producing high returns. Only last year five young schoolchildren from the Inner London education authority challenged an all-party team of hon. Members. It says a great deal for the ability of our young—and perhaps something about the quality of Members of Parliament—that the 10 and 11-year-olds beat us 3-2. It would not be fair if I did not end with a confession that I was one of those who lost.

12.46 pm

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West) *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Does the hon. Gentleman have the consent of the hon. Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) and the Minister to take part in the debate?

Mr. Stern: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) concluded with a reference to the match between the Tower Hamlets schoolchildren and the House of Commons and I must admit that I was more fortunate in that match, because I drew—with an eight-year-old who gave me the hardest game of my life!

My hon. Friend rightly referred to chess as the Soviet national game. Anyone who visits Moscow, Leningrad or any of the other great cities of the Soviet Union will see the permanent chess boards in the parks, frequently set up under cover, and see passers-by attracted by the magnet of the games being played all the time on every board.

The strides made in this country towards making chess perhaps our most successful widely played sport receive little recognition. We have come far, but we have a long way to go to make this country the international chess centre that it deserves to be, bearing in mind the quality of our players.

In 1983 we hosted the semi-finals of the world chess championship; in 1984 the match between the USSR and the rest of the world took place in docklands; in 1985 we staged the Commonwealth championships; we are now seeing the conclusion of the Kleinwort Grieveson Ltd. United States-United Kingdom chess challenge and in July and August we shall be hosting the first part of the world chess championship.

Without wishing to flatter my hon. Friend the Minister, I feel that it would be wrong to allow the debate to pass without paying a warm tribute to the sterling work done by him and his Department to make sure that the world chess championship can go ahead. The groundwork was done by the GLC, but, because of legal problems, if the chess community had not raised the matter urgently with my hon. Friend and if he had not made it a priority to get action within days, we would have lost the championship. The chess community is delighted that my hon. Friend acted with such speed.

If we are to develop as a world chess centre, further opportunities and problems will be landing on the Minister's desk. The most immediate problem is posed by a proposed new clause to the Finance Bill. The clause rightly introduces taxation on the earnings in the United Kingdom of entertainers, artists and sportsmen, but because of the east European tax systems, we may be uniquely disadvantaged in playing host to most of the world grand masters in international competition. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will liaise closely with his Treasury colleagues to ensure that an incidental effect of the clause is not to make this country an unattractive haven for world chess championships, which are so east European dominated, and that he will ensure that the clause provides for an adequate harmonisation of tax provisions throughout the rest of Europe and the Americas so that at least Soviet chess players are not significantly worse off playing in Britain than when they play elsewhere.

There are opportunities as well. One proposal, which may arise following the elections to the chess governing

[Mr. Stern]

body, the Federation Internationale d'Echecs, is that the centre of administration of world chess should be this country, and the docklands has been discussed. I would not at this stage ask my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State to commit either funding or governmental efforts, but I ask him, in view of the inevitable problems that will emerge from such a proposal, to offer ready access through his Department to FIDE, should it decide to come here, to ensure that it is given every co-operation from what is effectively the sponsoring Department of chess.

There are two needs with respect to tournaments. First, it is necessary to restore the Hastings tournament to its traditional place as one of the world's leading tournaments. Secondly, it is necessary to find a replacement tournament for that previously sponsored by the GLC as the annual grand masters' tournament. We require sponsorship. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes referred to a number of sponsorships that have already taken place, including the modest efforts by my firm in sponsoring in two weeks' time the first Halpern and Woolf London open chess tournament. However, more sponsors are needed. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will see it as one of his roles as Minister to provide every encouragement to commercial and professional firms and companies to sponsor a sport in which this country is already successful and in which even greater successes are open to us.

One matter that must be considered, especially by the Department of Education and Science, is the fact that the number of grand masters who are coming forward are almost exclusively male. Many years ago, when I was taught chess by my late father, it was accepted that women in chess were inferior. There was a women's world chess championship because it was recognised that the standard of women's chess could not compete with the standard of male chess. All that has changed, but there is a disparity between the sexes, and that can be most easily removed in the schools. I hope that my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State will seek to involve all our schools so that opportunities to play chess are available in schools, regardless of sex.

For many years, two of our traditional universities—Oxford and Cambridge—have operated discrimination against chess players by offering only a half blue for chess, whereas a full blue is offered for the more traditional sports. I hope that, if my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State has any influence in this regard, he will use it to encourage universities to place chess in its rightful position, as something at which this country is extraordinarily good.

12.53 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. George Walden): My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) is today making history. Those of us who know him would expect no less of him. I have not been able to check his claim that this is the only debate on chess in the history of the House because, as is so often the case, the truth can only be established at disproportionate cost. According to the more recent memory of the computer, which goes back only five years, my hon. Friend is making recent history at least. On history, we must, of course, remember that in 1972 two ivory chessmen were found in the Soviet Union and could be dated back to the year 200 AD. As the game reached Britain only in 1255, that may account for some of our more recent results. As my hon. Friend pointed out, chess is much more than a handy source of metaphors for East-West relations, and more than a source of income for the talented authors of the highly successful West End musical. Perhaps uniquely, it is at once a highly popular and highly intellectual and demanding game. I almost said sport, but my hon. Friend will be aware of the profound implications of these subtle distinctions.

I repeat the tribute that my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes paid to the achievements that are increasingly being made by British chess players in the international arena. The growing strength of our top players has elevated our status throughout the world. I wish the English team every success at the 1986 Olympiad, to be held in November and December this year, and hope that it can once again repeat its achievements of 1984, and take the silver medals—or, still better, beat the Soviet Union into second place. Our achievements in the world individual championships are also considerable, and we are not lacking either in the youth events, where no fewer than four world titles have been gained in the past decade.

I know that the British Chess Federation has played a significant part in enhancing our position within the world of chess. It has encouraged the study and practice of chess in the country, and has promoted national and international tournaments and matches. In addition, it has developed strategies for bringing our successes more to the attention of the public and for meeting increasing demands for BCF services and information from the public and from its own grass roots membership.

As my hon. Friend pointed out—I was afraid that he would stray on to the subject—the Department provides modest support for the BCF through an annual grant from our adult education budget to assist with administrative costs and with the expense of sending British players to international tournaments. Grants have funded the federation on a regular basis since the mid-1970s. In that time, our grant has increased, from an admittedly modest base, by about 115 per cent., which brings it to £35,500 for the current financial year.

Of course, we should like to encourage the BCF to extend its activities by the provision of additional central funds, but I need hardly remind the House of the priorities that face us, particularly in adult education, where unemployment is such a worry. However, we have been able to agree to changes to the basis of funding which allow the BCF to introduce a computerised national grading scheme without an overall increase in funds. The current membership of the federation stands at about 12,000. I am told that an estimated 40,000 play chess on a competitive basis, while market research suggests that there is a total of 2 million to 3 million players in the country as a whole. I believe that that puts it pretty well on the same level as angling. Clearly, we shall wish to encourage the BCF to increase its income from subscriptions by increasing its membership, and I understand that the introduction of the grading scheme represents a significant step in the direction of attracting new members.

I concur with what my hon. Friends the Members for Richmond and Barnes and for Bristol, North-West (Mr.

Stern) said about the importance of chess in schools. Chess clearly helps to promote a logical approach to problems, clarity of thought and the ability to formulate strategies under pressure. But I am sure that my hon. Friends will understand that, due to the constitutional relationship between the Department and local education authorities, we can only give our encouragement and blessing to any efforts to develop the game in schools.

I turn briefly to the world chess championships to be held in London and Leningrad during the summer. Naturally, I share my hon. Friends' delight that the difficulties associated with the funding of the event have now been resolved. It would be churlish — and churlishness is one thing that the House never forgives —not to mention that the initiative came from the GLC. However, I would add that one good act does not justify a pantomime.

I am sure that the contest will generate immense public interest, and will attract even more people to the game. Obviously, it will be a great boost to the London tourist trade. More than 6,000 people are likely to attend the tournament during the five weeks of the London leg, with a large overseas contingent expected.

I wish every success to the championship, and congratulate the British chess world, especially the British Chess Federation and its supporters, on giving us the opportunity of being so close at hand to what has the makings of an exciting final.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West raised a series of points. On the question of the tax system

---

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Mr. Dubs.

NHS Residential Accommodation

1 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): First, I declare an interest as I am sponsored by the Confederation of Health Service Employees, which represents many workers in the National Health Service. However, I would wish to put my case whether or not I was sponsored by COHSE, because it is of interest and concern to all people who believe in the NHS and want it to have a successful future.

Like all those involved in the NHS, I believe that it is highly desirable that it should be run efficiently and that maximum resources should go into the care of patients, while NHS workers at all levels are assured adequate pay and proper working conditions.

The Rayner scrutiny, which gives rise to the debate, dealt with NHS accommodation. My purpose is to examine that review and various problems that have risen as a result of it. It was published in August 1984 and was implemented, in a sense, by a DHSS circular last year called,

"NHS Residential Accommodation for Staff."

The Rayner scrutiny and the circular basically encouraged health authorities to dispose of a large proportion of their residential accommodation for all grades of staff.

According to the scrutiny, at present there are 112,000 units of accommodation, which comprise houses, flats and a large number of bedsitters and places in hostels, occupied as follows: 35,000 units by student nurses, 29,000 by other nurses, 11,000 by junior doctors, and 20,000 by ancillary staff. That makes a total of 95,000 units. Rayner claimed that the balance of 17,000 was unoccupied. However, he did not simply say that those 17,000 units should be occupied or disposed of, but suggested a much more drastic cut. The report suggested that first-year student nurses would occupy 29,000 units, junior doctors 8,000 and other staff 2,000, making a total of 39,000. That suggests that 73,000 units should be disposed of. Rayner made a fairly arbitrary distinction between essential staff—those who are to be given NHS accommodation—and non-essential staff who are to be encouraged or forced to find accommodation elsewhere.

The Rayner figures resulted from a survey based on a sample of a quarter of health authorities, of which only two were considered in detail. There are major doubts about the reliability of the figures, and, therefore, the reliability, of the results, conclusions and recommendations. I understand that there is 95·5 per cent. occupancy of the health authority's accommodation in Wandsworth. Therefore, if the Wandsworth health authority, which I am sure is typical of many health authorities, should get rid of a large proportion of its accommodation that would have devasting consequences, to which I shall refer later.

Rayner should have asked how along the properties had been standing empty, and why? Given that a fair proportion of the property is used by trainee Health Service staff, there is bound to be a certain turnover. Inevitably, therefore, some property will be empty for a short time when staff leave to go elsewhere in the NHS and in turn are replaced by other staff. If that information had been available, it would have been easier to decide whether there was any basis for the change in policy. I regret very much that that information was not available to Rayner.

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

When the Rayner report and the following circular were published, there was a storm of protest from many people in the Health Service. I have yet to find those who, other than the Minister and Rayner, support this policy change.

Under pressure, the Secretary of State for Social Services gave a guarantee in the House of Commons on 25 March that no district health authority would resort to the courts to force nurses to leave accommodation in which they wished to remain. The Secretary of State's words were:

"I can give that guarantee." — [*Official Report*, 25 March 1986; Vol. 94, c. 779.]

That is all very well, but there is one other matter to take into account.

Under Crown immunity, the Crown or its agents have immunity from many laws. A few weeks after the assurance of the Secretary of State for Social Services, the West Surrey and North-East Hampshire health authority took court action against a nurse because it wanted to acquire the property in which she was living. The nurse was offered alternative accommodation, but she felt that it was inadequate. In the event, I believe that she is being offered better and more satisfactory accommodation, which she may accept.

However, after its assurance that no court action would be taken, the health authority claimed that Rent Act protection did not provide security of tenure to the nurse and did not even make it necessary for the health authority to use court proceedings to acquire the property. In other words, Crown immunity means that people can be chucked out of their accommodation and that there is no longer the safeguard of the courts having to approve the decision that somebody should be ordered out of their home. That is very odd — the more so as, during the proceedings, the health authority changed the plaintiff. The plaintiff became the Secretary of State for Social Services.

It is extraordinary that a senior Government Minister should have given such an assurance and that later Crown immunity should have been used, which meant that his assurance became virtually meaningless. It has caused enormous consternation. The implication is that Health Service staff have no safeguard and that they can be thrown out of their accommodation, the courts being unable to provide basic protection for them. It makes nonsense of what was said by the Secretary of State.

Towards the end of April the Minister for Health gave an assurance that nobody would be required to move from his or her accommodation without being offered suitable alternative accommodation. That assurance is to be found at column 774 of the *Official Report* for 29 April 1986. That is an assurance of sorts, but it depends upon what is meant by suitable alternative accommodation.

I have two main concerns. The result of trying to get rid of the bulk of NHS accommodation will have a damaging effect on the effectiveness and efficiency of the NHS. It will also have a detrimental effect on the conditions and the work of the staff. We are not dealing with warehouses or with an accountancy exercise which is what Rayner seems to be doing, but with the homes of many thousands of Health Service workers. The Health Minister and the Secretary of State have engendered a feeling of anxiety and insecurity.

The Minister gave an assurance about alternative property but alternative property may be too far away. It is unsettling for someone to be told that he has to go and that the accommodation found for him is some distance away. In any case, the Health Service may find itself in difficulties because there may not be any alternative accommodation. It is certain that in many areas where there are housing shortages local authorities will not be able to provide alternative accommodation.

No doubt the Health Service would like to negotiate about alternative accommodation, and I understand that the Royal Marsden hospital put in a bid for some property that the council was selling. In my view, the council was wrong to sell it, but in any event the hospital did not make a high enough bid and the property was sold to a private property company. The hospital bid was just a little bit lower than the one placed by the property company. The difficulties are enormous.

Another problem is that alternative accommodation may have high rents. We know that in many areas of London and in many inner city areas the rents are very high and we are dealing with some of the lowest paid workers in Britain. Despite the announcement yesterday about pay rises for nurses and other people, many Health Service workers do not have enough pay to be able to move to alternative accommodation. The Rayner report took note of that because it said that higher pay cannot subsidise housing. The Government did nothing about that because it would have meant pay at quite a higher level.

There is a danger that the Health Service under the new policy would provide accommodation for training staff and certain grades of staff and when the trainees have qualified they will have to find other accommodation. That means that many of them will be living under the threat of homelessness. The policy will exacerbate recruitment to the Health Service because some hospitals get their staff because they can provide homes. When there are no homes, even with high unemployment people cannot accept jobs in those hospitals.

Although assurances were given that there would be proper consultation on all these matters, as far as I can tell there has been no consultation, and the measures that I am talking about were diktats by the Secretary of State and the Minister and were approached in an insensitive manner.

Because of Crown immunity, there are difficulties about getting the Health Service, as the landlord, to carry out decent repairs when such repairs are necessary to the type of accommodation that I am talking about. The Rent Act 1977 scrutiny of which other people have the advantage if they want to see whether their rents are set at a reasonable level, is not available to Health Service tenants. The only people to whom Health Service staff can appeal are people in the Health Service itself. There ought to be some independent method, preferably that which applies to other types of accommodation, which would allow rents to be set in an impartial way. There are health and safety risks in accommodation, especially in hostels and other multiple accommodations in the Health Service, and Crown immunity prevents legislation coming into play as it should.

The issues that I have raised are of major concern to many people in the Health Service and I fear that the Government are making a mistake. I think they hope to save some £170 million, but perhaps the Minister will come up with a different sum. The Government are saying, "We want to save money, and in order to do that we will

make a major change to the way in which certain types of Health Service staff can find accommodation." This policy is causing great confusion and is not clear to the health authorities. At the least, a further circular is called for in order to sort matters out.

That is only a minor point. The main point is that the policy is mistaken. It is based on false facts and on a misunderstanding of the serious housing difficulties in the areas adjoining many of our hospitals. The Health Service will be damaged if the Government insist on proceeding with this policy. I hope that they will change their mind.

1.14 pm

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): I am glad that the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) has chosen this subject for his Adjournement debate. I welcome the opportunity that it gives me to set out the Government's policy on NHS residential accommodation, for there has been, as the hon. Gentleman said, unnecessary anxiety about it.

As the hon. Gentleman said, the background to the policy is a Rayner scrutiny undertaken in 1983 as part of the programme that has covered sectors as diverse as ambulance services and arrangements for advertising for staff. These are not crude, cost-cutting exercises. They represent part of the Government's stategy for achieving the best value possible from resurces spent on the NHS. As the House knows, the Government have allocated £18·75 billion to the NHS in the current financial year, more than has ever been allocated by any of their predecessors, but there will never be enough money to meet all the demands on the services. Therefore, there is a duty to ensure that both revenue and capital resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's comments to that effect.

In the current year, the overall cost improvement programme, of which the Rayner scrutinies form an important part, will release about £150 million in cash, which can then be devoted to other aspects of the service. In addition, there will be productivity gains by better use of available resources.

The senior Health Service officers who undertook the scrutiny into residential accommodation examined the position in about 40 health districts, and their report contains some striking figures. In particular, they found that

"authorities have approximately 112,000 units of accommodation . . . more than 20,000 houses and flats and more than 70,000 residential places in bedsitter and hostel-type blocks . . . at any one time nearly a fifth of the total accommodation stock is unoccupied; in individual authorities the vacancy rate ranges from 4 per cent." to 33 per cent.

The hon. Member quoted the example of Wandsworth, which is at the low end of that scale, and may even have been the authority that the officers had in mind when talking about 4 per cent. The report continues:

"few, if any, authorities had a considered policy on accommodation. Rather, the level of the present stock and the categories of staff living in it, are in large measure the result of historical accident and ad hoc decisions."

Anyone who has surveyed this scene will appreciate the force of that remark.

This report showed clearly that residential accommodation represents a valuable and expensive resource which was not being managed effectively or efficiently. Quite separately from the scrutiny, there has been longstanding concern about the state of some of the property, and the conditions in which some staff have to live.

Following consultation on the scrutiny report, authorities were asked to draw up explicit local plans for the future, within an overall national policy. There are four aims. The first is to ensure that health authorities have sufficient accommodation for junior doctors, student nurses and other professional trainees. Secondly, to enable authorities to provide accommodation for other groups of staff where, for example in inner city areas, the lack of accommodation would make recruitment impossible. Thirdly, to bring staff accommodation up to a reasonable standard, as a priority charge on the proceeds of sales. I accept what the hon. Gentleman said about the poor standard of a significant proportion of the accommodation.

The fourth aim was to sell surplus property to existing tenants at discounts of up to 60 per cent. whenever practicable, the proceeds being used to develop health services. The Department has now studied most district health authority plans, which show that the alarmist stories about substantial reductions in the stock of accommodation available for student nurses and other professional trainees are untrue. Indeed, some authorities have plans for increases to take account of the rising number of trainees.

The plans also show that, in some cases, even now, nearly three years after the scrutiny report was prepared, a significant proportion of the existing stock is empty. Authorities have been asked to sell any such properties which they regard as surplus to requirements by the end of 1986, unless to do so would jeopardise the later sale of a larger site of which such property forms part. Authorities anticipate proceeds of about £30 million from the sale of residential property during the current financial year. Most will be from the sale of properties that are currently empty. Every penny will stay within the NHS, and will be available to improve the standard of the residential accommodation that is to be retained and to expand health services.

Some property that authorities have identified as surplus is currently occupied. Authorities have been asked, when practicable, to offer such property to the present tenants or licensees on concessionary terms which match those available to council tenants under the right-to-buy scheme. They thus provide for discounts of between 32 and 60 per cent. off market value to occupiers of two or more years' standing. This must be good news for the tenants concerned.

Some authorities are clear that, in future, they will not need to retain all of the accommodation that they now provide for staff other than professional trainees, but the process of rationalising property holdings, which may well involve asking some staff to move, must be carried out with proper regard to the interests of the existing tenants and licensees.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already guaranteed that nobody will be made homeless as a result of rationalisation. The hon. Gentleman referred to exchanges in the House in which I reaffirmed that clear guarantee. Nobody will be required to move from his or her present accommodation without being offered a suitable alternative place to live. That guarantee has gone a long way to meet the genuine anxiety expressed by some staff about how the policy is to be implemented. The Government recognise that those anxieties flow from the rationalisation policy and from the lack of any well established procedures in the service which cover these matters.

[Mr. Barney Hayhoe]

The conditions under which staff occupy NHS accommodation and under which health authorities manage the residential estate requires examination with a view to establishing a code of practice or some similar set of arrangements. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has therefore asked the NHS management board to review these matters urgently and to consult health authorities and professional and staff interests. I am sure, from the general tenor of what the hon. Gentleman said, that he will welcome that clear undertaking.

Until the review has been completed and proper arrangements have been established, health authorities are being asked not to implement any part of their plans for rationalising property holdings which involve giving staff notice to quit residential accommodation.

However, if circumstances arise, for example, not paying rent or behaving in a fashion that is wholly unreasonable towards neighbouring tenants — this has nothing to do with the estate rationalisation policy that I have described — which make it necessary for an authority to consider giving staff notice to quit, the authorities are being advised that they must first seek the Department's approval.

The Government's policy is designed to balance the obvious need to manage the residential estate effectively with the need to treat Health Service tenants and licensees reasonably and fairly. We cannot tolerate a position where 20 per cent. of accommodation is permanently empty, which represents about £200 million or £300 million worth of resources tied up pointlessly in empty property. Nor can nurses or other health workers be allowed to become homeless as a result of seeking to rationalise the estate. I hope that the hon. Gentleman agrees that that policy, including the guarantee that has been given to the staff and the review that I have announced today, is sensible and fair.

The hon. Gentleman also mentioned the need for a circular which will update those arrangements for health authorities. Such a circular will be issued during the next week or two. He also mentioned the incident in west Surrey, about which there was much publicity, in the context of the NHS residential estate. The incident had nothing to do with the estate. It is a separate matter.

The property at issue did not form part of the NHS estate. As I understand it, it was leased from another body, which considerably increased the rent that it was demanding. As a result, action was taken, with the individual nurse being offered alternative accommodation. I should be happy to write to the hon. Gentleman about that, because there have been grossly misleading accounts of the incident. That separate incident has been linked, misleadingly, with the general policy. There has been some awful, alarmist publicity. The hon. Gentleman mentioned the clear undertaking about no evictions given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in the House on 25 March. It was extraordinary that, on 4 April—a week or more after that clear statement — a national daily newspaper produced this front page headline:

"Sold out! More than 25,000 nurses are facing the boot from their houses in a shock, Government-backed plan."

There would have been no excuse for producing such an alarmist story before my right hon. Friend gave that clear assurance on 25 March, but it is monstrously irresponsible for the newspaper to feed the anxieties of nurses and other staff who may have read the story and believed it. I appeal for those matters to be dealt with responsibly and sensibly.

The hon. Gentleman also referred to Crown immunity in relation to action over rents and health and safety in this sort of accommodation. He will know that a Bill is going through the House which deals with Crown immunity for food regulations, hospital kitchens and the handling of food. I suspect that, on Report, provided that the Chair gives its permission and calls the appropriate new clause, those matters may well be debated again. Therefore, I shall say nothing further about them today. However, I hope that what I have said will reassure people that the Government's policy on NHS residential accommodation is fair, reasonable and sensible.

A38 (Bromsgrove)

1.30 pm

Mr. Hal Miller (Bromsgrove): I am obliged, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for the fact that the processes of your Office have enabled me to bring forward this afternoon the vexed subject of conditions on the A38 through Bromsgrove and the terms of the Land Compensation Act 1973, following a meeting attended by 300 residents in my constituency last Friday.

This matter relates to the diversion of traffic as a result of the widening of the M5, particularly in a northbound direction, and the imminent opening of the M42 to traffic west as far as the A38. The A38 used to be a trunk road in the care of the Department of Transport. I regret that parts of it have been detrunked following the construction of the Bromsgrove eastern bypass and as a result the Department has shed some responsibility. However, parts of it are still very much a trunk road.

That trunk road was never meant to carry the volume and type of traffic that is now routed that way. The scale and duration of the diversion means that northbound traffic on the A38 south of Bromsgrove has doubled—13,500 vehicles in a 16-hour day. The diversion has lasted nine months. I am happy to say that that terminates this week. But that diversion fully justifies a fresh look at the conditions under which compensation can be claimed and traffic management measures are warranted.

I said that the diversion has lasted for nine months, but there is to be no respite because next month the M42 opens as far west as the A38 and the diversion will continue until the northern link of the M42 with the M5 is completed. That is scheduled for 1990 but that date may well slip as the land has not yet been acquired for construction and we know not whether a public inquiry with its protracted procedures and delays, may be required.

Official predictions of the volume of northbound traffic as a result of the opening of the M42 exceed the volume in the current diversion—an additional 5,000 vehicles in a 16-hour day. Many, including the highway authority, believe that the Department's predictions could well prove light because apparently they have not taken account of the construction of the Evesham bypass on the A435—one of the main routes to the south—which will result in the diversion of traffic to the M42 to enable southbound traffic from the midlands to gain the coast and the ports. Likewise, the predictions take no account of the heavy holiday traffic that has been experienced by anyone who has used the M5.

Therefore, we are not talking of just the past nine months of damage, misery and danger. There is another four to five years of damage, misery and danger in certain prospect. The increase to the south of the M42 will be greater than the increase northbound, although there will be some temporary relief when the M42 southern link opens next year. But residents will still be exposed, like those north of the M42, to diversions when the remaining section of the M5 is widened, and that is already estimated to take a further two years at a time of increasing traffic from the M42.

It is not just a question of the volume of traffic but its speed and composition. We all know what motorway traffic is like—and the A38 has, in effect, become a motorway, but without any of the necessary provision for safety, compensation or traffic management. The residents believe—and I share their view—that several things must be done. First is the issue of safety. Children must be able to get to school, and pensioners must be able to collect their pensions from Post Offices and visit day centres and clubs in safety. A crossing is needed at Lickey End and a pedestrian phase in the traffic lights at Braces lane and Stoke Heath. I have asked for that several times. The speed limit needs extension and enforcement, and again, repeated requests have been made for that at Lickey End and Stoke Heath. Overtaking by heavy vehicles moving at speed makes turning in to or out of a drive a real hazard. Double white lines are needed.

All those measures may not be justified by the Department's criteria on a permanent basis, but five years—the period from 1985 to 1990—seems a lifetime. Indeed, nine months has been almost a lifetime to the residents. The removal of those measures could be considered later if necessary, when and if the traffic returns to normal volume and composition.

It is not simply a matter of life and death—the quality of life is very much in issue. The noise, especially at night, the vibration and the dirt, make life a misery. Vibration has caused cracks in ceilings and windows and some residents claim that mortar has been dislodged and garden walls damaged. The residents naturally feel entitled to compensation and protection by double glazing, without having recourse to expensive litigation which some of them can ill afford.

Compensation is not available under the terms of the Land Compensation Act because roadworks have not been carried out along the frontage of the properties affected. Only a few houses in the vicinity of the Marlbrook traffic lights could benefit. But this diversion is the result of roadworks—the widening of the M5. The increase in traffic will come from roadworks—the opening of the M42.

When consultations were held prior to the enactment of the Land Compensation Act, the effects of diversions and traffic management measures were raised as suitable grounds for compensation, but it was decided to omit them initially while the operation of the new provisions was studied. The results are plain for all to see on the A38 through Bromsgrove. Diversions and increases on such a scale and for such periods must surely merit compensation.

The dirt to which I have referred does not affect only the washing on the line and the windowsills in the front rooms. One look at the condition of plant life in the verges causes fears about a health hazard, with particular mention of lead deposits. I believe that we should conduct a pollution survey to dispel the fears.

It is not just a question of life itself or of the quality of life, but of the value of property and the blight which has been induced. The traffic diversions and increases have resulted in a property blight on the area. Families are finding it extremely difficult to move away from the danger and nuisance to which they are exposed. They find it increasingly difficult to move away to take up new jobs. They are also concerned about the diminution in the asset value of their homes, which also has an effect on their ability to move.

The residents are therefore, naturally, seeking compensation for the loss in property value or for some assistance to enable them to move for the purposes that I have described. Many of them work night shifts and need their rest.

[Mr. Hal Miller]

I realise that the rating question is outside the Minister's responsibility. There certainly seems to be a case for a reduction in rates, but that of itself will not remove the property blight.

It may seem as though the residents have presented a long catalogue of woes in a whining and complaining manner. That is far from true. Since many of the people involved drive vehicles themselves they accept the need for progress, for motorway construction and for easier access for our goods, and so that people from the Midlands can reach the coast and the ports. However, they feel that the period for which they are required to suffer damage, misery and danger is beyond all reason. They might have survived the past nine months without complaint, but the prospect of another four years of misery appears to them to be unsupportable.

The staff of the county surveyor have always been most helpful in trying to meet the genuine anxieties of my constituents. I am grateful to them and to my hon. Friend the Minister and his staff who have also responded as sympathetically as they are able, but who are apparently tied by bonds that I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to loosen.

1.46 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): My hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Mr. Miller) is one of the forthright, assiduous hon. Members who leave Ministers in no doubt about the needs of their constituencies and their constituents. I thank my hon. Friend for his kind words about the Department of Transport staff both in London and in the regional office and I am sure that his words about the county surveyor's staff will be much appreciated by them.

In a balanced, though rightly intolerant, speech, my hon. Friend has asked me to review what is going on. It would be unwise of me to say either that there is a prospect of an immediate change in the law or that no further measures might be taken. The purpose of the debate is to ensure that I look for every opportunity to meet the needs of my hon. Friend's constituency. I assure my hon. Friend that I shall do so.

As my hon. Friend said, there is joint responsibility for roads. The county council is responsible for detrunked roads and there are guidelines for safety measures that can be taken for pedestrians. It is vital that those guidelines are kept to, within reason. Road users subconsciously appreciate dangers on the roads and develop a subconscious sense of road craft while formally obeying traffic directions, road signs and so on. If motorists discover inconsistent treatment, whether in pedestrian crossing arrangements, speed limits or other provisions, we shall end up with more accidents, injuries and deaths. There is a point in sticking fairly rigidly to the guidelines and regulations.

I will make sure that as traffic develops, albeit temporarily—I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me, but even four years is temporary in our terms, though I concede that his constituents would not accept that as a proper use of English—the Department and the county council ensure that justified further measures are not only considered, but, where possible, responded to as sympathetically as is reasonable.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his balanced words about the need for roads. I recognise and share his ambition for improvements, not only for the relief of through traffic that they bring for residential communities, but for the economic benefits brought by these improvements to the infrastructure, or what the Prime Minister and I normally call better roads.

I have been reminded that my hon. Friend and my predecessor discussed investment plans for roads in the west midlands some years ago. I am pleased that they are now coming to fruition. Since 1979, there has been increased spending through the trunk road programme, with increased spending of 30 per cent. in real terms on national roads and with expenditure on the programme for renewing older motorways being nearly doubled. The national road programme was almost exactly halved in real terms between 1973 and 1979-80. I sometimes wish that those who call for more infrastructure spending would look at the recent history books and see how well we are doing now compared with the regime of the International Monetary Fund.

In the past six years there has been investment of £4 billion, £3 billion of which has been on new construction. That is a signifcant investment for Britain. My hon. Friend will not need reminding, because of his purpose in raising the debate, that the west midlands has had a considerable share of the growing cake.

In September 1985, the Umberslade section of the M42 was opened—the first new section of the M42 since completion of the Solihull section in 1977. In December 1985, the Water Orton and Kingsbury sections of the M42 were opened. The Lickey End and Alvechurch sections of the M42 will be opened soon. This will amount to 32 miles of motorway opened in the west midlands during the past nine months. We are going on with widening and reconstruction of the older motorways.

My hon. Friend's constituency is both suffering and benefiting from much of the work on the M5 which is under way or is scheduled for further improvements. The M5 is being brought up to dual three-lane standard. We must be aware that the traffic is with us and will continue to grow. Conditions on the A38 will not improve without improvements on the M5 and the M42/M5 junction which are in hand. I do not think that there is any disagreement either in my hon. Friend's constituency or between us that the work is necessary. But as my hon. Friend said, there is genuine dissatisfaction with the arrangements for the interim.

Anyone with any sensitivity would be conscious, as we are, of the tremendous impact of the new road construction on those living nearby. Particular problems are associated with the widening of the M5. It requires diversion of traffic on to the A38 and other local roads during the widening and reconstruction period. I think that my hon. Friend will acknowledge that those difficulties were recognised at an early stage by the west midlands regional office of the Department of Transport which launched a major public-awareness campaign. The intention was to explain the work and the need for diversion and temporary closure. It rightly concentrated on safety during the work both for road users and for the staff of contractors. There was a commitment to minimise disturbance to local residents. I am sorry that it is not possible to divert traffic to places where there are no local residents, but that is one of the facts of life.

Motorway users are encouraged to stay on the M5 until otherwise directed. My hon. Friend pointed out that traffic had to be diverted from the M5 for considerable periods. There has been co-ordinated publicity through national and local media, and we are grateful for the help of the police, local authorities and the motoring and road haulage organisations.

I think that I need not go through a list of the diversions. If my hon. Friend would like some more information so that he can share it with his constituents and road users locally, I shall happily write to him. If I have not managed to deal with some points, either I shall pick up the omission or my hon. Friend might like to remind me next week of them, and we can go further in this continuing discussion.

An intrinsic part of the works has been the extensive improvements carried out along the A38 and other local roads where necessary to cope with the additional traffic diverted from the M5. I doubt whether all of them will become effective without some pushing and prodding from my hon. Friend.

The improvements carried out on the A38 amount to £600,000 of work, and £350,000 has been spent on other local routes. It might help to give the House some examples. My hon. Friend has already mentioned the installation of traffic lights at Marlbrook crossroads and Birmingham road. There is also the improvement of the capacity of the A38 junction and the Lydiate Ash junction. There are improvements at Canal Bridge, Warndon, and right-turn lanes have been marked at various locations. My hon. Friend should not forget either the pelican crossing at the Barley Mow.

The overriding aim has been to minimise delay to traffic and disruption to local residents. Frankly, it is impossible to be totally successful. As my hon. Friend said, the increase in traffic flows while the diversion is in place gives him and his constituents cause for concern about safety. Many of the tragic news headlines during the past week or so emphasise the need to do everything possible to ensure that our vehicles and roads are safe, and to give as much attention as can be justified to individual safety work. I sometimes feel that I have more responsibility in this job than the Home Secretary had in the days of capital punishment, when death sentences could be commuted. The plain truth is that we have what appears to be an acceptable level of violence—which is unacceptable to me—which amounted to 5,209 road deaths last year. That total is unacceptable, even though it is the lowest for about 30 years.

We must ensure that money is spent on things that are likely to produce the greatest return. Instead of talking about road safety improvements after people have been killed, we should anticipate the need and evaluate the work that perhaps should be done. But I can dwell on that when we have another road safety debate, following the excellent debate that took place a year ago.

We are sadly aware of the disturbance experienced by residents living along the A38, who are inconvenienced by the extra traffic. They are suffering in the short term—although I suppose that if one is looking at four years, it is in the medium term—but they will enjoy long-term benefits when all the work on the M5 is complete. Some residents will benefit earlier than that. It depends on the location.

I shall not deal in detail with the extent and scope of the construction works. But from a technical standpoint, there have been remarkably few closures on some of the roads that can provide relief from the diverted traffic. However, I can understand that that may be a matter of opinion, depending on where one lives and which roads one is trying to cross.

I could give my hon. Friend information on the current situation, but given his liaison with the county surveyor and the regional office of the Department of Transport, he will be up to date on most events.

Mr. Hal Miller: I live there.

Mr. Bottomley: Obviously, my hon. Friend has personal experience of the situation, as he works for his constituency and lives there. His experience has, indeed, given force to his remarks. He has rightly summarised the compensation position. I cannot speak about enforcement, just as I cannot speak about temporary rate reductions, but I shall ensure that his remarks are passed on to those who have responsibility for such matters. I hope that he will tell his constituents that I sympathise with them because they live on a busy road. Will he assure them that I understand that they are very inconvenienced by the temporary increased traffic flows? But it was only as a result of representations such as his that the original compensation arrangements came into effect. It would be a brave man who said that they would never change. But I do not want to start defending them. I can assure him that, sadly, they are unlikely to be changed sufficiently quickly to affect financial compensation, other than through the possibility of rate reductions.

I will pay personal attention to this matter and see what I can do as Minister for roads and traffic. No one could have put the case as well as my hon. Friend, and, if there are further improvements, I suspect that they will be the result of his work.

Local Authorities (Tendering)

2 pm

Mr. Richard Alexander (Newark): I am grateful for this opportunity to draw to the attention of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Environment and the House the growing practice of some Left-wing local authorities of importing non-commercial conditions into the tendering and contractual process before contracts can be awarded. Indeed, the practice now has a description of its own in common parlance: contract compliance.

I have the first 30 pages of a questionnaire circulated by Leicester city council to tenderers. They are asked, for example:

"How many of your employees are members of a Trade Union?

State the numbers of (a) Afro-Caribbean, (b) Black Asian, (c) White European or (d) other employees directly employed by you.

Provide a copy of your policy statement with regard to equal opportunities to secure fair treatment of ethnic minorities and women.

Has your organisation ever been involved directly or indirectly with contracts which facilitate the manufacture and location of nuclear installations and weapons in Europe?

Has your organisation ever had any interest directly or indirectly in South Africa?"

Others ask wheter the firm has ever contributed to political funds, and whether any employee, director or owner is a freemason.

Apart from the volume of work which this stuff causes employers who are really there to make a living for themselves and their employees, few employers employ people because they are black, disabled or freemasons. They do not ask and they do not keep records. Indeed, if they did, it would be discrimination and grossly offensive in many cases. Employees are employed to do a job. To enjoin an employer to import non-commercial considerations such as those into his employing policy is discriminatory and offensive.

This abuse continues. The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors tells me that the St. Helens council tells those on its select tender list that it is raising money for a hospital in North Vietnam, and asks for a contribution. The message is clear: "If you want to work for us, you must pay protection money." One can imagine how far a firm would get if it refused. I have been told of another council which asks tenderers for money for a project in Nicaragua. This is straight protection, and the shades of the Mafia are not far away. Where will it stop if it is not curbed? Indeed, it is the authorities which claim to be prominent in outlawing discrimination on grounds of colour, race or sex which require employers to do just that, and then discriminate against employers who do not hold their political views or finance their projects. It is an abuse and a disgrace.

Nobody objects to councils making sure that their contractors will comply with the law and provide proper employee protection, but to bring social engineering into their policies, at the expense of ratepayers getting the best deal and at the expense of contractors being able to take on labour, must cause concern. These clauses are used as an excuse not to accept the lowest tender or outside contractors but to use in-house departments. I understand that at the Labour party conference in 1982 a resolution was passed that contract compliance should be used positively to discriminate in favour of in-house tenderers.

An additional evil of the system I have described is that the policy works covertly. The policies are stated and the questions are asked, but no one knows whether he has been rejected because he has run foul of them. Some employers just accept the whole thing as a farce and give up. They do so at the expense of the ratepayers and the future employment prospects of others.

This abuse and the need for action was recognised by the Department of the Environment. My right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin) announced in 1985 when he was Secretary of State for the Environment that legislation would be introduced in the next Session of Parliament to ban contract compliance clauses which went beyond the assessment of the contractor's technical, managerial and financial capacity successfully to carry out the requirements of the contract.

Then along came the case of *Wheeler v. Leicester City Council*, where it was decided that such clauses could be challenged as an unreasonable discharge of the council's functions. I am afraid that the Department of the Environment saw there an excuse not to introduce contentious legislation. It said that it would now go back on the word of the previous Secretary of State and that legislation would not be introduced. If, however, the law is adequate, why do these abuses continue? Why have the Building Employers Federation and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors been pressing for action?

I suggest that that is for several reasons. First, the test of reasonableness is not one upon which anyone is willing regularly to go to law. A contractor goes to law only if he has no other choice. The law ought to be clear enough for him to go about his daily business. In addition, if he goes to law with one council, others of similar political persuasions will find reasons for blackballing him from any of their contracts.

The burden of showing why a contractor has been refused work is virtually impossible to prove. In my view, it is unfair that he should have to go to law on such shifting sands. The council would merely turn round and tell him that it had blackballed his company for a reason different from the one claimed by the employer. And who would be able to prove otherwise in court?

My hon. Friend may say that it would be difficult to frame legislation to cover abuses that would not at the same time prevent councils from concerning themselves with proper matters, such as health and safety requirements. The Government accept that there is abuse. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport, who spoke in an earlier debate, in a letter dated 14 April to the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors said that the introduction of non-commercial considerations such as I have described into the contractual process for obtaining goods and services, was to be deplored.

Until the Wheeler case, legislation was proposed by the Department, and although it had not seen the light of day it was clearly intended. Until that case the Department never actually said that it could not be done. In the interests of ratepayers in the areas affected and in the interests of expanding the labour force in areas of high unemployment—and it can be no coincidence that those interests are often the same—I ask my hon. Friend to consider the case that I have put to him, to dig out the original proposals and to implement them. If the will is there it can be done.

2.11 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment (Mrs. Angela Rumbold): My hon. Friend the Member for Newark (Mr. Alexander) has raised a matter which, as I know from the number of letters that I have received on the subject from hon. Members, is of interest to the people those hon. Members represent, to the construction industry and to other industries that have dealings with local authorities.

My hon. Friend wrote to me on 14 May about a civil engineering firm in his constituency which has been excluded from a city council's approved list of contractors. That firm's demand for action by the Government to deal with political discrimination echoes the campaign being waged by the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors. I was amused to see the notes issued recently by the FCEC to its members on lobbying Members of Parliament. These said:

"a letter from a constituent, particularly if that constituent represents an important local business interest, is always likely to have some effect."

I do not know whether my hon. Friend's constituent is a member of the FCEC, though I suspect that his is, but his letter has certainly had some effect.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on the eloquent manner in which he has brought this matter before us. This is not the first time that the matter has been raised in the House and I should like to take some time and care in answering the points that have been raised.

The combination of self-indulgent arrogance and petty-minded vindictiveness of local authorities which, for example, refuse to allow contractors working at our crucial defence installations even to tender for their work, is almost unbelievably breathtaking. Such actions have no place in the contractual processes of local government, and it is clear that the vast majority of local authorities, irrespective of political colour, share that view. From my experience of working in local authorities I can say that this kind of attitude towards tenders was unheard of and quite beyond the pale even a few years ago. However, few authorities indulge in these amazing and rather unorthodox actions. Nevertheless, they present problems for the contractor, and for the small contractor the problems can be vital. I share my hon. Friend's anxiety and take the view that we must look seriously at this matter.

I am, of course, fully aware of the commitments given by a former Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), and by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government, that we would introduce legislation to put a stop to this nonsense. Those commitments were given at a time when the Court of Appeal had ruled, in the case of Wheeler and Others v. Leicester City Council, that the action of the city council was not unlawful. But the subsequent reversal of that decision by the Law Lords has altered the balance of considerations.

I accept that the Law Lords' decision does not put beyond doubt the legality or otherwise of the sort of politically based discrimination that we are discussing, but it reinforces the view that local authorities, albeit democratically elected, are not free to take capricious or ill-founded decisions. Democracy is about responsibility, not irresponsibility, and the courts have shown that authorities must exercise their considerable powers in a reasonable manner. There is informal but distinguished legal advice that the existing law is adequate to deal with the more blatant examples of political discrimination such as the banning of contractors who are connected with the cruise nuclear missile programme or who have some South African connections.

This legal advice recognises that these are uncharted waters and acknowledges that a challenge to such local authority practices is unlikely. It would be a costly exercise and any contractor taking action risks being blacked by other Left-wing councils. This is relevant to the small firms that may feel that they cannot afford to take action or, if they did so, might find it impossible to obtain work from neighbouring authorities because they have a similar approach.

Our legal advisers say that there are two options. One is the hope that there is someone around with sufficient funds to make a challenge, and the other is to seek the advice of the Audit Commission with a view to getting policy guidance for authorities on this matter. I can give some hope about the possibility of action.

I recognise that companies and their trade organisations face a difficult problem in deciding whether to challenge such abuses in the courts. I am still not sure, although my hon. Friend has gone a long way towards convincing me, that legislation will be the answer. I appreciate that it may appear attractive to spell out in legislation the limitation on authorities' powers to act in this way, rather than rely on non-statutory tests such as that of reasonableness, to which my hon. Friend referred.

It is acknowledged that there are clear problems in framing legislation that would prohibit political discrimination without either restricting the imposition of desirable, although not strictly commercial, conditions concerning, for example, equal opportunities and health and safety. One recognises that, within that framework, one has to ask about the habits of firms tendering.

One must not be seen to be inviting the courts to say that anything that is not covered in such legislation would, by implication, be permissible. We have a case, and, although, I say this with hesitation, we must avoid rushing into what might be called bad law, and we must not forget that whatever laws we enact can be enforceable only through the courts.

We should not forget that, even if we introduce fresh legislation to prevent overt discrimination, it is much more difficult to prevent covert action. My hon. Friend mentioned the tender document issues by Leicester city council. I also have a copy. I found it daunting. It is thick and filled with questions. I imagine that it is unusually long and complicated. I have seen other documents put out by local authorities which set so many hurdles as to make it almost impossible for ordinary contractors even to contemplate filling them in. If such firms receive a 95-page document with 200 questions they are likely to decide that they have neither the management skills nor the available labour to fill it in.

Unlike some of the documents that I have seen, the Leicester city council one does not say that no contractor who works at a nuclear missile site or has connections with South Africa will receive work. It says:

"The City Council would wish, as far as practicable, to dissociate itself from anything which directly or indirectly facilitates the manufacture and location of nuclear installations and weapons in Europe. The Council recognises the legal implications of a boycott of firms connected with nuclear installations but wishes to draw the attention of its prospective contractors to its policies in this respect".

[Mrs. Angela Rumbold]

The contractor is then asked to state:

"whether or not he is involved directly or indirectly with contracts which facilitate the manufacture and location of nuclear installations and weapons".

There is similar provision in regard to trading with South Africa. The Leicester city council document contains the quite amazing statement:

"The Council would rather you did not tender for contracts if your company has interests in South Africa."

In the event of legislation which outlaws politically based discrimination being passed, it is clear that the determining factor could not be simply what is or is not said in the tender specification or the contract. It would have to be the action of the local authority. It would be for the aggrieved contractor to establish, through the courts if necessary, that he had been unfairly discriminated against. That seems to be precisely where we stand now.

It is and always has been a fundamental principle that, in the exercise of powers and duties conferred upon them, local authorities must act reasonably. My hon. Friend knows the confines of our interpretation of "reasonably". That fundamental principle underpins our local government system and we must think carefully before we undermine its generality by introducing legislation to tackle the egocentric actions of a mere handful of authorities.

We do not underestimate the importance of the problem. In his former capacity, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science invited the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors and the Building Employers Confederation to liaise with our officials with a view to establishing how best to proceed. We have said that if appropriate provisions can be drafted and it can be clearly demonstrated that the benefits from further legislation outweigh the risks that I have described, the Department will give every consideration to legislating at the earliest opportunity. I hope that that assurance will go some way towards answering my hon. Friend's points. I understand exactly what he means. If we do not take steps now to challenge that practice, the problems could soon become serious.

The FCEC and the Building Employers Confederation will submit their proposals to us shortly. The Department has not ruled out the possibility of legislation. However, since announcing last October that we were not minded to introduce legislation, my colleagues and I have often expressed the hope that a company would challenge in the courts this blatant abuse of the contractual process. My hon. Friend will share my considerable delight in learning recently that a coach operator, with the backing of the Bus and Coach Council, has obtained leave to commence proceedings for a judicial review of a decision by the London borough of Newham. I understand that the coach operator's grievance is that Newham borough council refused to renew an educational transport contract, because the firm also has a contract with the Metropolitan police and is transporting police officers to take up duty at the News International print works at Wapping.

That is a good example of my hon. Friend's point, which has been prayed in aid by several colleagues. Although I cannot predict the outcome of the judicial review, it may be found that the firm has been discriminated against for reasons other than the normal practices of commercial tendering — local authorities usually consider several tenders and choose the one that provides the service that they require at the lowest price. We are talking about competitive tendering in its honest sense. We await the outcome of the case with considerable interest. If the courts decide that there has been malpractice, other companies will have a clear legal precedent on which to take local authorities to court.

Although I appreciate the problems facing companies in deciding whether to take action, I hope that even now other firms will find people who are willing to support them and follow this example. Thereby, they will uphold the well-established principle that in this area, as in all others, local authorities must act reasonably and in accordance with the fiduciary duty that they owe to their ratepayers. I feel strongly about that fiduciary duty in relation to local government. During the past few years, the practices of some extreme local authorities have caused the problems my hon. Friend has clearly exposed in this interesting debate. Sadly, the Government and their supporters will have to rectify the position.

That is not a situation which the Government, nor, indeed, the large mass of local government, enter into with any great joy. Therefore, I hope that today's debate, introduced so eloquently by my hon. Friend, will be taken note of and that at some stage we shall happily reassert the fiduciary duty and the accountability that the locally elected people sensibly hold.

It being half-past Two o'clock, the motion for the Adjournment lapsed, without Question put.

Schools (Norwich)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Malone.]*

2.30 pm

Mr. John Powley (Norwich, South): First, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to thank Mr. Speaker for giving me the opportunity to raise a matter of considerable importance to a large section of constituents whom I have the honour to represent. I also want to thank most sincerely my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary for his presence on the Front Bench this afternon. I am sure that the House will join with me in extending my condolences to him on the bereavement that he has suffered this week.

What is the purpose of this debate? I should like my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary to say that the Department has made a mistake, that it understands the reasons and arguments that I have put forward and that it will withdraw its letter of 4 March and grant-aid the extension of St. Michael's voluntary aided school at Bowthorpe in my constituency. However, that may be going a little further than my hon. Friend is prepared to go this afternoon, so perhaps he will concede that his Department will think again, taking into account all the arguments that I hope that I can put at his disposal this afternoon, and reconsider the decision not to grant-aid the school so that we may look to some not too distant time in the future when there will be a decision to grant-aid the school.

The subject of this debate has a great deal of support in my constituency. It is not often that within a constituency one has so much support for a particular project. I have the support of all the local residents within the area of Bowthorpe, of Norwich city council, the county council and the local education authority, the governors and the chairman of the governors of the school and all the denominations of the churches within my constituency.

I particularly want to thank the Reverend Ray Simpson, the chairman of the governors, who is in the Gallery today, and Dougy Underwood, the chairman of the Bowthorpe school campaign. They have given me considerable help in preparing the case.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Gentleman, but I should point out that he ought not to refer to anyone who is outside the Chamber.

Mr. Powley: I beg your pardon, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Bowthorpe is not just a housing estate adjoining part of Norwich. Although it is within Norwich it is a separate community. It was planned about 1972 and conceived as three separate villages, not part of Norwich. It comprised the villages of Clover Hill, Chapel Break, and Three Score. The development has started and Clover Hill already has 1,506 houses.

Chapel Break, the second development, has 361 houses already and a further extension is proposed. The population at Bowthorpe is now about 5,800, and with the further 1,370 houses planned will rise in six or seven years to about 13,000. It is important to bear in mind that the area contains a high proportion of young people, and as the House will appreciate, it is younger people who have children of school age.

The area is a separate community. Of course, it has great attachment to the city of Norwich, but it has its own separate community—its own village hall, community policeman, local churches and recreational facilities. There is very much the building up of a community spirit within the area—something that we do not often find on many housing developments.

The area is geographically separate from the city of Norwich, and there is little through traffic, it is very much pedestrianised. There is, of course, a ring road and there are roads within the area, but one does not go through Bowthorpe to get to another area. If someone wants to go to Norwich from Bowthorpe, he has to go out of the area, away from the city, on to the ring road and then back into the city. That is a slight geographical description of the area.

What is the problem that the area faces? I recognise the very difficult problem of the Department of Education and Science with falling school rolls throughout the country. Indeed, my local education authority is also having to grapple with that problem because there are falling rolls throughout Norwich. When proposals are made to close a school, that is done with a heavy heart. However, the argument of falling rolls cannot apply to Bowthorpe which is the most expanding area for school population in Norfolk.

Even within my constituency there are areas where the school population is falling. Within the last few days it was decided that the Gurney middle school would close in September. There is a great deal of regret about that, but I am explaining the point so that the Minister understands that we have accepted that, in some cases, it is necessary to close a school.

However, the area of Bowthorpe has an expanding child population and the figures are there for the Minister to see. We can calculate the number of Bowthorpe pupils who will go to St. Michael's school from 1987. The estimated number for 1987 is 373, increasing by 1992 to 490. Those figures are based on known children. With the new building development, the projected figure for 1987 is 430, rising by 1992 to 739, and all those children must be educated within the area.

In some of the other areas the rolls have fallen slightly. Four other schools are within striking distance of Bowthorpe-Blackdale middle, Wensum middle, Mill View middle and West Earlham middle—which have a capacity of about 1,120 pupils. One school is about to be closed so all the pupils from that school will have to be educated elsewhere. Although there is a surplus of places, the projected increase in the population and the projected increase in the number of children makes it clear that even if all the places at the other schools are occupied there will be still a surplus of children to places in the next five, six, or seven years. Those children have to be educated.

The local education authority will have a difficult problem. It will have to review its education policy. It will not be easy, without the permanent expansion of St. Michael's in my constituency, for the education authority to say to parents living close to St. Michael's that their children cannot attend the school which they can see from their bedroom window. It will be difficult to tell those parents that their children must attend a school two, three or more miles away, some distance from the area in which their friends live.

We have to look beyond this year and the late 1980s into the 1990s and consider what will be happening then. The Minister might say that we cannot spend the money now so he will put off the decision. But he can put it off

[Mr. Powley]

only for a short time because it takes time to plan, build and equip a building and to organise the education policy to accommodate new classrooms.

The cost to which I referred earlier was estimated by the local education authority to be £525,000 at 1985 prices. We are looking for grant aid of about 85 per cent. towards the building. When St. Michael's was first built in 1981—the Department accepted that that was only the first phase — the core facilities such as office accommodation and community areas, were provided on the basis of a school with 480 places, not 300 permanent places. We are asking only for an extension of the classroom space. The school is slightly inefficient because it is over-provided with those facilities. Its efficiency will be maximised when it has the 480 places.

The Department rightly has rules and regulations about the distances that anyone can be expected to travel. Two to three miles from the mid-point in Bowthorpe to one of the alternative schools does not sound far. However, I tried walking it the other day. I am relatively fit, I did not have children with me, it was a Sunday afternoon and it was not raining, but it took me 29 minutes to walk from St. Michael's school to the nearest alternative school.

Most parents would do the journey on foot and they would have to walk with their young children for at least 30 minutes. Anyone going by car has to go out of the Bowthorpe area, on to a busy ring road and back into the area of the other schools. I suggest that the local education authority and the Department of Education and Science would not want people to do that.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will take account of all the points that I have made. We are talking about a community and an expanding population that will need to be educated. There are not sufficient places in the long term for all the prospective children to be educated. It would be silly of me not to accept that there are places close by now, but I hope that the Minister will take my arguments seriously and will understand the strength of local feeling, backed up by facts and figures. Like any responsible Member, I am looking not only at the present, but at what will be needed in my constituency in the next five or 10 years.

I hope that the Minister will look sympathetically at our case and at the representations of interested parties and will give me some grounds for optimism that he will review the decision that I am sorry that his Department had to take a few weeks ago.

2.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science (Mr. Bob Dunn): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich, South (Mr. Powley) for his kind personal remarks at the start of his speech. They are sincerely appreciated by me and my family.

I also thank my hon. Friend for raising a number of important matters on which I welcome the opportunity to reply. I am grateful for the close interest that he has shown in St. Michael's Church of England middle school. He has written many letters and lobbied robustly in its cause, and I am aware that the reasons for the rejection by my right hon. Friend the former Secretary of State of the St. Michael's extension proposal have not been fully appreciated locally.

St. Michael's is a voluntary aided school and the estimated cost of extending it, at £630,000 at November 1985 prices, would represent a major investment from the very limited resources available to the Department for voluntary aided provision.

When considering projects involving additional voluntary provision, as proposed at St. Michael's it is our policy first to consider whether there is a basic need for more places in the area. If such a basic need is proved, we consider whether there is a case for enhanced denominational provision. I am sure that my hon. Friend realises that even following the impending closure of the Gurney county middle school later this year, there will still be about 450 surplus middle school places available in the area.

All those places are within the three-mile statutory walking distance for children of middle school age. Indeed, some sections of the Bowthorpe estate are closer to schools with surplus places than they are to St. Michael's. Therefore, it appears to us that there is no basic need in the area as a whole. I appreciate that my hon. Friend's constituents are opposed to the prospect of pupils moving outside the immediate boundaries of the Bowthorpe estate, for their education.

On the question of denominational need, I am aware that, although designated as a Church of England establishment, in practice, St Michael's plays the role of the local community school. Indeed, when I met a deputation led by my hon. Friend it was made clear to me by the diocesan representatives that St Michael's operated a policy of admitting children from Bowthorpe in preference to pupils from other parts of the city, irrespective of denominational affiliation. No pupil had either been admitted to the school or, indeed, refused entry on denominational grounds. Against that background, therefore, it would seem to be self evident that, at the present time, there is not only no basic need for additional provision in west Norwich but no case for additional denominational school places.

The case for an enlargement of St Michael's cannot, however, be considered in isolation from the effect that such an enlargement would have on other schools in the area. My hon. Friend may recall that in our White Paper "Better Schools" which stated the Government's policies for school-based education in England, we stated our views, based on Her Majesty's Inspectorate's advice, regarding the desirable minimum size of certain types of schools necessary to maintain educational standards and make efficient use of resources. This advice was that middle schools providing education for pupils in the age group eight to 12, which is the system in operation in west Norwich, should not fall below two forms of entry—240 pupils. When they do so, it requires above average staffing levels and makes uneconomic use of other resources.

My hon. Friend is aware, I am sure, that, due to the general and sharp fall in demand in west Norwich, numbers on roll in four other middle schools in his constituency have reached the point where, in each case they have significantly fewer than two forms of entry. Latest returns collected by the Department in February this year show that total numbers at West Earlham middle school are down to 215, leaving 85 surplus places; attendance at Mill View middle school is very low, at 186 pupils, leaving 96 surplus places; Wensum middle school

has only 209 on roll with 241 surplus places; and Blackdale middle school has 217 on roll with 43 surplus places.

I know that my hon. Friend cannot fail to agree that it does not make educational sense to allow the four schools that I have just mentioned to atrophy, or economic sense to add to the great number of surplus places currently available in his constituency within such close proximity of the Bowthorpe estate. If my right hon. Friend the then Secretary of State had approved the significant enlargement of St Michael's, such a decision would have had expensive consequences for the staffing levels and resources necessary to maintain adequate standards of education for pupils at West Earlham, Mill View, Wensum and Blackdale middle schools.

I have listened with great interest, and appreciate the arguments advanced so capably and well by my hon. Friend, but I believe that he appreciates the general situation that I have outlined and the need to protect the interest of all the children seeking middle school provision in the west Norwich area.

It is, of course, open to the governors of St Michael's to make fresh statutory proposals in the appropriate way for the enlargement of the school. Should such proposals be received, the Secretary of State would be required by law to consider them anew with due regard to the material facts and his general policies. I cannot, therefore, speculate on what his decision might be. However, I hope I have made clear why the recent statutory proposal was rejected.

I thank my hon. Friend most warmly for the way in which he has, in this case, as in so many others in recent years, represented his constituents' interests so capably and well. I hope that he will accept the response that I have had to make this afternoon.

Question put and agreed to.

Adjourned accordingly at five minutes to Three o'clock.

House of Commons

Tuesday 3 June 1986

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR. SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

SOCIAL SERVICES

Geriatric Services

1. **Mr. Janner** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to increase resources for hospital, nursing and ancillary geriatric services for Leicestershire; and if he will make a statement.

5. **Mr. Latham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will make a statement on the funding of the National Health Service in Leicestershire.

The Minister for Health (Mr. Barney Hayhoe): In real terms the 1986-87 Hospital and Community Health Services revenue allocation to Leicestershire is 34 per cent. higher than the 1978-79 expenditure. There has also been significant real terms growth in funding for the family practitioner services. In Leicestershire, as in the country as a whole, the development of services for the elderly has a high priority and there are plans for a substantial additional investment in these services.

Mr. Janner: I welcome the plans to which the Minister referred. However, will he please be specific as to the provision of geriatric beds, of which we are desperately short, to the extent that a constitutent of mine, about whom I shall write to the Minister, would probably be alive today had there been a bed for him? Will he undertake to conduct an inquiry into that case when I write to him, and will he give us details so that the people of Leicestershire may have some hope of real improvement in geriatric care?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am glad that the hon. and learned Gentleman at least acknowledged the substantial increase in real resources which has been directed to Leicestershire during the lifetime of this Government. In 1985-86 there has been a temporary reduction in geriatric beds due to repair and upgrading work, as I think the hon. and learned Gentleman knows. However, 37 beds at Leicestershire General will be back in use soon, and a massive injection of resources is planned for the period up to 1993-94—a 42 per cent. increase in revenue and about £33 million worth of capital development—for services specifically for the elderly. Total manpower, including trained nurses and professions allied to medicine, is increasing and they will all make their contribution to improve services for the elderly in the hon. and learned Gentleman's constituency.

Mr. Latham: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the RAWP formula helped to raise Leicestershire from a miserable 75 per cent. of the national average in 1974 to 93 per cent. last year? Will he give an assurance that if the RAWP formula is discontinued in order to help London he will find some other clear method to help Leicestershire get to the national average by 1993?

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend is right to draw attention to the way in which the RAWP formula has led to a significant improvement in the relative position of Leicestershire and the Trent region. The Trent region has received a real increase of 27 per cent. in its hospital and community health services revenue, whereas the average for England has been 20 per cent. and, as my hon. Friend acknowledged, in the Thames region it has been only 13 per cent. I can assure my hon. Friend that the Government remain committed to the principles of RAWP, but they are properly reviewing the criteria, looking especially at matters such as inner city deprivation, the particular requirements of teaching hospitals, and so on, so that the RAWP formula is properly based.

Mr. Dobson: If Leicestershire has been benefiting so substantially from the Government's policies, why are 7,582 people there waiting for hospital treatment, an increase, and why are 1,088 women waiting for gynaecological treatment in Leicestershire?

Mr. Hayhoe: Just think what the position would have been if the resources available to Leicestershire had remained at the level that we inherited from the previous Government. It would be very much worse than it is at present.

Mr. Ashby: We have an excellent cottage hospital in Ashby de la Zouch, which at present has only five beds for maternity cases. Will my right hon. Friend give an assurance that it will remain open and available for the people of Ashby?

Mr. Hayhoe: I would certainly give considerable attention to any representations from my hon. Friend.

Mobility Allowance

2. **Mr. Thurnham** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about mobility allowances for blind people; and if he will make a statement.

The Minister for Social Security (Mr. Tony Newton): We receive a wide range of representations on mobility allowance, but I am not aware of recent representations on behalf of blind people generally.

Mr. Thurnham: In view of the confusion that has arisen from certain recent cases, will my hon. Friend undertake to review the rules for mobility allowance, especially for those who are functionally incapable of being independently mobile?

Mr. Newton: I have seen my hon. Friend's early-day motion, and I pay tribute to the way in which he has pursued the case of Daniel Heaton. However, he will understand the difficulties, in that he is asking us to widen the criteria for mobility allowance in a way that would have substantial resource implications.

Mr. Alfred Morris: Is the Minister aware that right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House are under increasing pressure to secure the mobility allowance for blind people? Is he further aware that mentally

handicapped people and those with multiple handicaps who cannot walk unaided feel that they are unjustly deprived of the allowance? Will he reconsider the whole matter and make a statement soon?

Mr. Newton: The fact that the problem goes beyond blind people to those with directional problems generally is precisely why I said what I did in my initial answer. The right hon. Gentleman, above all, knows the original purposes for which mobility allowance was introduced, and will take the point that I made in my original answer.

Mr. Hannam: Does my hon. Friend accept that although those with double sensory handicaps, such as the deaf blind, are few in number, they face grave mobility problems and need just as much help as those in wheelchairs? Does he accept that the present criteria, which involve an acceptance of danger to such people and others, certainly applies to that group?

Mr. Newton: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend's efforts in this area. His mention of wheelchairs—at present there is a strong demand for the addition of outdoor, powered, occupant-controlled wheelchairs in the DHSS range—shows the problem of choosing priorities in this area.

Residential Accommodation

3. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the disposal of National Health Service residential accommodation for nurses and others.

The Secretary of State for Social Services (Mr. Norman Fowler): There have been virtually none since I announced that the policy of rationalising the Health Service's holdings of residential accommodation will be so administered that no one who lives in such accommodation will be made homeless as a result.

Mr. Hamilton: Does the Secretary of State recall the Adjournment debate on this matter on 23 May, when the Minister for Health gave an undertaking that no one would be evicted from accommodation unless he or she was offered suitable alternative accommodation? Who will decide whether the accommodation is adequate in terms of rent, distance from the hospital and other matters? Will it be the Minister, the health authority or the nurse concerned? Will there be a right of appeal or arbitration on the matter?

Mr. Fowler: My right hon. Friend the Minister said that no one would be made homeless, that is that no one would be required to move without being offered a suitable alternative place in which to live. He also said that the NHS management board had been asked to review conditions under which staff occupy Health Service accommodation. Pending that review, health authorities are being asked not to implement plans that involve giving staff notice to quit.

Mr. Soames: Will my right hon. Friend acknowledge that in the south-east in particular there is real difficulty because of the extraordinarily high price of housing? At the same time there is a good deal of surplus NHS property. How will my right hon. Friend handle the matter in the south-east?

Mr. Fowler: I acknowledge the issue that my hon. Friend raises. We want to ensure that health authorities have sufficient accommodation for student nurses, junior doctors, and other trainees, to bring accommodation up to a reasonable standard and to improve the standards of accommodation. We also want to sell surplus accommodation which is standing empty. That state of affairs cannot be defended, and the sale will go ahead.

Mr. Kirkwood: The reassurances which the Minister gave last week and which have been repeated today by the Secretary of State, are welcome. If other accommodation is offered as being suitable, surely there should be some system of review.

Mr. Fowler: I am perfectly happy to look at that. We are reviewing the whole property management issue. I will ensure that the point is considered.

Mr. Raynsford: Is the Secretary of State aware that a number of staff who have given long service to the Charing Cross hospital in Fulham have been threatened with homelessness as a result of eviction from homes they occupy? Is he also aware that the number of nurses in the area is severely impaired by the lack of adequate accommodation there? What does the Secretary of State propose to do?

Mr. Fowler: If the hon. Gentleman had listened to what I said he would know that, pending the review, health authorities have been asked not to implement plans that involve giving staff notice to quit under the residential accommodation rationalisation process. I hope that now he will be able to assure his constituents that that is the policy, and not spread rumours that are untrue.

Mr. McQuarrie: When the disposal of surplus accommodation is considered, will my right hon. Friend bear in mind the problems that would arise in rural areas, such as at Ladysbridge hospital in my constituency, where the accommodation is essential to attract staff to care for mental and psychiatric patients? Will sympathetic consideration be given to the disposal of accommodation, bearing in mind the need to ensure that adequate accommodation is provided for such staff?

Mr. Fowler: We want to ensure that health authorities have enough accommodation for student nurses, junior doctors and other trainees. That remains the policy. We want to see that accommodation improved. I think my hon. Friend would agree that property that is standing empty should be sold if there is no use for it. He might also agree that if the tenants occupying such property want the right to buy, they should be given that right. That is what we are achieving.

Benefits (Students)

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to conclude his consideration of the report of Social Services Advisory Committee on students' eligibility to benefits.

Mr. Newton: Shortly, I hope.

Mr. Bennett: Will the Minister confirm that the report is a damning indictment of the Government's policy and that it makes it absolutely clear that it would be a major breach of social security policy to ensure that a group of people, namely students, fall below the safety net which is set by social security measures? The Government have a simple solution to the problem, which is to restore the

student grant to its 1979 level, which would mean that far fewer students would need to apply for social security to supplement their grant.

Mr. Newton: I do not accept the premise of the hon. Gentleman's question. As the report has not yet been published, I do not know on what basis he rests his remarks. The Government are determined that the social security system should treat students fairly and sensibly within the context of policy towards students as a whole.

Mr. McCrindle: Does my hon. Friend accept that, because the housing benefit system was never designed to support the accommodation costs of students, there is a strong case for moving away from the heavy reliance on that system which has developed? Does he agree that in a year when the student grant increase has been restricted to 2 per cent., however, that may not necessarily be the best time to embark upon such a path? Would it not be better to do it progressively over a period?

Mr. Newton: I think there would be general agreement with my hon. Friend that, in the long run, it must be sensible to move away from the position in which we now find ourselves. I accept that the difficulty is finding a method of moving in that way which is fair and sensible, as I said earlier.

Mr. Wilson: Does the Minister accept that students gain entitlement to such benefits only because they get the qualifications under the label of poverty? Does he not think that it would be heaping hardship upon hardship if he were to take away such benefits without giving anything in return through the student grant?

Mr. Newton: That is not strictly true. One of the difficulties is that the calculation of housing benefit for students is done in a way more favourable to them than to other claimants on similar incomes.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend accept that the financial situation facing some students is very serious and that their ability to obtain part-time employment during vacations may vary from one area to another? Students in the north-east, for example, might find it extremely difficulty to get jobs. Should not the benefit system be so devised as to ensure that all students have an adequate standard of living to enable those undertaking serious study to do all the work required in order to obtain the qualifications that will be to their benefit and to that of our country?

Mr. Newton: I note my hon. Friend's very general proposition. I am sure he is aware that in the proposals for consultation there is no question of withdrawing students' rights to supplementary benefit in appropriate circumstances during the long vacations. We have made a proposition concerning only the short vacations.

Mr. Meadowcroft: Is the Minister aware that given the Government's policy of reducing the student grant in real terms, and the social security provisions, some students cannot cope? Why did the Government set their face against student loans when they are now introducing them in the guise of overdrafts?

Mr. Newton: The hon. Gentleman will be aware that part of the Government's proposition was an increase in student grant alongside changes in social security provision. An important part of the package was an improvement in students' rights in relation to the disregards for housing benefit purposes.

Mr. Favell: Does my hon. Friend agree that the DHSS and the Department of Education and Science should ride in tandem on the question of student grants? Is it not time that they got together to hold a full review of the student grant system?

Mr. Newton: It is precisely because we are anxious to consider such questions, both within the DHSS and with Ministers in the Department of Education and Science, that we are taking the proper amount of time to consider them.

NHS (Staffing Levels)

6. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with administrative staffing levels in the National Health Service.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. Ray Whitney): We are concerned that administrative and clerical staffing levels in the National Health Service should be controlled so that resources can be concentrated on direct patient care. The contribution of administrative staff to the running of the service is necessary and valuable, but I believe that there is still scope for improvements in the use and efficiency of this staff group. The National Health Service management board is, therefore, conducting a review of administrative and clerical staffing to see what further action is needed.

Mr. Evennett: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that reply. In the South-East Thames region there are three administrators for every one doctor, and the administration is taking far too big a share of the resources. As a result, hospitals such as the Erith and District hospital in my constituency, which provides community care, do not obtain enough cash to provide the necessary service in the area. I welcome my hon. Friend's reply, but hope that he will do even more to rectify the situation.

Mr. Whitney: I am well aware of my hon. Friend's concern, and I read with interest his exchanges with the chairman of the regional health authority. In making this judgment it is important to understand that, under the general heading of administrative and clerical staff, an important contribution is made by the clinically related administrative staff and, for example, by mental health care assistance.

Mr. Sheldon: Will the Minister give an undertaking that those who are prematurely retired from the National Health Service are not re-employed in the same class of work? Two sittings ago the Public Accounts Committee drew attention to some of the confusion that was apparent in the records of the NHS and of the Minister's Department.

Mr. Whitney: I take due note of that point. Indeed, I believe that action has been taken in response to the PAC's observations.

Mrs. Currie: Does my hon. Friend agree that administrative staff in the NHS are often much maligned? Is he aware that they include such people as ward clerks and medical secretaries, who provide the essential back-up

for doctors, nurses and other paramedical staff, payroll clerks of what is now the largest employer in western Europe, and such other good people as chairmen of district health authorities and general managers, who were introduced under Conservative legislation? Is it not time that we stopped being quite so rude about administrative staff and recognised the work that they do?

Mr. Whitney: I am happy to agree with that general point. Just as we have significantly increased the number of doctors, dentists, nursery and midwifery staff, and professional and technical staff within the NHS, so, at the same time, there has been an increased need for back-up staff to reinforce those efforts.

Mr. Cyril Smith: The north-west region is appointing a growing army of public relations officers—I believe that three have been appointed in the past six months. What possible contribution do they make to health care? When will the Minister deal with the financing of the north-west region, where money is frittered away on, for example, public relations officers while wards and whole hospitals are being closed and nurses are being asked to take premature retirement?

Mr. Whitney: As the hon. Gentleman knows, the funding of the north-west region is increasing significantly above the rate of inflation. The employment of the administrative and clerical staff is one of those areas to be investigated by the management board review.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that the Government's latest proposals to abolish or reduce the registration and inspection of private nursing homes will put thousands of vulnerable elderly and handicapped persons at risk? Will the Government withdraw that proposal, in the light of the recent appalling revelations about Oriel Lodge in Suffolk, which combines just about everything that can be wrong in the private sector—gross maltreatment of patients, an almost total lack of supervision and exploitive profits of £130,000 a year, made from just 10 mentally handicapped, helpless persons?

Mr. Whitney: As so often happens, the hon. Gentleman is misinformed. There are no such proposals. As to the performance of nursing homes, I am not surprised, but disappointed, that the hon. Gentleman concentrates his attack on the private sector while ignoring the deficiencies that are sadly all too often found in the statutory sector, of which the hon. Member for Peckham (Ms. Harman) could tell him.

Departmental Offices (Staff)

7. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received regarding staff levels at Department of Health and Social Security offices.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security (Mr. John Major): Staffing levels in local social security offices are a matter of constant concern to the Government. We take careful account of the representations which are received from various sources which include organisations representing the staff both locally and nationally. I am glad to tell the hon. Gentleman that an additional 5,000 staff have been added above complement for the current year.

Mr. Pike: Will these 5,000 additional jobs be in DHSS offices to enable them to ensure that claimants get the money to which they are entitled? Is not the situation throughout the country much as it is in Burnley, where there are now fewer staff dealing with three times the number of claimants as in 1979? Is this not disgraceful, as people are not getting the benefits to which they are entitled?

Mr. Major: We are determined to deliver a cost-effective and efficient social security system, and we shall provide the staff for that purpose.

Mr. Dobson: When will the hon. Gentleman start?

Mr. Major: As to when we shall start, that is a substantial part of the social security review, which may have bypassed the hon. Member for Holborn and St. Pancras (Mr. Dobson). In Burnley there has been an increase of 12½ people over the 1985-86 natural work load complement.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Will my hon. Friend look at staffing levels in the city of Leicester, and particularly in the three local DHSS offices, which, after doing an excellent job, are facing a crisis as to whether they should continue with overtime or bring in casual labour to do the work that has been well carried out?

Mr. Major: We are carrying out a full complement review of staffing and the effect of that will be shown in the offices next year.

Mr. Corbett: Is the Minister aware that, despite a large increase in the number of claimants at local DHSS offices, as in the Kingsbury road in my constituency, the staffing levels are below those of 1979? Can he assure us that the four extra staff allocated to the Kingsbury road DHSS offices will be sufficient to deal efficiently with the number of people claiming benefits there?

Mr. Major: I shall examine the position in the office quoted by the hon. Gentleman. With the 5,000 staff that have been approved, the national complement is now greater than it was in 1979. The hon. Gentleman might care to bear in mind that the equivalent of about 6,890 posts are no longer needed because of changes in procedures on statutory sick pay, housing benefit and postal review.

Mr. Forth: Is it not the case that the bold and excellent proposals being made to reform the social security system are designed to increase the number of people who will understand the system, raise the level of claims made and received and make the use of staff more efficient? Is this not the way to go, rather than piling more staff upon more in a system that is breaking down?

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend is right. In addition to his catalogue, the review will also ensure that we can deliver an efficient social security system. That is our intention.

Mr. Meacher: Is the Minister aware that cuts of 10,000 jobs at DHSS offices since 1979, together with a near trebling of work loads as a result of soaring unemployment, has produced a plummeting of morale to the lowest level perhaps since 1948? Is he further aware that in one north London office, for example, it takes at least four weeks even for claims for urgent needs payments to be dealt with, even for household disabled persons with

no income? How long do the Government intend to allow staff to remain so grossly overworked, undertrained and underpaid?

Mr. Major: As ever, if one shows the hon. Gentleman a top, he will go well over it, and he has done so yet again. He clearly did not hear what I said a moment ago. Recently we authorised a substantial increase of 5,000 in complement. In addition, there has been a reduction in work load equivalent to nearly 7,000 jobs because of substantial changes in procedure. Further, if the hon. Gentleman is so concerned about delivering a good system, he might have given us a little more support, in the Standing Committee considering the Social Security Bill, for the reform that we are making.

Mr. Kennedy: Is the Minister satisfied that the authorisation of 5,000 extra staff will be sufficient to meet the strong reservations expressed by the private consultants' report which was commissioned by his Department one and a half years ago on the staffing, training and retraining implications of the social security review?

Mr. Major: The latter part of the hon. Gentleman's question arises on a later question today. If the 5,000 additional staff are insufficient to deliver the service required, that will be revealed by the complement review that is now going on, and we shall deal with the result of the review at the end of this year.

Social Security Act 1985

9. **Mr. Stern** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services in respect of which provisions of the Social Security Act 1985 draft regulations are still to be published.

Mr. Major: There are only two sets of regulations arising from the Social Security Act 1985 which remain to be published. These are regulations under section 3 of the Act concerning disclosure of information by occupational pension schemes and regulations under section 5 of the Act concerning managers of occupational pension schemes. Six sets of regulations dealing with new rights for early leavers of occupational pension schemes were made in December 1985 and have come into effect this year.

Mr. Stern: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his reply, which suggests the near completion of a successful exercise under the 1985 Act and indicates the outcome of a similar major exercise on what will undoubtedly be the 1986 Act. May I, however, draw his attention to the effects of one regulation, namely, the recent publication of the names of those advising the Secretary of State on personal pensions, and point out that not one person on that advisory panel can be said to represent the consumer interest?

Mr. Major: My right hon. Friend's advisory group is advising him on technicalities. There will, of course, be consultation with consumer interests. I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his remarks about the passage of the earlier sets of regulations. Of those still outstanding, I am pleased to tell him that we expect to publish and lay the disclosure regulations this month and bring them into effect later this year. Consultation is almost concluded on the regulations concerning managers of occupational pension schemes. We shall lay those regulations as soon as possible.

Mrs. Beckett: I am no surprised that the Minister was grateful to his hon. friend for congratulations on publishing regulations when he has just said that he expects the disclosure regulations to be published—did he say this month? That is presumably a post-date from the original date of Easter, which was a post-date from the original date of January. If the regulations for this year's Social Security Bill are published with the dexterity, speed and competence of those for the 1985 Act, we shall still be doing the regulations in 1992.

Mr. Major: It would perhaps be indelicate to remind the hon. Lady of how long the Labour Government took to lay regulations after the Social Security Act 1975, but it was substantially longer than has been taken in recent months. There will be a number of consequential regulations under the 1986 Act. We shall consult and publish these as soon as possible after Royal Assent. I assure the hon. Lady that Royal Assent will be given.

Mr. Watts: Will my hon. Friend resist the temptation to be pushed along by the hon. Member for Derby, South (Mrs. Beckett) in the matter of disclosure regulations? Will he bear in mind the importance of ensuring that when they are introduced they do not impose onerous burdens on small schemes that make them more difficult to operate? Will he concentrate on getting them right, rather than on introducing them quickly?

Mr. Major: I entirely agree with my hon. Friend about the importance of ensuring that the regulations are right. There may be a minor burden on schemes, but we are concerned primarily to ensure that the regulations enshrine existing good practice and that members of schemes have a right, first, to know their entitlement, and, secondly, to know how the schemes are being managed.

St. James's Hospital

10. **Mr. Dubs** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will meet members of Wandsworth district health authority to discuss his proposal to close St. James's hospital.

Mr. Whitney: This is not a proposal of my right hon. Friend and it would not be appropriate for Ministers to intervene at this stage. All health authorities are required to consult formally on any proposals for closure or change of use of health premises. The Secretary of State will certainly take account of all the views expressed locally should a proposal come to him for final decision in due course. In the meantime, the hon. Member may wish to keep in contact with the chairman of Wandsworth district health authority on the matter.

Mr. Dubs: Is the Minister aware that the Health Service in south London, particularly in Lambeth and Wandsworth, is in a state of chaos? The ambulance service cannot meet needs, hospitals are being closed temporarily and in-patient admissions are being cancelled at the last minute. Against this background, the suggestion that a much-needed and much-loved local hospital should be closed because of a lack of resources for Wandsworth is surely unthinkable. Is it not for the Minister to say to the health authority, "You can have the money. We do not want this hospital to be closed"?

Mr. Whitney: No, Sir, I am not so aware. If the hon. Gentleman refers to a debate that took place a week or two

ago he will see a statement on the future development of London's ambulance services. He will be aware of the new facilities that are becoming available within Wandsworth, such as the exciting new facilities at St. George's hospital.

Personal Pensions

11. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he is satisfied with the response of financial institutions to the personal pensions proposals in the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Fowler: Yes. Insurance companies and the new providers like building societies and unit trusts are showing an encouraging and increasing interest in personal pensions.

Mr. McCrindle: I accept that it will most often be appropriate for people to remain within good occupational schemes, but does my right hon. Friend join me in welcoming the fact that in future there is to be a choice? Will he join me equally in suggesting to the established pension funds that instead of complaining about the 2 per cent. incentive that is being given to the new personal pension arrangements they should welcome competition, on the basis that whichever scheme may be effected there is every reason to expect that competition will bring a better return?

Mr. Fowler: I entirely agree with what my hon. Friend has said. At present there are about 10 million or 11 million people without an occupational pension scheme of their own or without a personal pension. The current legislation gives them the right to choose. All the experience of other countries, notably the United States, is that competition between different providers takes charges down, and I think that that is what will happen in this country.

Mr. Marlow: Is there any possibility that the private sector will be able to devise a system of private pensions for the marauding anarchists who are causing so much distress in the west country at present? The public at large cannot perceive why these people should be getting taxpayers' money.

Mr. Fowler: I entirely understand what my hon. Friend has said and sympathise with it. I think he will agree with me, however, that it has precious little to do with personal pensions.

Breast Cancer

12. **Mr. Kennedy** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on current steps being taken to provide screening facilities for breast cancer.

Mr. Hayhoe: The United Kingdom expert working group under the chairmanship of Professor Sir Patrick Forrest is now considering the policy options for breast cancer screening. Its final report will be ready later this year and I shall announce the Government's response as quickly as possible.

Mr. Kennedy: Will that inquiry, and will the Government's thinking on the matter, take into account international studies that show clearly that of the 10,000 or more deaths from breast cancer, over 30 per cent. are avoidable and preventable? Does he accept that more must therefore be done by the Government centrally directing funds and centrally directing Health Service thinking towards prevention, especially of mammagraphic abnormalities?

Mr. Hayhoe: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will support the work being done by Professor Sir Patrick Forrest and his colleagues. Their interim report shows that there was a convincing case, on clinical grounds, for a change in United Kingdom policy on the provision of mammographic facilities and the screening of symptomless women aged 50 and over. The committee is now considering the policy options, their costs, benefits and overall implications for the National Health Service. We expect that report towards the end of the year. We will come to a decision quickly after the report is published and announce our conclusions to the House.

Ms. Richardson: What I think the House would like to know is whether one additional woman will be screened as a result of the Government's initiative.

Mr. Hayhoe: Yes, that will happen. If we examine the record on these matters, which was set out fully in a debate on 5 February, it is clear that the Labour party has no claim worth hearing on this issue, if we compare its record with that of successive Conservative Governments.

Departmental Staff (Ernst and Whinney Report)

13. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has now received the Ernst and Whinney report on his Department's manning levels necessary to implement the provisions of the Social Security Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The study to which the hon. Member refers was carried out last year concurrently with the consultation period on the Social Security Green Paper proposals. The report was delivered to the Department in October 1985. It provided an independent initial view, to complement management's assessment, of the broad staffing implications of the then Green Paper proposals prior to the preparation of the White Paper and the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Kirkwood: The Minister will be aware of the implications of the Social Security Bill that is passing through the other place. Will he assure the House that the Ernst and Whinney report will be published? The operational aspects of the changes are very important and will have far-reaching consequences. What plans do the Government have to publish the changes, so that the public can be made aware of what is to be expected when the system is implemented?

Mr. Major: The Ernst and Whinney study was only one of a number of studies—the others being made internally—that were carried out on staffing matters. It would be misleading to publish the study carried out on the Green Paper, as there have been structural alterations of some substance to the Bill.

NHS (Expenditure)

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what percentage of the gross domestic product was spent on the National Health Service in the most recent year for which figures are available; and what was the percentage in 1978.

Mr. Fowler: Total health care spending in the United Kingdom represented 6·1 per cent. of gross domestic product in 1984; the corresponding figure for 1978 was 5·3 per cent. In 1984, 5·5 per cent. of GDP was spent on the National Health Service as compared to 4·9 per cent. in 1978.

Mr. Knox: Does my right hon. Friend agree that these figures show the high priority that the Government have given to the National Health Service compared to that given to the service by their predecessors?

Mr. Fowler: Yes. The figures show that we are spending substantially more resources than were spent by the previous Labour Government. We are building more hospitals and, above all, we are treating more patients. That shows the Government's commitment to the National Health Service.

Drugs (Parallel Importing)

15. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has made of the latest extent of parallel importing of drugs prescribed under the National Health Service.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that firm figures about parallel imported medicines dispensed under the National Health Service are not available, but unofficial estimates of between £80 million—£90 million a year have been published.

Mr. Heathcoat-Amory: May I suggest to my right hon. Friend that he may be underestimating the extent of parallel importing, and that consequentially he is over-remunerating those pharmacists who have access to these drugs? Will he do more to investigate officially the extent of parallel importing and try to prevent this unfairness?

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend will be pleased to learn that the Department is about to hold a new inquiry into discounts enjoyed by retail pharmacists. This will take into account all discounts in the market place, including parallel imports.

Psychiatric Patients

16. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he proposes to establish the procedures provided for in the Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Bill for assessment to be made before people are released into the community from psychiatric institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: I cannot say. As my hon. Friend will be aware, parliamentary consideration of the Bill is not yet completed.

Mr. Greenway: Is my hon. Friend aware that, sadly, psychiatrically sick people have been released into the community without assessment who are incapable of living adequately, who break up their beds, and who terrorise their neighbours? Is it not wrong for people to be released into the community unless they are assessed as having the proper capability to live adequately in the community, often in built-up areas?

Mr. Newton: I understand my hon. Friend's anxieties, and that is why we have been anxious to co-operate with the hon. Member for Monklands, West (Mr. Clarke) over the Bill.

Mr. Tom Clarke: Is the Minister aware that the clause dealing with proper arrangements for hospital discharge was given an enthusiastic reception by those who responded to the Government's document? Will he accept that that clause will lack real meaning unless it embraces joint assessments as between hospital managers and social services departments?

Mr. Newton: As the hon. Gentleman is obviously aware, there is some uncertainty about the precise meaning of the clause, and further discussion of that matter is going on at the moment.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Q1. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in the House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Mr. Dixon: Is the right hon. Lady aware that last year in the northern region over 23,500 jobs were lost in heavy manufacturing industry? Today, Swan Hunter is announcing massive redundancies, on top of those already announced in the shipbuilding industry, the steel industry and the engineering industry, and the last shipbuilding and ship repair facility in my constituency is virtually at an end. When will the Government do something to save our industrial base, or is the right hon. Lady prepared to sit back and allow the country to become what Napolean once described at "a nation of shopkeepers"?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the north-east has suffered because there was a concentration of heavy industries there. That is why regional aid is concentrated on that area, to try to get extra help to go there. As the hon. Gentleman is aware, the order for the second oiler replenshment vessel was brought forward especially for Swan Hunter, subject to price. It had the second of the type 23 frigates, again subject to price, and it can bid for a further two type 23 frigates. So there are good possibilities for Swan Hunter if it can manufacture down to the price.

Mr. Higgins: Will my right hon. Friend now accept the recommendation of the Treasury and Civil Services Select Committee that the House should have an opportunity to debate public expenditure before the beginning of the annual review, rather than after it is all over? In particular, should we not have an opportunity to express our views on priorities, particularly, for example, with regard to the overseas aid programme, following the tremendous public response to the Sport Aid exercise?

The Prime Minister: I am sure that my right hon. Friend will be in order if he makes a speech on any matter relating to public expenditure in the debate on economic policies later today. With regard to overseas aid, particularly as it relates to Africa, I should point out that last year we spent about £550 million, taking into account those sums which were put through the multilateral agencies and our bilateral aid.

Mr. Hattersley: What pressure does the Prime Minister propose to exert on President Reagan to persuade him not to abandon the SALT II agreement and thus jeopardise the prospect of an autumn summit?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman is aware, we regard it as important that the SALT II agreement continues to be observed, and observed by both sides. That is precisely what it means. The right hon. Gentleman is aware that when President Reagan gave warning that unless the Soviet Union complies with SALT II he would make different arrangements from November, he at the same time dismantled two Poseidon submarines in accordance with SALT II. We wish SALT II still to be regarded on both sides, and we hope that it will continue to be so.

Mr. Hattersley: Will the Prime Minister now at least attempt to answer the question? Does she believe that the President should abandon SALT II, or does she believe that what I think she calls "the Russian case to answer" is in itself justification for abrogation?

The Prime Minister: I notice that the right hon. Gentleman will never say anything about the Soviet Union not complying with SALT II. Never, never, never. I make it perfectly clear that I hope that SALT II will continue to be observed on both sides. President Reagan has just observed SALT II by breaking up two Poseidon submarines in accordance with SALT II. I hope that both sides will continue to comply.

Mr. Hattersley: The House and the country know perfectly well why the Prime Minister will not give a straight answer to that straight question. Why does she so regularly humiliate herself and this country by always dancing to President Reagan's tune? Does she not think that in the matter of world peace she has a duty to speak for this country, rather than wait to be told what to say by the President of the United States?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is talking utter nonsense. I hope that SALT II will continue to be observed. The United States is observing SALT II by dismantling two Poseidon submarines. It has left the door open for the Soviet Union to comply with SALT II. I hope that it will do so, because there is a clear opportunity for the Soviet Union to respond positively.

Mr. Jim Spicer: Will my right hon. Friend join me in praising the Dorset police for the firm but fair way in which they handled this so-called peace convoy at the weekend? At the same time, will she accept that most people are puzzled that such trespass and such disruption of a weekend and of our highways can be allowed to continue?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I share my hon. Friend's distaste for this whole matter. If by any chance the law on trespass is inadequate, we shall have to consider amending it.

Dr. Owen: How can President Reagan expect Mr. Gorbachev to visit him in Washington in December if in November President Reagan increases the number of cruise missiles on the B52 aeroplanes? Surely the Prime Minister ought to show her convictions at the Dispatch Box and make it clear that the abandonment of SALT II would be a disaster and that her Government would not support that.

The Prime Minister: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will make it equally clear that if there is an agreement it has to be complied with by both sides. The United States is complying with it. It has given a number of details where it thinks the Soviet Union is not complying with it. The reply from the Soviet Union has not dealt with those non-compliance points. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will at least agree that both sides must comply with the agreement, and the United States is doing so.

Mr. Andrew MacKay: Further to the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Dorset, West (Mr. Spicer), while I am delighted that my right hon. Friend will look at the question of trespass and the law, may I ask whether she is satisfied that the law is being obeyed to the extent that benefits are being properly paid to these hippies? Is she satisfied that their children are being properly educated within the law and that the health legislation is being properly enforced by the health authorities?

The Prime Minister: As my hon. Friend knows, matters such as vehicle registration are wholly matters for the police. He asked about the benefits that these people receive. So that there should be no possibility of fraud or of people appearing at one benefit office having received benefit from another, there is a social security officer attached to them to see that duplication does not occur. *[Interruption.]* I had exactly the same reaction as Opposition Members when I read that, but then I was told that there was a tendency for these people to apply to one office and go on to another one and apply again. The social security authorities thought it important to take action to avoid that.

Q2. **Mr. Dobson** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Dobson: What credence can the Prime Minister place in the reasons that President Reagan has given for withdrawing from the SALT treaty, when he personally misled her over the accuracy of F111 bombers on the raid on Libya?

The Prime Minister: I utterly reject the hon. Gentleman's assertion. He asked what credence I place in the United States agreement on SALT II. The hon. Gentleman will be aware, and I have repeated it several times, that when the President made the announcement he simultaneously acted in accordance with SALT II by dismantling and breaking up two Poseidon submarines. One could have no better evidence than that.

Mr. Squire: When the Cabinet discusses public expenditure in the near future, will my right hon. Friend look in particular at a number of housing aspects, including the desirability of phasing out all bed-and-breakfast accommodation for the homeless, which is both expensive and unnecessary? Will she also consider the reintroduction of improvement grants at a higher level, as they are a classic illustration of the way in which public money can stimulate greater private investment?

The Prime Minister: I notice that if my hon. Friend is proposing additional expenditure he carefully proposes

economies equal to the additional expenditure. I hope that his example will be followed by all right hon. and hon. Members.

F111 Aircraft

Q3. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister if she will list those characteristics of F111 aircraft based in the United Kingdom which rendered their use essential for the United States' attack on Libya.

The Prime Minister: The F111 aircraft based in the United Kingdom provided the best equipped means of carrying out the United States operation against specific terrorist targets in Libya, with the lowest possible risk of Libyan civilian and United States service casualties. As the United States has indicated, the F111 possesses advanced avionics and other capabilities which made it particularly suitable for such a mission.

Mr. Dalyell: Will the Prime Minister name the senior American, or Americans, who told her that the F111s were more precise than the carrier-based aircraft?

The Prime Minister: That was the advice that we received both from across the Atlantic and from home.

Sir Antony Buck: Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we had not given permission for the F111s to be utilised, the Americans would have gone ahead, used less accurate aircraft and there would have been more civilian casualties?

The Prime Minister: As I said when I spoke to the House on this matter, I understand that the raid would have gone ahead in any event.

Mr. Stuart Holland: The Prime Minister referred to the United Kingdom's aid budget to Africa.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The question is about the F111.

Mr. Marlow: What effect has the raid had on Colonel Gaddafi's ability to wage international terrorism?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the raid had a great effect. I believe that it showed that the United States was prepared to use force in self-defence against terrorism. That in itself is a salutary warning.

Mr. Wareing: Will the Prime Minister say what kind of self-defence should be conducted by the Nicaraguan Government against the terrorist in the White House?

Mr. Speaker: Order. That does not relate to this question, which is about Libya. It is a definitive question.

Mr. Wareing: As the United States believed that it was necessary to use F111s——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member is wasting time.

Engagements

Q40. **Mr. Litherland** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Litherland: Does the Prime Minister agree with Mr. Bob Geldof's vivid description of the Foreign Secretary's speech at the United Nations? However crudely it was put, was it not a fair and just assessment of the cant and hypocrisy of this Government's aid to the Third world, compared with the Live Aid events? Does the right hon. Lady realise that her Government are now branded as a Government without compassion?

The Prime Minister: There are 550 million reasons why that assertion is not true. I have already said that £550 million was given by the taxpayer, through this Government, to Africa in one year both in bilateral and in multilateral aid. That was a generous contribution to the problems of that troubled continent.

Mr. Nelson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there will be widespread public support for her restatement this afternoon of the mutual obligations under the SALT II treaty? Does she agree that treaties lightly cast aside may be lightly entered into?

The Prime Minister: Treaties should not be lightly entered into. This one was not lightly entered into. It was never ratified by the United States, because in the meantime the Soviet Union went into Afghanistan, which country it still occupies. Nevertheless, the United States has continued to observe the treaty and I believe that it is anxious that both sides should continue to observe it.

Q5. **Mr. Eadie** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Eadie: As the Prime Minister has shown concern about litter in our streets when viewing from a car window and has asked that something be done about it, I wonder whether the right hon. Lady would consider at long last travelling by British Rail? If she looked out of the window she would see the litter of industrial devastation that the economic policies of her Government have perpetuated, and she might do something about that too.

The Prime Minister: With regard to the implications of the question, an initiative will shortly be announced on improving the environment with regard to litter. With regard to the greater matter, as the hon. Gentleman is aware, regional aid is now slanted towards creating more jobs in those regions, and my noble Friend the Secretary of State for Employment has taken extensive action, all of which the hon. Gentleman will find set out extensively in the new booklet "Action for Jobs".

Hippy Convoy (New Forest)

3.31 pm

Mr. Patrick McNair-Wilson (New Forest) *(by private notice)*, asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Hampshire about the hippy convoy currently occupying Crown land in the New Forest.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Mr. Douglas Hurd): As the House will know, the so-called peace convoy was evicted from Mr. Attwell's farm at Cook's Carey in Somerset last week, and from Yeovil it moved into Dorset. It passed through Dorset during the weekend, causing serious dislocation to traffic on the way, and on Sunday evening moved into Hampshire. I have been in touch with the Hampshire police this morning, and I understand that on Sunday night a group consisting of some 115 vehicles and about 300 people camped on a minor road in the New Forest at Stoney Cross. Yesterday the police ordered them to move for obstructing the highway, and they moved on to the land adjoining the road, which belongs to the Forestry Commission. I understand that the commission is issuing proceedings today for recovery of the land and seeking an expedited hearing. If the commission is granted a possession order, the police will assist the sheriff, as they have at previous evictions.

That is the present situation as reported by the chief constable. Hon. Members from the west country will be aware of the immense policing difficulties created by the peace convoy, because, as anyone whose constituency has been visited by the convoy knows, it is anything but peaceful. Indeed, it resembles nothing more than a band of medieval brigands who have no respect for the law or for the rights of others. All hon. Members will have watched with sadness and anger the ordeal of Mr. Attwell at their hands. It is plainly not acceptable that a group of this kind should inflict such harm and distress on law-abiding citizens and, of course, the law of the land does not accept such behaviour. Criminal powers are available to the police and civil remedies to the dispossessed occupier. Following a meeting recently with two of my hon. Friends, my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor is considering urgently how the civil law procedures might be streamlined in order to grant more speedy recovery of the possession of land.

The criminal law has an important part to play. The police have wide powers to take action where there is an imminent risk of a breach of the peace; they have powers to prevent obstruction of the highway; and they have powers to arrest for offences such as criminal damage. We have strengthened these powers in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1985. The Public Order Bill, if enacted, will further strengthen police powers and it will extend the public order offences in clauses 4 and 5—threatening behaviour and disorderly conduct — to offences committed on private land. I hope that this important Bill will soon be on the statute book.

Understandably people have asked whether any new police powers are required, and in particular whether any change to the law of trespass is required. There are strong arguments against making simple trespass a criminal offence. No one wants to criminalise the activities of a group of ramblers, and no one wants to harass genuine gipsies. But we are discussing with the police, and in meetings held this week with the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association, whether some further strengthening of the law is required and, if so, what form that change should take. It may be that wider consultation will be required. What I can say today is that we are fully aware of the strength of feeling on this issue; that we have the matter very much in hand and that, if any further changes in the law beyond those we already propose are required, we shall not hesitate to introduce them.

We are of course in close touch with the police forces concerned and they are in close touch with each other. No one should underestimate the difficulties involved in policing the convoy, and I am grateful for the messages of support that I have received from hon. Members in the west country for the police in their areas. I am in no doubt about the resolve of the police to deal as they judge best with the criminal offences committed by the convoy. It is not just the criminal law that is flouted by the convoy. The other arm of our strategy must be to ensure effective action not just by the police but by any other public agency whose services the convoy exploits and whose rules it flouts. The peace convoy is not entitled to special treatment for exemptions simply because its members wish to contract out of their responsibilities as citizens.

Mr. McNair-Wilson: Is my right hon. Friend aware that many of the vehicles in which this anarchic group travels, with its own legal adviser, are untaxed, untested and uninsured? Why cannot action be taken to remove those vehicles from the roads. Is my right hon. Friend further aware that the group has, in one form or another, been in existence for many years? The Government should do something now. Passing the problem from my constituents to someone else is no answer. It could potentially be extremely dangerous because one is dealing with a large unruly group. What action is to be taken to break up the group into smaller groups of a manageable size?

Mr. Hurd: I agree with the thrust of what my hon. Friend has said. I agree that it is not enough simply to speed the so-called peace convoy on its way, without regard to its law-breaking activities. If my hon. Friend listened to my statement, he will have heard that that was the thrust of it. The chief constables in the areas involved know of their duty to enforce the law and of the wide powers that they already have. It is for them to make their own judgments about the use of those powers under the operational independence that they have.

The law on the specific point that my hon. Friend raised is that the police have no power to prevent the further movement of an unroadworthy or untaxed vehicle. What they have is the power to issue a summons. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act they will have a new power to arrest an alleged offender if no satisfactory address is given.

Mr. Paddy Ashdown (Yeovil): Will the Home Secretary say why his Government have failed to respond to a request from Somerset county council a year ago about where responsibility for dealing with the matter should lie? Is it not the case that the Government's indecision on the matter has left the police with a law which is either unenforceable or inadequate and farmers with a major threat to their livelihood?

Will the Home Secretary now grasp the nettle, first by providing the police with the resources that they need to enforce the law; secondly, by strengthening the law on trespass, particularly in relation to mass trespass with vehicles; thirdly, by saying where responsibility for dealing with the matter should lie; and, finally, by providing facilities for the hippy convoy so that its freedom does not impinge on the freedom of others?

Mr. Hurd: The hon. Gentleman continues to amaze us with his contortions on the matter. There is no difficulty in understanding where responsibility lies. The police have wide powers under the existing law. They have powers as regards a breach of the peace and as regards criminal damage. Their powers have been strengthened in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act. We are proposing new powers in the Public Order Bill that is being strongly contested in Committee. Those powers would extend the offence of threatening damage to private land and would create a new offence of disorderly conduct. The hon. Gentleman should have a word with his hon. Friends about the attitudes of the alliance parties. I have said, as the Prime Minister said before me, that if, in addition to the powers which already exist and in addition to the powers that we propose in the Public Order Bill, it turns out that further powers are required we shall not hesitate to introduce them.

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. Is he aware that my constituents suffer the attention of these unlovely people? As my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson) has said, this is a long-standing problem of a collection of thoroughly aggressive, anti-social people who are intent, among other things, on provoking the police. If the House passes legislation, as it has, to make it illegal for more than six pickets to congregate at a given place during an industrial dispute, cannot legislation be considered that would start by making it illegal, except for the public services, for more than a specified number of vehicles to travel round the countryside on public roads?

Mr. Hurd: I listened with care to my hon. Friend's suggestion. The trouble with his suggestion and others I have heard is that it might deal effectively with this mischief but would create many other problems which its authors did not intend. That is why, as I have said, we intend to consult urgently. If, in addition to the existing powers of the police and the proposals in the Public Order Bill, we can find a way of meeting this mischief without adding other problems to it, we shall take that course.

Mr. Merlyn Rees (Morley and Leeds, South): Is the same law available to deal with this convoy as was used to deal with the Kent miners during the miners' dispute when, effectively, men from the south were prevented from moving north? Can I assure my constituents in south Leeds, where we often have large numbers of vehicles occupied by travelling tinkers which nobody has been concerned with, that the same urgency will be used to deal with our problem as is now being used to deal with this problem in the south?

Mr. Hurd: Certainly, the law is the same in whatever part of the country it may be flouted. The police have the same power to anticipate a breach of the peace which they reasonably fear and I understand that the Dorset police have been using that power.

Mr. Nicholas Baker (Dorset, North): Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Dorset police on the splendid job they did peacefully to contain the damage, disturbance, fear and the threat to farmers and jobs that were caused by the hippy convoy? [HON. MEMBERS: "Reading".] With your persmission, Mr. Speaker, I shall refer to my notes. Will my right hon. Friend with me deplore the attack on the Dorset police made by the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) with no justification? Does he agree that the problem of such a convoy, which consists of 130 vehicles, derives from its size? Therefore, policies designed to disperse such a convoy and to include a provision in the Public Order Bill which will allow us to deal with large mass convoys of this kind is the correct approach?

Mr. Hurd: It is the intention of the chief constables who have been dealing with this problem to take action under their powers to disperse the convoy. I think that they have had some success in that and the number of vehicles is rather less than that which afflicted the people in Wiltshire a year ago.

I entirely agree with my hon. Friend's first point. I think that it is a little too easy to hold a political position and criticise chief constables for the exercise of their powers under the law. Our job is to ensure that those powers are adequate.

Dr. David Clark (South Shields): I appreciate the difficulties with this particular hippy convoy. However, does not the Minister realise that his announcement today will cause serious concern, especially when he refers to extending the simple trespass law?

The right hon. Gentleman told the House that he was prepared to meet representatives of the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association.

Is he aware that 20 per cent. of the people in this country have walking as their principal recreation? Is he prepared to meet representatives of the Ramblers Association, Youth Hostels Association and Open Spaces Society before he contemplates changing the law? Is he aware of the danger of applying the particular to the general when one is talking about legislation?

Mr. Hurd: It would be a poor day if Home Office Ministers did not meet the National Farmers Union or the Country Landowners Association. As the hon. Gentleman knows, our doors are also open to the Ramblers Association and others. I specifically said that there were strong arguments, which the police sustained with vigour, against a general criminalisation of trespass, not least for the reasons given by the hon. Gentleman. Although we have found some answers in the Public Order Bill, we must search for a way of distinguishing between what the hon. Gentleman is talking about and the undoubted mischiefs which concern my hon. Friend the Member for New Forest (Mr. McNair-Wilson).

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): If the law relating to obstruction of the public highway is adequate, as I think my right hon. Friend has told the House, can he give an assurance that those whom he describes as medieval brigands will not be able to obstruct the highway on further journeys of the so-called peace convoy?

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend knows that the law on obstruction of the highway, as with the law on criminal damage and on breach of the peace, is wide and gives

[Mr. Hurd]

substantial powers to the police. It is for the chief officers of police in each county to decide, in the best interests of their county and according to their judgment of the local position, how, when and with what force to use the powers that Parliament has conferred on them.

Several Hon. Members *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I remind the House that this is a private notice question, not a statement. I shall allow questions to continue for a further five minutes, after which we have another private notice question.

Mr. Joseph Ashton (Bassetlaw): Why is it that during the miners' strike more than 700 people could be arrested simply for shouting "Scab" or stepping off a pavement, and ancient laws called "besetting" could be found under which men could be arrested simply for staring at somebody, yet in this case the Home Secretary wrings his hands and asks for sympathy?

Mr. Hurd: That is not an accurate summary of my statement. The hon. Gentleman will find that action has been taken to arrest and bring to justice a large number of people who have broken the law during the peace convoy. The police will continue to work in the south-west of England and in the hon. Gentleman's part of the world to protect citizens against law breaking from whatever source it comes.

Mr. Robert Key (Salisbury): My constituents in south Wiltshire are angry and frightened, and it gives them little pleasure that the Paddy-come-latelies are now interested in a problem with which they have lived for more than 10 years.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that, if we are to see a peaceful resolution of the problem, it is essential to have a cooling-off period and for an independent committee to report within days, not months, on what has happened? There must be an immediate and properly resourced inquiry, and the travellers must not attempt to battle their way to Stonehenge this year because it will only lead to further real trouble.

Mr. Hurd: My hon. Friend was probably the first hon. Member to take an informed and continuing interest in this matter for reasons which are deeply rooted in his constituency. Therefore, I listen carefully to what he says. However, I am not sure that an independent inquiry of the type he mentioned would do good. We must support the police and the chief officers in their efforts to enforce the existing law, get the Public Order Bill on the statute book, see if any further powers are required, and look at the action of all Government agencies to ensure that we all row together, not towards some great battle or confrontation —I agree with my hon. Friend about that—but towards a resolution of the problem on the basis of respect for the law.

Mr. Donald Anderson (Swansea, East): Is the Home Secretary aware that many of us who have no sympathy for this unruly group are nevertheless frightened by the emotions which the incident has whipped up among Members on the other side of the House? Will he take care to ensure that in the heat of the moment he does not start along the road of criminalising the law on trespass?

Mr. Hurd: The emotion is fairly general and understandable, and I am sure that it is not confined to supporters of one political party. Indeed, the correspondence columns of the newspapers show that. I hope that my statement, read as a whole, reflects to some extent the anxiety which the hon. Gentleman reflects, and deals effectively with the anxiety and emotion which clearly exist.

Sir Eldon Griffiths (Bury St. Edmunds): As one who would oppose criminalising trespass and certainly does not wish the police to be used as the private agents of private landowners, may I ask my right hon. Friend nevertheless to acknowledge that it is far more difficult and causes far more casualties, especially to the police, to remove those people from land which they have no business to occupy than it is to prevent them from going there in the first place? Recalling my right hon. Friend's interest in the Committee on the Public Order Bill, may I ask him to say that when the Bill reaches another place he will do his utmost to ensure that clauses 4 and 5 apply to private land and are effective instruments through which the police can act?

Mr. Hurd: Both those clauses, which deal with threatening behaviour and disorderly conduct, would apply in respect of private land. In the earlier part of his question, my hon. Friend was pushing us very much in the direction in which our minds are already moving. I hope that people will not get the impression that there is no effective criminal law in the matter. The criminal law already gives the police substantial powers to deal with such an incident. The Public Order Bill will add to them.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): The Home Secretary may have the matter in hand, but he certainly does not have it under control. I remind him that last year my hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Dr. Clark) and I, with limited support from the hon. Member for Salisbury (Mr. Key), came close to getting an agreement by which the Department of the Environment would negotiate with the Department of Defence to have suitable land set aside for the group to provide sufficient time to arrange a long-term solution for both a festival and the travellers. *[Interruption.]* If Conservative Members do not think that that is necessary, they had better decide where the houses will come from to house those people if they return to their former way of life.

I remind the Home Secretary that the Secretary of State for the Environment negotiated with the group and other groups to have access to Stonehenge. If the Home Secretary persists in using the police as though they were the Tory party's private army, he will continue to whip up hostility within the police, because the police do not like being used in such a role when it is not necessary, any more than the farmers like their land being used. The Government have caused riots not only in the inner cities in relation to industrial disputes, but in the byways and fields of England.

When the right hon. Gentleman answers, will he take the opportunity to remind the minority in his own party, who are betraying dangerously fascist symptons, that when they talk of making people conform, that is precisely the language that was used in Nazi Germany, and that when people failed to conform they were put in concentration camps and gas chambers? Will the right hon. Gentleman renounce that behaviour by his own party supporters?

Mr. Hurd: Where is the right hon. Gentleman for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman)? We need him badly. The hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley), in an amazing way, followed up his attack yesterday on Sir Kenneth Newman with an extraordinary attempt to turn this into a party political issue. Anyone reading or listening to his remarks must think that they bear no relation to reality. The only serious point he made was his first point. In that respect, he misread the nature and intention of the so-called peace convoy. However many sites were provided for those people, at the public expense, I do not think that they would stay in them or abide by the law.

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Does my right hon. Friend accept that, as the law stands at the moment, this remains a Hampshire problem? Hampshire has a good record of resettling gipsies and travellers, but this is asking a bit much. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is a national problem needing a national solution?

Mr. Hurd: The chief officers of police in Wessex and the Government agencies involved need to continue to put their heads together. I understand from my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment that it is not thought that the peace convoy comes within the definition of the Caravan Sites Act 1968.

Geevor Tin Mine

3.55 pm

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives) *(by private notice)* asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement on the Geevor Tin Mine.

The Minister of State, Department of Trade and Industry (Mr. Peter Morrison): After detailed and careful appraisal, the Department has reluctantly concluded that Geevor Tin Mine's latest proposals do not offer sufficiently robust prospects of commercial viability to justify financial assistance on the scale requested. The company has been notified of this decision.

Mr. Harris: I accept that my hon. Friend had to make a very difficult decision, and that Geevor was clearly the most vulnerable Cornish mine, but does he realise that the decision has caused those in west Cornwall deep dismay? I visited the miners last night and they were in a stunned state that was, I am afraid, giving way to anger. One can understand that.

Will my hon. Friend say something more about the £1 million of assistance that the Government are making available to west Cornwall? Will he also say something about the office that he is setting up? Can he hold out some hope to the rest of the Cornish tin industry? Does he agree that the decision does not sound the death knell for the tin industry but that, hopefully, other mines will survive the crisis and perhaps one day, who knows, Geevor will come back to life?

Mr. Morrison: I agree that the decision was very difficult. We have debated the situation in Cornwall, and particularly in west Cornwall, several times and it is, indeed, very difficult.

My hon. Friend referred to the business improvement services. We hope that within a few weeks we shall be able to set up an office in close proximity to Geevor with three officials to administer the scheme. I cannot at present say precisely where it will be. My hon. Friend asked about the future of the Cornish tin industry. As the house knows, other applications are being processed.

Mr. David Penhaligon (Truro): Does the Minister accept that his decision has destroyed a community, a lifestyle and a tradition, and will inevitably lead to an unemployment rate of 50 per cent in the area? Precisely why did the application fail? The Minister said that it was not vigorous enough. How did it fail the test of commercial viability? In reality, is not the message that if those 300 miners bought clapped-out vehicles that did not have MOTs, some wigwams, and semi-trained dogs, and camped out in Hyde Park, the House and Britain's journalists would show far more interest in this tragedy?

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman has done Cornish tin miners, and particularly those at Geevor, less than a service. All hon. Members have rightly paid great attention to the predicament in which the tin miners find themselves. But the hon. Gentleman grossly exaggerated, when he said that there would be 50 per cent. unemployment, although I accept that the figure is very high and that we are talking about a very depressed part of Cornwall. The application was turned down, like many other applications for regional grants, on grounds of

[Mr. Morrison]

commercial viability. We must have certain criteria. If the hon. Gentleman was in my position, he would have them, too.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): My hon. Friend will know that the Select Committee on Trade and Industry recommended, after a very thorough investigation, that there should be support from public funds for Geevor's programme in order to enable it to produce tin at a reduced price. He could have made the decision that Geevor's future was not viable only by making certain assumptions about the future price of tin. What assumptions did he make about the price of tin in three and five years' time? The present price reflects the fact that banks have unloaded their tin warrants, which were the securities for their loans on money advanced to the London metal exchange. Is my hon. Friend aware that, following the absurdly high prices caused by the cartel arrangement, tin production has fallen by about 40 per cent? I repeat —what assumption did my hon. Friend make about the world price of tin in three and five years' time, without which he could not have made any judgment about the viability of Geevor, Pendarves, South Crofty or Wheal Jane?

Mr. Morrison: Of course I am aware of the Select Committee's recommendations on Geevor, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State intends to reply very shortly to the Select Committee.

My hon. Friend asked what assumptions we made. We looked at the assumptions in the Geevor application for the price of tin at the stage when the company would wish to produce from the current Geevor mining operation. That price was on the best advice that my Department has, within the band of what the price would be in five years' time. At this stage, in view of the fact that applications are being processed and looked at, in particular that from Rio Tinto Zinc, it would be inappropriate to say precisely what the price was.

Mrs. Gwyneth Dunwoody (Crewe and Nantwich): Is the Minister aware that the cost of flooding those mines, in terms of employment and the viability of communities, is far higher than the sum of money that he was being asked to contribute to keep them open? Is he also aware that, once the mines are flooded, he will have handed down the ultimate death sentence to the whole area? I hope that he will be able to sleep at night after that.

Mr. Morrison: I am very much aware of the point that the hon. Lady makes about the community. I am also aware of her point about turning off the pumps. That was why I was prepared to put up a matching £40,000 to keep the pumps operating for a further four to five weeks while we looked at the second application. We wished to see whether there was any proper way to operate the mines commercially in the future.

Mr. David Mudd (Falmouth and Camborne): Does my hon. Friend accept that the Government are facing a major crisis with petty cash solutions? My hon. Friend has suggested that £1 million will be made available to the St. Ives and Penzance areas to bring them through this crisis, a sum that is to be spread over four years. My hon. Friend has told us that it will be administered by three civil servants, who will no doubt require office and back-up accommodation, so that we are talking about an input of probably less than £180,000 each year for the next four years to solve this massive crisis. Can my hon. Friend come up with something more promising, hopeful and positive?

Mr. Morrison: I am sorry that my hon. Friend does not welcome this substantial sum of money. We expect that in the first year £250,000 will be spent. Three officials in the right area to advise on any request is the right number to administer the scheme.

Mr. Doug Hoyle (Warrington, North): Does the Minister agree that he has looked at this problem in the short term rather than in the long term and that this is a short-term solution? Will he re-read the report of the Select Committee on Trade and Industry, which pointed out that if the grant had been made to the mines, they would have been competitive against the prices that might be prevailing in five to 10 years? Would not this have been a practical solution? Does he further agree that the £1 million, spread over four years, will provide only candyfloss and ice cream jobs, which are purely seasonal, when what are needed are real jobs and real help?

Mr. Morrison: I assure the hon. Gentleman that, when we looked at the Geevor application, we did not consider it only in the short term. I appreciate his point, but, because of the current state of the tin market, that would not have been a solution by any stretch of the imagination. We were looking forward five years out from now.

As to the point about business improvement services, the hon. Gentleman will be aware from his experience in our part of the country that the scheme is popular. I am sorry that he does not welcome the scheme, even though he may not agree that it goes as far as he would like it to.

Mr. Kevin McNamara (Kingston upon Hull, North): When are we likely to have the decision on the RTZ application? Is the hon. Gentleman aware that the majority of people employed in those pits are members of my union, and they feel that the decision announced yesterday sounds the death knell for the whole of the Cornish tin industry?

Mr. Morrison: To deal with the hon. Gentleman's second question first, he should not draw any particular analogy from yesterday's decision with any future decision, because each application will be considered on its merits. I hope that we shall be able to give a decision in the next five or six weeks. I would not wish to be precisely tied to that date, because it is important for the company and its employees that we should explore every possible avenue.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): I have every sympathy with the problems of the distressing situation that my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris) and his constituents face, but is it not the case that £25 million was being requested to sustain 375 jobs? Is that not at the rate of about £60,000 per job and, with the best will in the world, is that not rather above the odds for providing Government money to sustain employment?

Mr. Morrison: I am not in a position, because the applications are dealt with commercially and in confidence, to confirm or deny the figures that my hon. Friend has given. The cost per job would have been very expensive indeed.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is there not a big difference between saving the jobs of a few bankers at Johnson Matthey, which cost the taxpayer £100 million, and the 300 jobs that are due to be lost in the Geevor mine? Have not the Government a strange list of priorities when they have before them a paper from the oil industry in which the companies say that, because of the fall in oil prices, they will need some special tax relief from the Government to exploit the small pools of oil in the North Sea——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We are talking about tin.

Mr. Skinner: I am drawing an analogy, Mr. Speaker. The Government are prepared to back the oil barons but not to protect the jobs of 300 miners in Cornwall and prevent the many more hundreds of redundancies that will follow if other pits close. Is not the job of a miner just as important as those of the bureaucrats in the Common Market? We have just paid £250 million to bail out that clapped-out organisation the Economic Community. Are not the jobs of the miners as important as those of the bankers at Johnson Matthey? The Government will use the test of viability to suit the casino economy, but they will not do so to look after people's jobs.

Mr. Morrison: The hon. Gentleman, as always, makes a cheap party political point. If he had been involved, as I have been in the past two months, in all the work put into looking at the first and second applications to see whether it was possible to help, he would not have put such a question.

Mr. Alan Williams (Swansea, West): Is this not a tragic and sad end to an inglorious catalogue of Government blunders and failures? Does the Minister remember that the Select Committee condemned the Government for giving a warning of the impending tin crisis in such imprecise terms as to be worthless? Is he aware that the Committee deplored the Secretary of State's refusal to give full answers to questions, the same evasiveness that was repeated today when the Minister refused to give us information on the future of tin prices?

Does the Minister also recollect that the Select Committee stated categorically that the Cornish tin industry is worth saving and went on specifically to recommend that Government aid be given to Geevor? Why are the Government so contemptuous of a Select Committee when the cost of aid is less than the cost of the unemployment?

Have the Government no sense of the absurd? Does not the Minister realise that an offer of £1 million aid is so derisory as to be a gross insult? Will he recognise that today Geevor has been condemned to die, and the people of Cornwall will never forgive the Goverment for their lack of preparedness, lack of interest, and their pathetic ineffectiveness?

Mr. Morrison: The right hon. Gentleman anticipates the response to the further applications. As he is aware, because I have said so, the only response so far given is that to the application on Geevor. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will soon be replying, as is the parliamentary convention, to the recommendations of the Select Committee.

I would like, as much as the right hon. Gentleman, to give a grant to Geevor so that the mine could become commercially viable. It just did not prove possible. I do not think that, over the next three or four years, the recipients of the £1 million will consider it the gross insult that is suggested by the right hon. Gentleman.

[Mr. Silkin]

tunnel is not something that I would wish to experience. Let us consider the average holiday family on their way to France: a saloon car with husband and wife in the front and the average 2·2 children in the back——

Mr. Crouch: And one in the boot.

Mr. Silkin: No, none in the boot. It is an average family.

They are taking auntie Maggie with them, and it is well known that auntie Maggie tends to become a little frustrated when she does not get her own way. If that car was stuck in the middle of the tunnel, the panic would be colossal. I do not think that the House really understands that. If there is also the danger of fire, the position would be very difficult.

Of course, fire or other hazards can occur on a ferry — there was a sad incident with a hovercraft a few months ago — but nothing could be as bad as such a hazard in the tunnel. That is a fundamental objection to the scheme. Even if the Secretary of State does not agree with me on that, he must not ignore it because it is a terrifying possibility. It is 30 miles of danger.

If the tunnel is meant to achieve anything, it is to cut down the number of ships and seafarers crossing the Channel. It is no use pretending, as the right hon. and learned Member for Dover did—although I accept that he did so in all sincerity—that the ferries will remain and that there will be competition between them and the tunnel. I do not believe that, and neither do they. The effect of building the tunnel will be to destroy the ferries because the costs of crossing the Channel will be brought down to a level with which the ferries cannot compete. We must remember that a great deal of money is required to modernise the ferries, but where will they obtain it? We are talking about the death knell for the ferries. I am enormously worried about that, not least because of the effect on the future of our country and its defence.

During the past few years there has been a monumental decline in ships, shipbuilding and, even worse, the maritime capabilities of Britain's defence. Before the debate I looked at the Defence White Paper, and paragraph 443 is significant. It states:

"Because the United Kingdom's merchant fleet is of great importance for defence needs, the scale of its recent decline has caused some concern. There are, however, still sufficient ships of most of the particular type that we need to enable us to meet our foreseen defence requirements for cross-Channel reinforcement and direct support of Royal Navy operations."

We can see the rusting ships in every port in Britain; That is the truth about the ships. What about the men who man them? Without them, there will not be a Navy. Anyone who has served in the Navy — as the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) and many other other hon. Members know well—knows that we rely upon the Merchant Navy in times of war and trouble, not just for manning support ships but for the Navy itself.

I want the House to be aware of the figures. The latest figures that are available for the number of registered United Kingdom seafarers show that there were 31,434 officers in 1979. That figure has fallen to 13,371. In 1979 there were 28,942 ratings and that figure has now declined to 17,680. There were 6,318 cadets and that figure as fallen to 1,016. That figure represents the future generation of seafarers.

The strongest of my objections, which lies at the root of the issue, is what will happen to our maritime experience and skill. We are an island country. Our past was safeguarded and maintained and we have prospered because our country is girded by the sea and our seafarers were able to protect it. From the figures that I have quoted, and from the Government's attitude, it would appear that the defence of our country does not matter.

I fear that we may be heading for a catastrophe. I do not want to see that happen. I began by saying that a question of principle was involved. I firmly believe that. I hope that the House will reject the Bill.

6.2 pm

Sir Julian Ridsdale (Harwich): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on his excellent speech. He referred to opportunities. I was reminded of the instructions of a ski instructor who said that in skiing there is no security, only opportunity. We have heard two points of view in the debate, and I also congratulate the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) on his interesting speech against the Channel tunnel. I give qualified support to the tunnel but I am concerned about the security aspects of the project and the effect it will have not only on the ferries, but on the oceangoing shipping as well.

Viewed from the east coast, the main effect of the Channel tunnel will on the sea trade in the range from Ramsgate to Newhaven and from Dunkirk to Dieppe. I have considerable sympathy with the fears of my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies and those who represent constituencies on the south coast over the employment effects which the project is bound to have in their constituencies. If the project was being carried out in my constituency, I could understand their opposition and the views of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and those of other Kent Members.

I am naturally also concerned for the future of the privatised Sealink company, a subsidiary of Sea Containers. I applaud that company's action and confidence in pressing ahead with the investment at Bathside bay in Harwich. I was anxious to have the support of the House for my Harwich Parkstone Quay Bill this week to build new quays to expand the sea container traffic to 100,000 sea containers a year. I thank my hon. Friends and Opposition Members for their support for that venture by Sea Containers.

To justify that venture we will need the support of two or three major deep-sea operators. Clearly the acid test will be whether they think such facilites are still justified. I am glad to say that at present the noises are encouraging. That may encourage the right hon. Member for Deptford, who was concerned about the falling numbers of our seafaring people. All hon. Members must be concerned about that.

Is it true that the French Ministry of Transport has announced recently that it intends to build a multi-million franc investment in deep-sea container facilities at Le Havre and improvements in the rail link between Le Havre and Calais? For some time I have been concerned about the subsidies being paid to many continental ports. The building of the tunnel naturally increases the problem for our own ports. Was that point raised in the negotiations?

In October I was told that the then Secretary of State for Transport had taken up the matter with Commissioner Sutherlans, urging him to investigate a number of specific

cases. I am pressing for complete transparency of financial relations between the Community ports and public authorities. What is the present position on that?

Clearly, before the Channel tunnel is built, we must clarify these matters as soon as possible because the range of state and municipal aid to ports in the Community and in France is a potential distortion of competition to United Kingdom interests and will have special effects on sea container traffic and on shipping.

Will the draft concession agreement in its present form be acceptable to equity investors and bank lenders? It is claimed that the agreement contains a host of clauses which are completely uncommercial. Is it correct that the Government are giving complete freedom to change the fiscal legislation without compensation, with no mortgages being permitted to lenders?

Is it true that France is unwilling to stop its road permit system now in force, which limits the number of freight vehicles which can transit the country? Does the draft concession agreement provide that 50 per cent. of profits of the fixed link will be taxable in France? At present approximately 80 per cent. of the profits for short sea Channel traffic are taxable in the United Kingdom. Would a 50:50 arrangement like this lead to the transfer of hundreds of millions of pounds of British tax revenue to the French?

I have considerable doubts about what is happening. Can the Minister tell me what help has been given from the European Community to the Haven ports? Could road facilities be improved at Harwich and Parkston at the same time as progress is being made on the roads to the tunnel? Have we in the United Kingdom had similar grants to our ports as the French have had from the Community?

All these matters are connected with the downturn in the fortunes of our merchant fleet, so eloquently alluded to by the right hon. Member for Deptford. The merchant fleet is vital strategically to our defence, not only across the Channel. We must remember that one of the first requirements of our defence is the reinforcement to Norway. Recently the Danish ferries, not the British, helped to reinforce in the last NATO exercise.

I will support Second Reading but with considerable reservations. I want to hear the answers to the questions that I have asked because I still have doubts on the matter. I hope that the Government will have more frank discussions with the country's port and shipping operators and those on the east coast to include the taxation position of flags of convenience. We are a shipping nation. No matter how enthusiastic we may be about rail users when discussing the Bill, we must remember the figures that we have heard about our merchant shipping fleet and our defence requirements.

All these are considerable reservations and anyone considering the future must bear them in mind. It would be a bitter blow if we were to lose our ferries and our sea container traffic. That is why I am concerned about the subsidies being given to Le Havre and the road links with Calais. I can foresee a time when the ferries may disappear. However, even more serious, what will happen to the sea container traffic? The French are making a dead set for that at the moment, and we must think very seriously about the implications for our merchant shipping fleet.

I welcome the fact that the House has given support for the east coast ports, particularly for the sea container traffic, but I do not think that, just because that support has been given, there will not be considerable problems for the sea container trade. They are now privatised and will have to face any losses on their own. It will be tragic if, because of the Channel tunnel, we lose not only the ferries but the sea container trade to France, with all the consequences that that may have for our merchant shipping.

Therefore, I ask my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to initiate discussions at a high level to consider those questions carefully. Like the right hon. Member for Deptford, I feel strongly about the future implications to our shipping and our seafaring people, and that is why I give this Bill qualified support at this stage.

6.10 pm

Mr. Stephen Ross (Isle of Wight): The hon. Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) made some pertinent points about subsidies on the Continent, but I think that he will agree that they do not apply just to the construction of the Channel tunnel. Many hon. Members have suspicions about subsidies in many other areas which have enabled our competitors on the Continent to obtain contracts. They have often been surprising, given the tightness of the bids submitted by British firms. I hope that those points will be followed up. I have fed the Minister with some information which appeared in a French newspaper about Le Havre.

I have served in the Navy and I share the hon. Gentleman's views on the rundown of our maritime forces, but I think that he will agree that it is not the Channel tunnel that is causing that. It has been going on for a considerable time. A different attitude to taxation of our shipping companies will be needed if we are to retain a merchant shipping fleet at all.

I add my congratulations to those already offered to the Secretary of State. I commiserate with him for having to sit here and listen to yet another speech. However, I remain an unrepentant supporter of the Channel tunnel and I hope to live long enough to travel through it. My alliance colleagues will be voting for the Second Reading of the Bill tonight just as we have supported it throughout as can be seen from the record. I am well aware that the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) has been quoting some of my words. If he is honest he will accept that I have been rather helpful to him. I hope that he will accept that I have stood my ground——

Mr. Crouch: Until the hon. Gentleman's party's candidates in Kent objected.

Mr. Ross: The hon. Gentleman should tell that to the Conservative candidate in the Isle of Wight. It is tit for tat. Fair's fair. They are representing their constituents just as the hon. Gentleman is representing his. The right hon. and learned Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) certainly represented his.

Support for the Channel tunnel does not mean that people's rights can be bulldozed. As I have made clear before, ample time must be provided for all those adversely affected who wish to be heard either by the Select Committee of the House of Commons or, later, by the Lords to submit their petitions. Hence our amendments which will be discussed later tonight.

The hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) quoted from the Select Committee's report on Tuesday. As a member of that Select Committee I signed the report. We said:

"The Committee recommends that this precedent"—

[Mr. Ross]

that of 1974

"be followed, that the fullest possible latitude again be allowed to petitioners and that all those whose petitions conform to the basic requirement of relevancy be allowed to be heard."

I repeat that now because it is important.

Compensation where rightly due must be generous, and every effort should be made to limit the damage to the environment. Clause 8 has much to say on that. The Secretary of State referred to it and I was glad to hear what he had to say.

A decision not to hold the usual full-scale public inquiry is perfectly understandable in view of recent experiences, but that must mean that the Select Committee's duty is to give objectors every opportunity to be heard. I repeat that I hope that it will agree to take evidence in Kent rather than stay in the confines of the Palace of Westminster all the time. If we can have some influence on that it will be helpful.

Mr. Moore: Let me make it clear that that will be up to the Committee, but the character of the motion permits that.

Mr. Ross: I accept that that is up to the Chairman of the Committee, but I am glad that the Secretary of State agrees with that view.

Let me also take the opportunity to clarify my attitude to the short 20-day inquiry which I put forward for consideration before Christmas to the Select Committee on Transport and which I also mentioned in the House before Christmas. That had merit before the decision on the type of fixed link was made. But, as the recent Dounreay inquiry has revealed, cutting hearings short leaves dissatisfied too many whose views are not heard. I have already made that point and I repeat it now.

I am in favour of this project because it is an exciting challenge and, with inflation under control, the time is right. We must at least give the Government credit for that. I regret that was not the case in 1974. Secondly, it helps to move Britain into the 21st century. I fully support the Secretary of State on that. Nearly 60 per cent. of our exports are now said to be going to Europe. Anything that can speed up their delivery and, I hope, cut costs, must surely be right. It also gives our railway system a great opportunity to take some of the traffic off our already overcrowded roads. If this Government are not prepared to tackle congestion the next will surely be obliged to do so. One has only to look at the photograph of the M25 in *The Times* the other day and the correspondence that it evoked. Somebody wrote that there are 25,000 Austin motor cars unsold in Longbridge — thank God! That is understandable.

I should have preferred a rail-only tunnel. I think that the hon. Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) was wrong: there was not to be a rail-only tunnel in 1974. It surely did include a shuttle. Like the late Anthony Crosland, I must be realistic. Pressure on the public purse for any future Administration would probably mean that the project would have to be put on to the back burner when priorities came to be made, and that would be a mistake, one sees that. If one reads the appropriate volume of *Hansard* in 1974 Anthony Crosland said that he had to accept the shuttle, although previously he had been in favour of a rail-only tunnel. I put the actual question to him. It becomes even more of a necessity when private money is being used because the public purse just could not run to it without the extra revenue. If my party were to consider our priorities when we came to power, we would almost certainly have to take the same view. However, that does not mean the demise of all our ferry routes to the Continent.

I have been got at in the Isle of Wight because many seafarers live there who operate ships out of Portsmouth. At the moment the ferry traffic to France from Portsmouth is increasing. A new line is coming in within the next week or two. I believe that competition will be good. Sometimes I wish that we could build a tunnel to the Isle of Wight. My constituents would say that that is the most expensive crossing in the world. I do not think that that is true but it costs between £30 and £40 to take a medium sized car and a couple of children across, and there is no real competition.

I take the point that the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) made in an intervention earlier. Competition is desirable. But ferries will run from places such as Portsmouth, Plymouth and up the east coast because people will not want to drive all the way round to Dover.

Mr. Silkin: I notice that the hon. Gentleman said that they will run from Portsmouth. I do not agree, but he is automatically killing Dover by his speech.

Mr. Ross: I am not killing Dover. Obviously competition will be the greatest for Dover and Folkestone. I hope that Dover will survive, but it will have to be competitive. I do not think that it will necessarily lose out totally, but, yes, let us be open about it, Dover will have a real problem.

The chance of being able to board a train at Waterloo and be in the centre of Paris in three hours 15 minutes or in Brussels in two hours 55 minutes is one that most of us would jump at. I was surprised at the views of the right hon. Gentleman on that. It would be wonderful to avoid the uncomfortable ride out on the Underground to Heathrow, the delays before takeoff, the cramped seat with the tray of food that one has difficulty eating and the likelihood of someone knocking your glass over, more delays at customs and immigration and then another 30 or 40 minutes to get into the centre of Paris or Brussels. All that hardly puts anyone in a good mood for the task ahead, and many thousands do such trips every week, if not every day.

In its latest handout, British Rail predicts over 20 million passenger journeys per annum by the year 2003 and 11·6 million tonnes of freight per annum on the railway. It anticipates running 20 freight trains daily in each direction and that should mean 1,500 fewer 38-tonne lorries on our roads. I am sure that it will not be quoted by a Labour spokesman in this debate, although it may be by the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs), but in a document signed by three or four of the leaders of the rail unions issued to their members only a day or two ago, of which I happen to have a copy, they said:

"Those against the Channel Tunnel have said it will be bad for the Regions, for jobs and have maintained that the money could have been better used for social infrastructure."

The right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) took that line.

The document went on to say:

"Whether we like it or not, the finance for the project is being raised in the international markets. It is venture capital, much of it from abroad, and is simply not available for re-direction by any

Government to projects which it might consider socially more useful. Set against the real job benefits of the project this argument is irrelevant and misleading.

Many more jobs stand to be gained than will be lost by the Channel Tunnel project. There has been no serious challenge to the research findings that the long-term effect of the Channel Tunnel on Kent Coast employment will be broadly neutral. Some jobs will undoubtedly be affected by the new investment. They always are. But it is part of the challenge to the Labour Movement in our campaign for jobs not only to defend existing jobs but to create new ones. There is massive potential for jobs in construction and in associated supply industries, as is shown in the attached appendix. As the party which stands above all for infrastructure investment Labour must be committed to the job creating potential of this project.

Many of the job opportunities are in the Regions, in our hard pressed traditional heavy industries — iron, steel and heavy engineering. Already, companies in the North East and Strathclyde are tendering for the tunnelling equipment. Increasingly, companies and workforces up and down the country will be reflecting in their plans and expectations the contracts that will be flowing through from the Tunnel work. Predominantly, these jobs will be in Labour seats or high on Labour's target list. There can be no doubt that in the next few years the Regions will be major beneficiaries of the construction phase of the Tunnel. Once the Tunnel is in operation, the new speed of connections to continental destinations will place firms in the Regions on a more equal competitive footing with firms nearer to the South Coast."

That is signed by Jimmy Knapp, Ray Buckton, Albert Williams and Bert Lyons. I could not have put it better myself.

The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) has gone but I visited British Rail Engineering Ltd. in Derby this morning. In the carriage works there were coaches for Gabon and for the Congo, former French African countries. We have beaten the French at building rail carriages. They may have to put the bogies on, but the carriages are being built in Britain and being exported to former French African countries. I do not doubt that we can win if we can compete on equal terms with the French.

In clause 1(7)*(d)* of the Bill it would appear that Ashford is to be the base for customs and other controls on the English side of the channel. I would hope that for rail passengers arrangements can be devised so that customs men can operate on the train during the journey as it makes so much more sense and would avoid the necessity to detain or delay people. It should be the same on the ferries——

Mr. Gale: Would the hon. Gentleman extend that argument to the cross-Channel ferry so that it can compete on equal terms?

Mr. Ross: I accept the point that was made earlier. I realise that there are differences because it is a sea crossing, but one can go from Brussels to Paris these days without having to worry about customs. Surely the time must be coming when we can drop some of the restrictions placed upon us when we travel within the Community.

Clause 43 amends the Coast Protection Act 1949 and the removal of materials during the excavation. I think that it has already been said by the Secretary of State, but I assume that agreement will definitely be reached with Kent county council as to the extent and disposal of the material before works begin.

I hope that the Bill will make good progress but that every care will be taken to ensure that the views and representations of those adversely affected are fully taken into account and, wherever possible, without ruining the project, adjustments recommended.

6.23 pm

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): I oppose the Second Reading of the Bill. I should like to quote briefly from a document prepared by the Kent county council, "The Channel Tunnel and the Future for Kent". The key question in the document posed by Kent county council is:

"Can Parliament ensure that national objectives are secured without Kent, the front line county, paying an unacceptable economic and environmental price?"

Referring to the economic consequences of a chunnel for Kent, the document says:

"Once the construction phase is completed it is expected that jobs generated by the operation of the Tunnel will not replace job losses at Kent's ferry ports. East Kent is already struggling with serious economic problems and the ferry business represents one of the thriving industries in this depressed area of the County."

County and district authorities have warned the Government that, even allowing for Fixed-Link work, East Kent can expect a net loss of jobs over the next 10-15 years unless positive measures are taken to stimulate growth. How the ferries respond to the challenge will be critical . . . East Kent needs the earliest possible demonstration of real commitment to its economic future. Left solely to market forces, the benefits could be more likely to focus on West Kent with its easy access to London, the M25 and the airports or"

this is the crucial point

"go to Northern France."

In conclusion, the document says:

"Across the Channel vast sums (of the order of £900 million) are being provided to ensure that the French gain a full share of benefits the tunnel will bring. It would be deplorable if we in Britain failed to make an imaginative investment in the future, and lost out as a result."

That is the Kent county council's view in its own discussion document.

In the debate on 10 February of this year I drew the attention of the Minister of State to a publication called "Lien Fixe Transmanche" which was published by the regional council for Nord-Pas de Calais on the occasion of the Prime Minister's visit to Lille, on 20 January 1986. That document outlines in great detail exactly what the French Government are doing for Nord-Pas de Calais and how their money will be spent to ensure that jobs created by a tunnel go not to England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, or Kent, but to Nord-Pas de Calais.

The Kent county council-sponsored economic development board also published an assessment of the incentives in the Nord-Pas de Calais region of France. In a news release Kent county council said:

"We want a Government commitment to give development incentives in order to compete on equal terms with the French. The Region Nord-Pas de Calais enjoys substantial national and European assistance and Kent will be at a disadvantage unless we can offer similar incentives."

Canterbury city council, writing to the Government, said:

"The Council is convinced that such a link will have seriously adverse effects upon the Canterbury District in particular and upon the whole of North East Kent in general, and that although the short-term effect, during construction, may produce benefits through increased employment, the long term does not bode well for the area mentioned . . . The injection of massive financial support for the infrastructure for the North East Kent area is absolutely essential to minimise the effect of the link, as is huge capital investment particularly for the coastal areas of Whitstable, Herne Bay and the Thanet towns."

As I have said, in the debate on 10 February, I drew the attention of the Minister of State to that situation. In reply, he said:

"He mentioned, as did other hon. Members, a document produced by the French Government about their intended investment in the Pas de Calais. He asked whether we could have a similar document in the United Kingdom. We have that in the

[Mr. Roger Gale]

White Paper, the statements that have been made in the House, the questions that have been answered and the speeches that have been made in the debates. Drawing all those matters together in one document might be helpful to hon. Members. I will consider that point carefully." — [*Official Report*, 10 February 1986, Vol. 91, c. 726.]

So far, no equivalent document has been produced. I suggest that the reason for that is that no policy exists in this country as exists with French Government support for the region of Nord-Pas de Calais.

In the debate on Tuesday 3 June the Minister of State, in reply to criticisms by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and myself about the undue haste with which the Government were pursuing their objectives, said:

"What about the landowners in the area who would like the uncertainty to be cleared up? What about the unemployed who would like the order to go to engineering industries — indeed, to Thanet? Some of the large number of unemployed people in that area would like these jobs to go to that area." — [*Official Report*, 3 June 1986, Vol. 98, c. 868.]

That was widely quoted on national radio and television. I do not think that either my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South or I would quarrel with the need for jobs in an area with 27 per cent. male unemployment — the highest unemployment of any area not in receipt of aid from assisted area status or regional aid.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South will in due course undoubtedly make the case for the port of Ramsgate. I and my constituents believe that the economic regeneration of north-east Kent is dependent almost entirely upon the success of the port of Ramsgate, and the development of that port depends in its turn very largely on the road system in north-east Kent. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) said, if Ramsgate is to compete on equal terms with the Channel tunnel—I know of no reason why it should be asked to do otherwise — then, as the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) said, the ports of Dover, Folkestone, and Ramsgate and those on the rest of the south coast must have the advantage of the same customs system as that in the fixed link. At the moment, as far as I can see, there are no proposals to offer those advantages to the cross-Channel ferries.

If the ports are to compete on equal terms, they must be subject to the same safety regulations as will apply to a fixed link and to rail traffic. As far as we can see, it is considered in order to load traffic on to trains, to secure that traffic by no means other than a handbrake and to allow people to travel in cars while on trains. In short, it is in order to break all the regulations that are currently applied to the same kind of vehicles travelling on ferries.

When one drives on to one of the Sally Line ferries at Ramsgate, the vehicles at the front and rear of the line are secured by hawsers. One is then required to leave the transport, there is no opportunity for customs clearance during the journey and one rejoins the transport at the end of the journey. I would be delighted if my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State could correct me if I am wrong in my understanding of the situation.

To compete on equal terms, the port at Ramsgate must have the same kind of road access that is proposed for the Channel tunnel. In east Kent, we have been fighting for the improvement of the Thanet way for many years. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Couch), when he represented a part of my constituency before it was rejigged in 1983, took up that point on his election to the House. Proposals for the improvement of the Thanet way were accepted by Kent county council in the late 1960s. The proposals were for

"improving Thanet Way to dual carriageway standard with grade separated junctions . . . and land for the scheme has been reserved since that time."

On my election to the House I approached my hon. Friend the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), who at that time had responsibility at the Department of Transport for roads, and I raised again the subject of the dualling of the Thanet way. In the *Lloyd's Ports Bulletin International* for November 1985, the managing director of the Sally Line is quoted as saying:

"We have fought long and hard to get permission to build an access road that will take traffic away from the middle of Ramsgate.

Work could start next year and we could see it completed by 1988. But what now worries me is that if the decision is given to go ahead with the tunnel the construction work will take precedence over schemes like ours.

The tunnel will then serve no other purpose than to take away funds allocated to other road projects."

It is clear that Mr. Kingshott's fears were well founded.

In January, the then leader of Thanet district council wrote to the leader of the county council, Mr. Tony Hart, saying:

"We are naturally apprehensive about the problems which will face Thanet in the event of the Fixed Link being constructed. . . . The unanimous view of the Thanet representatives was that some additional expenditure on infrastructure would help to make Thanet more attractive to new industry and also for tourism. We therefore asked for his assistance in upgrading the A299 – the notorious Thanet Way. Mr. Ridley, of course, pointed out that this road is not his responsibility, as it is a County road. He indicated, however, that he would be sympathetic with our needs and would be willing for the road to be trunked if the County Council so indicated. Having regard to the problems of the County Highways budget (and all other budgets) this seemed a helpful suggestion."

The Kent economic development board, on 20 January 1986, issued a news release saying:

"it is in the Board's view essential that the exceptional incentives being offered by the French Government for investment in the Nord-Pas de Calais region be recognised by the British Government and matched by some similar forms of support and incentive for investment in North East Kent. This area, which already suffers high unemployment levels (reaching 27 per cent. male unemployment in the Thanet area of Kent at present) could otherwise suffer a serious investment blight which cannot adequately be offset by the locational advantages from which Mid and North West Kent should ultimately gain."

It is clear that Thanet and the north-east area of Kent is suffering from investment blight.

The efforts of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South and myself are made so much more difficult because at present, with no link road into Thanet and no suitable link road planned from Thanet to the Channel tunnel, investors regard the Channel tunnel and its approach road as the north-east Kent bypass. That will continue to be the case unless and until the road infrastructure is improved.

In his evidence to the Select Committee on Transport, the planning officer for Kent county council, Mr. Deakin, said:

"Although there will be job generation on the London fringe, nevertheless it remains the fact that Dover, Thanet and Folkestone will be behind the door as one comes out of the tunnel. We are anxious to see that a genuine assessment is made of what has to be done in that part of the world to achieve compensating economic growth."

The county surveyor, in a more recent publication of minutes to the Kent county council highways and public transport sub-committee, said—I apologise to the House

for quoting this in some detail but it is highly relevant —that virtually no progress has been made, in spite of my representations and those of the Thanet district council, the Canterbury city council and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South to all the Ministers involved and to the county council. The county surveyor says:

"At the meeting of this Sub-Committee on the 11 February 1986, Members considered my report on the Department of Transport's request that the County Council give its formal view on the possibility of the A299 Thanet Way becoming a trunk road. Members resolved (Minute paragraph 3561):

That the County Surveyor's report be noted,

that the Department of Transport be informed that the Council wishes to see major improvements to the A299/A253 route to Ramsgate at the earliest opportunity, comprising a dual carriageway along the A299 and realignment of the A253 to avoid the existing problem areas,

" that the Department be invited to give a firm undertaking to complete these works within a reasonable timescale of say, 7 years".

in other words, before the Channel tunnel project can be completed—

"and on that basis, the Council would welcome an initiative to trunk this route;

that the Department also be asked to discuss these arguments with the Council to establish the priority of improvements to Thanet Way and access to Ramsgate and that the issue of trunking the Thanet Way be reconsidered when such discussions have been concluded; and

that Thanet District Council, Swale Borough Council and Canterbury City Council be informed of the County Council's views in this matter and sent copies of the County Surveyor's report together with all of the appropriate Kent M.Ps."

The county surveyor wrote to the director of transport at the Department of Transport's south-east regional office informing him of the resolution in these terms:

"the Minister had met Members of Parliament representing the Thanet constituencies and informed them that trunking the Thanet Way and A253 would not attract a high priority for improvement, particularly dualling."

He went on:

"The Director has written to me stating 'The Secretary of State decided that Thanet Way should remain a local road as improvement schemes were unlikely to attract high priority in the trunk road programme'. He stated that he would look sympathetically at schemes proposed for Transport Supplementary Grant in the Transport Policies and Programme."

The surveyor concluded:

"I made it quite clear that, with current levels of TSG and capital allocation, dualling of the Thanet Way was included in the County's draft Transport Plan for a start in post year 2000. It could only achieve early implementation if the County Council were to receive additional funds from the D.Tp. over and above the level that would otherwise be realised."

There is no indication as yet that funding for that road, over and above the existing grant available to the county council, to improve the Thanet way is likely to be forthcoming. Mr. Michael Odling, the chairman of the development, planning and transportation committee, in a letter to one of my constituents dated 3 June, said:

"The Mitchell Committee on the Channel tunnel has at the instigation of Kent county council commissioned a joint impact study. This is intended to identify the economic problem but also the economic opportunities which can be generated particularly in East Kent. Consideration of the enhancement of the Thanet way is part of that very study. The question of whether or not the Thanet way should be trunked is still undecided. We have been quite willing for the Department of Transport to trunk the road, but only on the clear understanding that much upgrading would take place as a matter of urgency."

Last year, Kent county council authorised the building of a single-lane footbridge to join Whitstable with a new hypermarket development on the other side of the Thanet way. It is quite clear from that action alone that there are no plans either with Kent county council or with the Department of Transport to give the port of Ramsgate a lifeline that it needs and an opportunity to compete, on equal terms, with the Channel tunnel. The most recent communication that I have received from my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Transport, whose presence in the Chamber I welcome, shows that he is prepared to look further at the issue of the Thanet way.

I should like to be able to take a more positive approach to the Channel tunnel. I can see, in the right circumstances, some economic advantages for my constituents in the construction of a fixed link, but only when undertakings have been given that the Department of Transport will wholeheartedly support and, if necessary, fund the dualling of the road, which the port of Ramsgate needs to survive, and which the Isle of Thanet needs to develop economically. If that undertaking is given, the project—I say this quite unequivocally—will have my wholehearted support. Unless that undertaking is given, the Channel tunnel project will continue to have, as regrettably it has had to have up to now, not only the opposition of my constituents but the wholehearted opposition of myself.

6.43 pm

Mr. Alfred Dubs (Battersea): The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) will forgive me if I do not follow him down the paths of the issues which affect his constituency and the neighbouring area. I speak as someone who regrets that we are in the Common Market. I wish that we had never joined it. However, it does not necessarily follow that one has to be an out-and-out opponent of the Channel tunnel project. I judge the proposal, as I have judged others, in three ways: first, its effect on jobs; secondly, its effect on public transport and British Rail; and, thirdly, its effect on the environment. Those are some of the criteria by which I judge the Bill, although there are others which I shall develop later.

What effect will the proposal have on jobs? The Labour party has long supported investment in the infrastructure as a way of providing more jobs and tackling the appallingly high level of unemployment. I take comfort and strength from the views expressed by a number of trade union leaders connected with the rail and construction industries who have talked about the benefit of jobs from the development. I appreciate that it has not been as fully worked out as I would wish. To that extent, I agree with my right hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin). I should have liked to see a tougher analysis of the effect on employment. Nevertheless, I am satisfied that overall, in terms of both the construction and the running of the Channel tunnel, there will be a beneficial effect on employment, especially in the construction industry.

What effect will the proposal have on public transport? I have long believed that as a country we have been entirely wrong to turn our backs on the development of British Rail. We made a major mistake in shifting passenger and freight movement from the railways on to the roads. That policy was damaging. We are not yet able to assess the full price that we must pay for the cuts in rail services that have taken place over the past 20 or 30 years. I fear that British Rail's future is bleak unless, as a country, we make a determined effort to do something about getting more goods carried by British Rail.

I see the development as a shot in the arm and a possible salvation for British Rail freight services. If we decide not

[Mr. Alfred Dubs]

to have a Channel tunnel. I fear that we will be faced with further Beeching-type cuts in British Rail, and freight will move almost entirely to the roads. British Rail will be left with a few inter-city services and a few commuter services, especially in the London area. I do not want to see that happen. I believe that in the next century we shall regret the rail closures that have already taken place. I certainly do not want to see any more. I should like to see more freight moved off the roads and on to the railways.

What effect will the proposal have on the environment? I appreciate that in certain parts of Kent there will be environmental disadvantages in areas where work is carried out and where the tunnel comes out. I think, and hope, that that geographical impact will be limited. If the result of developing the Channel tunnel is that there will be a movement from the roads on to the railways, surely there will be major environmental advantages throughout the country, which I would welcome.

Who will use the tunnel? I think that some hon. Members were somewhat negative or pessimistic in referring to the type of traffic that the tunnel will attract. I shall deal with the issues under three headings, not necessarily in order of importance. The issues which have been raised concern air passengers, motor cars and freight.

Dealing with air passengers, I believe, in contrast to my right hon. Friend, that the attractions of a shorter journey from city centre to city centre mean that many people will no longer fly on the London-Paris and London-Brussels routes. The benefits will go further afield in terms of an incentive to use the railways, if there are quick and efficient services from city centre to city centre. In winter at any rate, the hazards of having to wait at Heathrow airport for fog to clear, ice to thaw and so on, with similar hazards at the other end, mean that it is more attractive to undertake a sensible journey during which you can sit the whole time and not have the dislocation of going to Heathrow airport on the tube, getting out and waiting, getting on to a plane, getting out and having the same process at the other end. Even if the journey, city centre to city centre, was a little longer, many people would prefer to use that path.

Sir Anthony Meyer: I am listening to the hon. Gentleman's remarks with great interest. Is he aware that his argument applies well within France, where the introduction of extremely high speed trains has had a dramatic effect in switching traffic from the air to the train?

Mr. Dubs: Yes. That presupposes, of course, that British Rail moves to the level of efficiency of some parts of the French railway system. I hope that a by-product of the tunnel project will be that British Rail will take note and do something to improve its services.

Mr. Silkin: Is it not a fact that the Channel Tunnel Group talks about a maximum speed of 93 mph between London and the coast as against 169 mph for the TGV to Lyons?

Mr. Dubs: I should like to see British Rail develop higher speed trains, but 93 mph from London to the Channel is not bad to be going on with, and will certainly be an improvement on many of the present services. I take note of the fact that on the other side of the Channel the French have developed a highly efficient rail system, one of the advantages of which is that to which the hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) has referred. I hope that the effect of the tunnel on the number of short-haul flights from London to the other side of the Channel will have a beneficial environmental effect. Much of the burden on airports in southern England is derived from the many short-haul flights that take place. A reduction in the number of planes will have a greater environmental effect, in my view, than a reduction in the number of passengers. I see certain advantages. Those who fly from other parts of Britain and change planes at Heathrow will continue to fly to the Continent, but there will be advantages if the number of short-haul flights direct from the south is reduced.

I take the point that the Channel tunnel may not produce all that much of an advantage for heavy goods vehicles that come from the Continent into Britain. The drivers of these vehicles must have rest periods and there are some advantages for them in crossing the channel by ferry. The effect of the tunnel, however, will reduce crossing times and may well induce goods to be shifted from the roads to the railways. If that happens, we shall not have to worry about drivers having to stop for a rest, for example. There will be no need to onload or offload. I envisage enormous economic benefits to Britain if freight trains can run straight from the north of England down to the Ruhr and through to Italy, which would be a good thing to work for.

Mr. Stuart Holland: In supporting the case for it being possible for a train to go from any part of Britain to any part of the Continent, does my hon. Friend agree that the concentration of traffic at one terminus in London – at Waterloo – could be disadvantageous to precisely the dispersal that he is talking about?

Mr. Dubs: It seems that there will be great advantages if trains, both freight and passenger, can travel from parts of the Continent to the midlands or the north of England as well as to London. If that does not happen, we shall be losing some of the main advantages which the Channel tunnel may offer transport services.

One of the benefits of the tunnel will be the possibility of trains travelling from the north of England directly to various parts of the Continent, which will lead to enormous savings in time and, I hope, in costs, to the point where our roads will be a little clearer of the heavy goods vehicles which now clutter them.

The use of the tunnel by those who are going on holiday, for example, is one of the least attractive considerations. That is one of the least interesting factors from our point of view. Many of those who go on holiday by car may wish to continue using the ferries. The tunnel offers more benefits in the movement of freight than of passengers. Those who are taking their cars abroad way well choose to use traditional methods of crossing the Channel.

What will be the effect on the ferries? My right hon. Friend the Member for Deptford has talked about our traditions as a seafaring nation and the need for us to retain the skills that lie in the ferry services. I agree with that. I would be concerned and disappointed if the consequence of the Bill's enactment was to wipe out the ferry services around our coasts. I believe emphatically that that need not be the outcome and will not be. Demand for movements across the Channel is increasing and can be projected to

continue to increase. To an extent, the ferries and the Channel will be competing for a larger market in the future than that for which they would be competing if the tunnel were to open today.

There are many other ferry routes apart from the short-haul ones from Dover and Folkestone, and I am sure that they will continue to operate. The advantages of using the ports of Plymouth and Portsmouth, for example, if one's destination does not lie directly from Dover and Folkestone, will remain, and to that extent I believe that the ferry services will continue.

It is argued that the Channel tunnel will cost a tremendous amount of money and that we as a nation could use it to better effect elsewhere. If the money were ours to use elsewhere and if we had a Labour Government, no doubt we could use it for things more important than the tunnel.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Like what?

Mr. Dubs: That would be an interesting debate. However, that is not a choice that is open to us, since we are talking about private money, not public money. I have complained for a long time that too much British capital goes abroad and does not benefit the British people. If the tunnel is a way of ensuring that at least part of that capital is used to help our people, that is an advantage.

The most important single criticism of the development, at least from some of my colleagues, is that it will favour the south-east and not the other regions. That is an important argument and one that needs to be thought about. I do not believe that that will be the outcome. If anything, the development will help the regions at the expense of the south-east, other than during the immediate construction period when labour in the south-east will be employed.

If trains from the regions do not stop too much in the south-east and go straight through to other parts of the country, the difference in journey time between north-east England and Italy, for example, and the south-east and Italy, will be reduced. The extra time that it takes to shift goods and people, but especially goods, from the south-east to elsewhere, as well as the extra cost, is one of the reasons why so much investment is concentrated in the south-east. If the net difference in time and cost is reduced —I believe that it will be lessened quite significantly— not only will the tunnel not boost the south-east, it will give some help to the regions.

One or two problems have not been resolved completely, including customs controls. We do not want the Channel tunnel to exacerbate the drugs problems—the importation of heroin, for example, through Heathrow and elsewhere, despite the strenuous efforts of Customs and Excise to prevent it happening—by making it easier for them to be brought into the country. This is a matter of concern and one that needs to be thought about. There are ways of preventing the easier importation of drugs, but we must be aware that it will be difficult for our hard-pressed customs officers to ensure that the flow of drugs does not increase. I have visited Heathrow and watched the customs people in action. They work extremely hard to prevent heroin and other hard drugs entering the country, and I am sure that they will be able to use their skills when dealing with a different mode of travel.

If the Channel tunnel development is to make sense there must be further investment in British Rail services throughout the country. It does not make much sense to have highly efficient train services between London and the Channel and through the tunnel, when nothing is done to help the movement of transport throughout the United Kingdom. Since 1979 the Government have been reluctant to do much for British Rail. I hope the Government, aware of the opportunities, will improve British Rail services throughout the country. We would then have services to compare with those in France and we would not have to yearn for a system as efficient as theirs.

In a debate such as this, we concern ourselves with matters of principle, but there are one or two matters of local concern in my constituency that I wish to mention. Hon. Members will be aware from the schedules to the Bill that there will be developments in the Wandsworth area. Those developments are causing concern in my constituency.

I believe that the development at Stewarts Lane could take place at a lower rather than a higher level and therefore, it would have less impact on the people living in the nearby blocks of flats. There is to be another development in the Sheepcote lane area of my constituency, and I am concerned about the extra noise and disturbance that will be caused to the people living there. I hope British Rail will do its best to minimise the noise and that some compensation will be offered to people whose way of life could be seriously disturbed if there is a heavy increase in rail freight traffic through that part of my constituency.

The proposed plan to service all these trains near Clapham junction in south London has fallen by the wayside. I am persuaded, reluctantly, by British Rail that this must be. It now insists that the servicing will be carried out at the North Pole depot somewhere near Acton. I regret that decision.

A matter of wider interest to my constituency concerns the New Covent Garden market. Some years ago there was a proposal that it should have a railhead. That proposal was not followed through. I regret that, but I shall regret it even more if it is not provided now when other rail developments are taking place very close to the market.

A rail link to the market would be important because approximately 1 million tonnes of fruit and vegetables go through it every year. Between 2,000 and 3,000 tonnes of the produce comes from the United Kingdom; about 200,000 tonnes comes from outside Europe, and about 500,000 tonnes comes from Europe. I have discussed this railhead with the New Covent Garden authorities and British Rail and we agree that it is an interesting and attactive proposition. British Rail should become entrepreneurial and make a bid to carry a fair proportion of the traffic, now coming by road into the market, often in expensive refrigerated vehicles.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): I am sure my hon. Friend is aware that British Rail must put any proposal for such a development to an investment committee on which representatives of the Department of Transport sit. British Rail cannot make such a proposal until it knows that it can meet the necessary economic returns. That is why, when we press for improvements, we are continually told by Ministers that there are no British Rail proposals before the Government. If one considers the other side, we are told by British Rail that there is no point in making proposals because they would not meet the Department's investment criteria. That is the problem.

Mr. Dubs: I accept my hon. Friend's point, but surely the volume of fruit and vegetables going into the market is large enough for this proposal to be a worthwhile and interesting one for British Rail.

There would be great environmental advantages because it would halve the number of road vehicles, vehicles would distribute from the market only, and they would not need to go into the market. There are enormous attractions in getting fresh produce from Spain, which will be an increasingly large supplier to this country, and elsewhere. I am afraid that if the railhead is not developed at the market, some people will look elsewhere for trains that can deliver the produce. That may have a damaging effect on the market and threaten employment there.

I have spoken at some length on national and local considerations and I give the proposal my qualified support. To gain my unqualified support the Government would have to do far more to ensure that the benefits of the tunnel construction stay in this country and also promise further investment for British Rail, and not simply between London and the south-east. I hope the Government will respond to the needs and not make their gesture to British Rail in this project but forget about it in the future. The railways are needed all over the country not just in the south-east.

7.6 pm

Mr. Charles Wardle (Bexhill and Battle): I begin, as other right hon. and hon. Members have done, by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State on his new appointment.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak because the Channel tunnel has aroused a great deal of interest in my constituency and, in some quarters, not a little anxiety. Although I represent a Sussex constituency, the eastern border of it is on the Kent and Sussex county boundary. My constituency is considerably closer to the proposed development areas around Folkestone than many parts of Kent. It is not surprising that many of my constituents, along with the East Sussex county council and the Rother district council, have expressed their views to me. Some are strongly held and have been expressed in a trenchant fashion.

The second and equally important reason for speaking is that I have had the opportunity of discussing the Channel tunnel project with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard). Earlier this year, I spoke in his constituency and saw, at first hand, the entirely understandable apprehension that is felt by some local residents at what they see as a major upheaval right on their doorsteps.

After my visit to Folkestone I was able to tell my hon. and learned Friend that the overwhelming opinion of the people I met was that he was doing an excellent job representing their interests concerning the Channel tunnel project. Therefore, I was not surprised to hear my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State say that my hon. and learned Friend had assiduously represented the interests of his constituents. My hon. and learned Friend is present today, as he has been throughout every debate on this subject.

The House is aware that my hon. and learned Friend cannot speak in this debate, although there are other ways in which he can make his feelings known to his Government colleagues. While the House may understand the convention by which my hon. and learned Friend is bound on such occasions, it may be that some of his constituents do not readily appreciate that he cannot speak today. Therefore, if you will permit me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, later in my speech I shall mention some of the key points about developments in the vicinity of Folkestone which I have discussed with my hon. and learned Friend.

It is by no means my hon. and learned Friend's view alone that I wish to express this afternoon. I have already mentioned that a number of my constituents have expressed concern. One young constituent has recently moved to Bexhill, having been brought up in Cheriton. She feels keenly that the proposals before the House will destroy the landscape of her childhood memories. Sadly, that is a fact. I have been able to tell her only that her feelings have been experienced by people whose houses have been obliterated by motorways and in the last century by the railways. Progress is inevitable.

I support the Channel tunnel. My reaction, which is perhaps typical of many British people, is that although I support the project, I do not intend to use the tunnel. That method of travel does not appeal to me. No matter how efficiently it is run or how quick the journey, it would be a highly claustrophobic experience. I am also worried that it will inevitably be a terrorist target. Nevertheless, there are sound reasons why the project should go ahead.

The project will unquestionably be a special example of private enterprise. Even at a time when about £60,000 million a year is spent on capital investment in the United Kingdom, to have a private enterprise scheme of this scale and nature is enormously important. This afternoon we have heard that during the construction stage about 8,000 jobs will be created on site on this side of the Channel and, equally important, that a further 5,000 jobs will be created for those who manufacture components and fabrications. That gives an idea of the scale and importance of the project, which I hope will shortly be launched.

When the project is completed, the economic advantages to the British economy will be considerable. The Secretary of State has told us that goods will move faster, more cheaply and more efficiently to the European market, and that about £46 billion of exports—about 60 per cent. of our total exports—go to the European Community. Before entering the House I spent years in manufacturing in the midlands, and I cannot impress sufficiently on the House how important a competitive advantage it will be to many manufacturers in the midlands, the north and throughout the country to put their products on a train and have them unloaded in Paris, Milan, or wherever.

It is also worth bearing in mind—this is often overlooked—that exports are vital to our economic performance. People often think of Japan as being in the forefront of export techniques, yet only about 14 per cent. of Japanese gross domestic product is accounted for by exports, whereas ours is nearer 30 per cent. That is why the project is so vital and why the rail link will provide such a competitive advantage. Some hon. Members have also told us what the tunnel will do for British Rail.

There are road links in my constituency and along the south coast that will matter a great deal. They are not simply in Kent. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has already assured us that roads in Kent will be developed, but many of my right hon. and hon. Friends with south coast constituencies are keen that the entire south coast network should be considered in connection

with this project. Anybody who has at any time tried to drive along the south coast from Dover to Devon will quickly have concluded that it is considerably easier to drive to Edinburgh and back for the afternoon than to fight one's way along the south coast. That is the case with the A259 and A27 and beyond towards Devon. As the Channel tunnel project reaches fruition, it is imperative that we have adequate roads to take tourists and some freight traffic to the south-west.

An important part of the project which has been earmarked in the national road plan, the Hastings and Bexhill bypass, is in my constituency and the neighbouring constituency of Hastings and Rye. At present it is time-scaled for the early 1990s, and I, together with many hon. Friends, will press the Minister to ensure that that time scale is firmed up. Indeed, at present there is a public inquiry going on in my constituency about another part of that link, the Pevensey bypass, and the same applies there.

The reaction of my constituents to the proposals is predominantly one of concern about the impact on the environment, the need for proper control of the project and for consultation. A Joint Consultative Committee has been set up, and I hope that district and county councils outside Kent which feel that they will be affected will be able to lodge their petitions before 17 June in the Private Bill Office. The machinery for consultation exists, and I have assured my constituents of that.

Some of my elderly constituents—and I have many—have psychological fears. They genuinely feel that something of our island status will be lost. It is easy to dismiss that lightly as a ludicrous notion, but people conjure with that idea. I would say to anybody who has that idea that if it is now 17 years since man was first able to fly to the moon, surely we have sufficient technology to build a tunnel under 23 miles of the Channel.

Despite all those feelings, the implications of the tunnel and its direct consequences are unquestionably more profound for Folkestone and the area around it than for anywhere else. That became clear from my discussions with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe. Some features of the Bill are of particular concern to my hon. and learned Friend and to me, and we shall continue to seek a detailed and thorough justification for them. If they cannot be justified, we shall press for them to be modified or even eliminated. I shall confine myself to one or two features which are troubling us.

Many of my hon. and learned Friend's constituents are particularly worried about the siting of the railway sidings associated with the scheme at Dollands Moor near the attractive village of Saltwood, and believe that those sidings should be removed, if it is at all practicable. There appear to be two possible alternative sites for the sidings. One is within the terminal site itself and the other is at Ashford, where a less sensitive site could be made available. Many remain convinced that the sidings can and should be removed. I hope that the Government will look carefully at the possibility of resiting the sidings.

Some of my hon. and learned Friend's constituents are unconvinced of the need to provide both access to and egress from the terminal via the western end of the site. It involves the construction of a road across Beachborough park and between the villages of Newington and Peene, dividing one from the other. If egress were to be provided from the eastern end of the site, this road could be eliminated from the scheme. I understand that that change would also have the advantage that traffic would leave the terminal facing Folkestone. That would enhance the prospect of the town benefiting from the construction of the tunnel. Some months ago, when I spoke in Folkestone, local people put that point to me. They feel it is a major project producing a major upheaval, and that there might be a danger of its benefits bypassing the town of Folkestone.

There is widespread concern about the movement of spoil and construction materials. Wherever possible those materials should be transported by rail. I know that this is already the subject of careful consideration by the Joint Consultative Committee which is chaired by my hon. Friend the Minister, and I hope that he will continue to give it careful attention.

On construction, I have discussed with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe the possibility of the appointment of an independent Channel tunnel commissioner who would act as a type of ombudsman. People could then clearly identify the person to whom they could bring their complaints and concerns, and who could take action to remedy their grievances. Both my hon. and learned Friend and I think that that is worth considering.

The main justification for the tunnel is the national advantages that it will bring, some of which I alluded to earlier. However, it is essential that some of the benefits to be derived from that national advantage are devoted to ensuring that the scheme is implemented in such a way as to do most good and least harm in the area facing the biggest impact—the environs of Folkestone. At the end of the [illegible] I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will give a clear recognition of the Government's responsibilities in that regard.

7.20 pm

Mr. Stuart Holland (Vauxhall): The decision to expand Waterloo station to include an international terminal for passengers using the Channel fixed link was taken not recently but five years ago. Neither then nor since have the Government or British Rail agreed to hold a public inquiry into the many aspects and consequences of a decision of that magnitude. Public consultations held by Lambeth council have consistently led to a rejection of the terminal proposal, and have just as consistently been ignored by British Rail and the Government. Lambeth borough council has summarised BR's consultation document, saying that the document sent to

"local authorities explains the works to be included in the Hybrid Bill but it is very thin on detail and deals very superficially with the way Waterloo was chosen in preference to other locations. Lambeth officers have met BR's channel tunnel team to try to get more information but BR were able to add very little about the actual works and virtually nothing about the spin-off effects of the terminal on the Waterloo area."

For example, I understand that we still do not even have elevation design drawings for the terminal facilities at Waterloo. If I am wrong, they must have been made available only recently and petitioners will clearly be unable to make a detailed response to them.

Indeed, the contention that the hybrid Bill procedure is inadequate or even superior to a full public inquiry has already been falsified by the confused and inadequate information that is available on Second Reading. Interested groups and individuals who wish to submit petitions, even with the full co-operation of officials of the

[Mr. Stuart Holland]

House, are confused about what form their submissions must take and where to deliver them. With only three weeks as the period envisaged for the submission of petitions, the instructions that have been issued remain unclear and contradictory. That affects not so much those who can gain access to legal advice and services, as those local residents who probably do not know how they should petition the House.

In March of this year I tabled 35 questions to the Department of Transport and the Department of the Environment and about nine of them were answered satisfactorily. However, as a result of so-called common interest meetings held by British Rail during the past week, we have at long last learnt that the decision regarding Waterloo station was based on "guesses" and that only within the past two months have studies been undertaken of the traffic impact on Waterloo. They are still not available in any proper form.

Considerable speculation has gone on. For example, initial indications are that there could be, as Lambeth council stresses, massive confusion for pedestrians at Waterloo station, with commuters being mixed up with tourists carrying heavy loads. There could be congestion on the Underground; an extra 5,000 cars, with an additional 2,150, on average, in August, and an extra 1 million taxis a year, with 4,300 daily on average in August; an extra 35,000 coaches. The congestion on roads, particularly York road, Waterloo circus and Lambeth circus roundabout, which is implied by the additional traffic is considerable. Given the exceptional interest that hon. Members on both sides of the House have shown, I shall elaborate further in a moment.

My support for the case for dispersal cannot have been hidden from any Conservative Members whose eyesight is in decent condition. But the argument that there should be only one terminal for Channel tunnel passengers originating in, or bound for London—an estimated 70 per cent. of the total number of 7 million to 15 million Channel fixed link passengers — has never been satisfactorily justified. By contrast, the case for dispersal is so strong that it has partially, although implicitly, been conceded in BR's plans to process passengers bound for the south-east at Ashford and to divert some midlands and north-bound passengers to Olympia.

The justification given for having a single London terminal is that the duplication of facilities would be too costly. This is so clearly undercut by the dispersal case that an intention on the part of BR or the Government to develop Waterloo and the terminal complex as a saleable commodity—a privatised fixed asset related to the fixed link system—inevitably suggests itself. I hope that the Minister will address himself to that point.

In any event, why pick Waterloo? The selection of Waterloo from among the possible London sites for a terminal has received no satisfactory justification. British Rail has admitted that no quantified research was done on other possibilities such as Victoria, King's Cross or Olympia. Only since the decision was taken has a study of Victoria been pursued. However, the results of it are not yet available. Yet Victoria has the advantage of direct links with the international airports of Heathrow and Gatwick, as well as having hotel and other tourist accommodation in place. Moreover, it is situated north of the Thames which is where, according to BR's repeated assertions, most London passengers will originate or be bound for.

A case could also be made for Blackfriars. In that context, I shall cite a letter that was addressed earlier this year to the Department of Transport. It came from a Mr. K. Meyer, who is honorary secretary to the National Council on Inland Transport. I did not solicit the letter, but when he discovered that I was making a case for dispersing the traffic in London, to bypass London, he sent me a copy of the letter. It is dated 30 April 1986, and states:

"I refer to the question of the location of the London station. Both this Council and the RDS are convinced that Waterloo is the wrong choice, both as regards linkage to the London road and the public transport network and proximity to the City, as such. This is also the view of Transport 2000 London"

and other bodies.

"We consider that Blackfriars would be a much better location. It is north of the river near to the City, it would be less costly in route alteration expenditure and furthermore it would offer the opportunity of through working using"

I trust that the Minister will address himself to this—

"the Snowhill route"

for traffic north,

"and the Blackfriars bridge".

Mr. Meyer then goes into various technical matters concerning the tunnel curve limitations at King's Cross and he stresses that there are other route possibilities "which could be adapted". The House and the public should address themselves to those issues.

Given that independent endorsement of the case for at least another major station in London, why should it not be possible for passengers boarding in Brussels or Paris to arrive at Victoria, Waterloo or Blackfriars? I accept that there are certain limitations about the lengths of platform involved, but at least then there would be no need to pile the traffic into one terminal with the disadvantageous effects that that would have on the local environment and, in particular, on the overloading of the Underground and of the road network.

I welcome the Secretary of State's invitation that I should go to see him and take with me some local residents and constituents. We shall seek to put that sort of point to him. Hon. Members on both sides of the House are sensitive to the possible impact on local communities. Consequently, I shall not detain the House for long on that point, but it is of great importance to the people who live there.

No consideration has been given by British Rail or by the Government to the destructive impact of their plans on the community in Waterloo. That community has been struggling to survive decades of depopulation and the razing of homes to make way for offices. After 14 years of campaigning, the residents have at last achieved a stable and growing permanent population through the provision of new, fair rented housing with gardens, exemplified in the new Coin street scheme which is within 200 yards of Waterloo station. The residents have also achieved the protection and promotion of basic retail shopping and have resisted pressures to close primary schools. There is a viable community in the Waterloo area and it is threatened by the kind of developments proposed. In addition, the worries expressed by local residents who see their neighbourhood threatened have consistently fallen on deaf ears.

The guide to compensation relating to the tunnel scheme issued by British Rail says that payments for noise and nuisance may be made to businesses that lose custom.

or to owners whose property loses value, but not to ordinary residents whose lives have been made more unpleasant and difficult. One does not need a Nobel prize in cost-benefit analysis to see that this is a sharp discrimination against local people and favours the business community. We should at least reverse that and get a commitment from British Rail and from the Government that for any works going ahead at any station in London local residents will be compensated for damage.

I regret that, because of a prior commitment, I was unable to be present for the whole of the earlier part of the debate. I suggest that if Government Members have not already made the argument for individual compensation to be paid to those who are most directly affected by road works or railroads or other works associated with this project, they should do so. Hon. Members on both sides of the House ought to press for that.

Mrs. Currie: I have listened with great interest to what the hon. Member has said about Waterloo because for the past few months I have been working above Waterloo station. Despite the trains, I was trying hard to listen to what colleagues in the Department of Education and Science were saying. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the most important service that can be offered to a community and to the people in Waterloo is the opportunity of employment? If British Rail were proposing to spend money in my constituency on local stations to provide the sort of increased service that is likely to come through Waterloo, I would be thrilled to bits.

Mr. Holland: I suspect that that is why the electors of Vauxhall elected me rather than a member of the party to which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) belongs. It is not at all clear that there will be anything like the kind of job creation which would thrill her to bits in the refurbishment of the station. I shall come to that point shortly.

Speculation and blight will be a major issue if we have a single terminus. It will be less of an issue if passenger traffic between Victoria, Waterloo and Blackfriars can be dispersed. Pressures for building major hotels in the immediate vicinity or for a change in retail use are obvious. The argument about those pressures will be submitted in detailed form by Lambeth council during the progress of the Bill, and I trust that serious attention will be paid to those arguments. It is evident to people who live around some of the other main stations in London that there will be a transformation in the Waterloo area from owner-occupation and long-term tenancies to short-stay hotels and bed-and-breakfast accommodation, and from resident shopping to fast-food and souvenir outlets.

The history of central London communities, including the one in Waterloo, has consistently shown that, where changes in land use from housing or industry to office and hotel development have been permitted, speculation in property values has occurred and along with that has come long-term environmental degradation. Waterloo has the misfortune to have a higher degree of office development than most other central London areas and has experienced the ensuing speculation and blight. Speculation brings about the razing of houses, the driving away of residents, and the boarding up of sites held by property companies awaiting an even more profitable price bonanza.

Mrs. Currie: Nonsense.

Mr. Holland: The hon. Member for Derbyshire, South says, "Nonsense." I do not know how much time she spends in Waterloo station, but if she cares to come up river a bit to Vauxhall bridge she will see razed sites on both sides of the bridge because of office speculation over a long period. A former Secretary of State for the Environment addressed himself to the problem of blighted streets.

Mr. Tony Banks (Newham, North-West): There have been a number of former Secretaries of State.

Mr. Holland: Yes. One of the many former Secretaries of State in this Government addressed himself to the problem that blighted streets in areas like those that I have mentioned contribute to the fear and insecurity of the remaining residents. That would be more of a problem bearing in mind the sort of increase in crime that would be likely to follow the sort of railway terminal expansion planned for Waterloo.

I take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) who spoke of his anxiety about increased drug traffic on the Channel tunnel link. I am sure that all hon. Members share that anxiety. If there is a single terminal and a single inspection of luggage at customs, what are the implications for immigration procedures? Has the Minister addressed himself to the kind of detention facilities that are likely to be operated? Will they be in the Waterloo area or on the Kent coast? How will the immigration service cope with this? The Opposition would much prefer to see the detention facilities of the Home Office smaller in scale and less frequently filled than they are. But that is a serious matter and so far the Government have said nothing whatever about it.

Lambeth is one of the most hard pressed of the inner city boroughs and can expect no additional resources from the Government. The Bill seriously jeopardises Lambeth's lawful planning powers and thus weakens the basic principle of planning by local authorities. British Rail contends that Lambeth, within its own planning powers, could control the adverse effects that I have described. That is not so, because the Bill will permit British Rail to build "a frontier facility" in Waterloo station and the requirement to obtain detailed planning permission from the local authority has been voided by the Bill.

The Bill disables the usual protections of the planning system precisely in order to prevent the borough from exercising them. I am worried about this because in one of the few replies to the written questions that I put down in March I was given an assurance that Lambeth's planning powers would not be voided. This is yet another example of the way in which the Government, in their undue haste to deliver results, have prejudged the situation and have been misleading hon. Members.

Horrendous traffic congestion in the area is threatening. That is evident from the recent presentation of British Rail's proposed solution to the local traffic problem. It has recognised that there will be major traffic congestion along York road to the west of the station and in the two major traffic circles of Waterloo bridge and Westminster bridge. British Rail's traffic consultant estimates an influx of between 7 million and 15 million additional passengers at Waterloo station. The difference between 7 million and 15 million is rather sizeable and the traffic implications are rather sizeable. There is no indication that the traffic

[Mr. Holland]

system will be able to cope with numbers of that kind. The consultant to British Rail made the argument that traffic congestion would sort itself out or, as he put it:

"achieve an equilibrium as drivers found other routes"

This beggar-my-neighbour attitude means that, as congestion becomes unbearable, drivers will press on to the already overcrowded roads of Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster in order to avoid the traffic snarls around the station. The same traffic consultant's solution to the York road traffic jams is to re-route the traffic from and to the station in such a way as to dump the bulk of it into Westminster Bridge road and thus into Westminster circle and bridge. The York road traffic congestion problem was simply rotated by 90 degrees. It will be for Wandsworth and Westminster to find their own solutions.

I suggest to hon. Members, in particular to those hon. Members who sometimes have to come to Divisions in the House across Westminster Bridge, that on more than one occasion they have found several tourist buses parked on the bridge. It is an attractive place to park if one wants a good view, but they park on the bridge because they can find nowhere else. I urge hon. Members to take seriously the implications of this vastly expanded bus and tourist traffic as well as the taxi traffic.

The House will not take a view tonight on this issue. The Standing Committee and Select Committee procedure that we have adopted cannot take a proper view on it, either. It is in the interests of hon. Members in their use of this House that there should be a public inquiry into the dispersal issue and similar issues — the parking of coaches, over 500,000 trips by private motor cars, and 35,000 additional coaches.

A proper numbers game on rational traffic routeing can scarcely be expected, granted the variation in the estimate of the number of passengers and vehicles that British Rail anticipates will be added to the Waterloo area and station. The temptation to use the highest guess at the additional number of passengers is understandable. Why? Because the income to the Channel tunnel consortium of banks is based upon a straightforward multiplication of fares by users. Hence, the more of the latter, the more profits for the scheme.

On the other hand, when discussing how the additional travellers will be accommodated, the management of British Rail shies away from the higher figure. It says that it is not its own estimate but that of its French partners and that it may be a little high. In fact, British Rail has done no research to convince anyone who might be sceptical that even the lowest guess as to the additional number of passengers can satisfactorily be accommodated.

When pressed to explain their estimate, both British Rail and the Channel Tunnel Group say that the major portion of this new traffic will be won from airlines serving London and Paris. To the extent that it seems plausible, it will surely interfere with another of the Government's current projects — the selling off of British Airways. Potential investors in a privatised British Airways will certainly find it less attractive to buy an asset from a Government who are planning to diminish British Airways' income in a few years.

Moreover, the location of the Channel tunnel terminal at Waterloo will make it more difficult for connecting passengers to reach the airports, just as the planned cancellation of fast boat trains after 1993 will make access to the ferry service less attractive. It is a further example of the left hand working against the right in the Department of Transport. At best, it knows not what it is doing. At worst, it is misleading the public and the House.

On employment, to which the hon. Member for Derbyshire, South referred, we should be aware that the claim that major new employment will result from the construction and operation of the fixed link is unlikely to be substantiated. Tens of thousands of jobs are predicted as the dividend for the ordinary people of Britain, while the investors in the scheme are to realise between 18 and 20 per cent. per annum from their investment. Perhaps their 20 per cent. will materialise, but there are few grounds for believing the promise about jobs.

The promise of 550 jobs to be created at Waterloo by British Rail is to be welcomed, as is any job creation in a depressed inner city area, but we must ask ourselves whether that number of new jobs can be considered a good return on £60 million worth of investment. Moreover, many of the other jobs that are being talked of in offices, hotels and shops would simply relocate existing jobs in central London to follow the new concentration of potential customers. Of those 550 new jobs, 200 are train crews, 20 are maintenance staff and 150 are trained catering staff. I welcome the creation of those jobs, but only 80 will be terminal staff jobs, and I shall be surprised if eight of them go to Vauxhall constituents. In other words, I am not over-delighted by the number of new jobs to be created, as the hon. Lady assumes that I should be.

At the outset, the British and French partners of the Channel Tunnel Group spoke as if they would share out the employment benefits in possibly equal shares, but as time has passed it seems that the potential British share has diminished. First, we learnt that at least one third of the contract value of the scheme must be available to open bids from other EEC countries. Then we learnt that one of the main items of heavy expenditure — the tunnel digging machines—cannot be built in Britain but will have to be obtained from elsewhere, probably from Germany or the United States. Still later we learnt that the contribution of Japanese banks to the aggregate capital for the venture, over £4 billion, is 43 per cent., or £1·8 billion.

In addition to the problems that this will cause for foreign exchange, it is as well to remember that Japan is at present constructing a far more complicated tunnel from northern Honshu to Hokkaido and that it has some of the world's most complicated engineering and electronics industries, both of which are essential to the tunnel scheme. Are we to suppose that, with this dominant share of the project's capital and with the technology for bearing a significant part of the construction, a major share of the employment will not go to the Japanese?

If new jobs result, they are more likely to come from public rather than private investment. One of the most cynical aspects of the Bill is the pretence that it will involve no public expenditure. The public is being asked to pay £60 million for changes at Waterloo, despite the fact that the Government keep claiming that private rather than public money is involved. I urge the Government to think again about dispersal. I, or my right hon. Friends, will seek to press this matter as the Bill proceeds.

7.45 pm

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): Listening to the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), hiding behind that very attractive yellow dinner plate, I was rather

worried about whether he would eventually get to Scotch Corner in discussing the implications of the Channel tunnel link. Many and varied problems are likely to emanate from the development of the Channel tunnel. However, we ought not to lose sight of the very broad advantages that will be made available to this country and to all sections of the community in all regions from the building of the tunnel. Of course there will be restructuring problems in the Kent area. Competition will cause concern to the ferry industry and that concern should not be underestimated. However, substantial additional jobs will be created throughout the length and breadth of the country as the tunnel link is developed.

I am a member of the Select Committee on Transport. Last November we were privileged to travel to Dover where we looked at the existing tunnel works, such as they are. It was a typical November day, with mist and an uneven sea. They were the kind of conditions that would lead one to feel rather uncomfortable on a voyage across the Channel. We descended by vehicle down the existing shaft and travelled about three quarters of a mile to the face where we saw the remains of the original mole, which had lain dormant for the last 10 years. The cutting blades were still jammed into the rock face where they had been left all those years ago. But the tunnel was in perfect condition. It was warm and it was dry. The temperature never alters.

Standing at the furthermost point east of this country, I wondered why we had stopped the work then. I had a feeling of excitement and anticipation when I thought that once again a replacement mole will be churning out the soil as the tunnel proceeds towards France. All members of the Select Committee were aware of the great opportunities and the challenge that the building of the tunnel link will provide for the community in general.

Of course, we shall need to look at the infrastructure, in particular at the roads in Kent and at the road system leading to that part of the country. There are problems now with the M25 and the Dartford crossing. We must ensure that the M25 is adequately strengthened in size and capacity, particularly at the Dartford crossing. Additional Dartford crossing links must be in place before the opening of any Channel link. The additional traffic that is envisaged will probably find, if a new crossing is not made available, that there is a considerable bottleneck when it tries to negotiate that particular part of the M25 under the river Thames.

What impressed the Select Committee most — it certainly impressed me—was the enormous opportunity that is to be afforded to the railways industry. The levels which the industry can achieve in developing its commercial structure are almost without bounds. At a time when it has difficulties in maintaining jobs, principally in the construction side of the industry, the opportunities for building railway rolling stock for European use are substantial.

Although the track gauge is the same throughout Europe, the overall width of rolling stock is not. It is impossible for European rolling stock to ramble over the British Rail system because it would collide with platforms, tunnels and bridges, but it is possible for our rolling stock to ramble all over Europe.

If we are to realise the potential of our railway system and have the trans-shipments of rolling stock and trucks throughout Europe, we can use only existing British rail stock, or, to be more precise, we must build a substantial quantity of trucks and coach rolling stock. That alone would provide many jobs, not only in the British railway workshop industry, but in commercial private industry. The west midlands stands to gain substantially, as a historical builder of rolling stock for more than a century, principally at Metro Cammell in Birmingham, which is anxiously awaiting the decision to go forward with the Channel link so that it can start to quote for the ensuing rail traffic and the building of rolling stock which will be on offer.

The opportunities for the railways to capture commercial road haulage traffic have already been mentioned. There will be a reduction of about 1,000 trucks per day on the roads. That will indirectly play a part in reducing the load on the M25 and Dartford crossings. The traffic from those trucks will go on to rail transport, which will mean a substantial increase in income for British Rail. It has been predicted that the present 2 million tonnes of cross-Channel freight that goes by railway will increase to 50 million tonnes and more by the early 1990s.

The business of rail freight will become so viable that there would be no reason why the ultimate in privatisation could not take place—a railfreight plc. It would be an ideal candidate for further privatisation and investment by the private sector in what will be a substantially viable commercial undertaking. I look forward to that happening.

The amount of exports that we can ship out, which at present causes difficulties, can be shown by coal shipment from our super pits in the north, in the Vale of Belvoir and elsewhere, which the National Coal Board is anxious to develop. The opportunities to ship coal into Europe from our high-speed, high-technology pits must be fairly substantial. There would be a great advantage in merry-go-round trains which would load up in our new super-coalfields, go non-stop into Europe to deliver their coal and then return.

In terms of car shipments into and out of the country, the opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles in transit, to reduce the average transport time from three to four days, to get cars from the factories in the midlands to Europe in two days will lead to a reduction in manufacturers' overheads and costs. But here I give a word of warning. It is all very well to improve the connection between Britain and mainland Europe and to speed the flow of finished and imported goods, but it is not much good if we do not speed customs documentation. It has been suggested that although it takes three or four days for a car to be taken from its factory in Birmingham to its port of destination in Europe, it takes another two days for the customs documentation to catch it up. We should pay close attention to streamlining customs documentation in line with the opportunities afforded by the speedier transit of goods through the tunnel.

The opportunities for passenger traffic are also substantial. It will not be much good if one boards a train in Birmingham and is excessively delayed at the entrance to the tunnel while one goes through the customs procedure. I hope, not necessarily that the trains could be locked upon leaving Birmingham so that no-one could get out or in, but that a system of on-board train customs could be encouraged.

The opportunities for commercial passenger traffic for the railways from the midlands and the north are good and would compare well with those offered by the airlines and the roads, but we should consider building new rail links. There is no reason why a private investor should not

[Mr. Roger King]

consider the possibilities of a high speed rail link from the Dover area to the midlands, bypassing much of London, and developing it as a single-line, high-speed track. Those are all possibilities which come to mind as the tunnel and its links are developed.

Mr. Speed: May I beg my hon. Friend not to pursue this argument if he wants me and many of my hon. Friends from Kent to support him in the Lobby tonight? The high-speed rail link, which was a feature of the 1974 scheme, means death in Kent, Sussex, Surrey and many other counties right up to Warwickshire and Birmingham—the area that he represents. It is not necessary with modern railway technology, and I hope that the matter is dead and buried one and for all.

Mr. King: I accept my hon. Friend's point. Of course it is possible for advanced railway rolling stock to run at very high speed on existing track, but there is no reason why we could not straighten some of the existing track and redevelop some of it into high-speed links. It might require the building of 20 miles of new railway, as has been done round the Selby coalfield. That is one way to develop the links. I was not suggesting an entirely new railway system, although that may bear examination at a subsequent date. That might take place at some time in the future when the temperature of public opinion is more satisfactory than it is now.

Mr. Snape: Perhaps the hon. Gentleman would let the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) know that the high-speed rail link to which he refers—whether a new one or an upgrading of the existing line—would be much less intrusive in Ashford than would some of the road developments that are apparently supported by hon. Members from that area.

Mr. King: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point which should be considered.

Mr. Adley: If my hon. Friend would care to look at the railway map of Britain and recall the history of the south-eastern railway, he would know that less than a century ago, it built a line from Tonbridge to Redhill to Guildford to Reading which still exists and which was identified in the second part of the Beeching report as a major trunk route in connection with the Channel tunnel. We do not need to build new railway lines; we need to invest in the lines that we have.

Mr. King: My hon. Friend is an acknowledged expert on railways, and I shall not even attempt to argue with him. I return to my original point: that development, straightening and realignment is probably what is needed. The Birmingham to Euston line is not the straightest that one could envisage. In several areas, the curves are substantial. That matter could be considered subsequently. It is not a subject that one would consider as a matter of priority.

Hon. Members who represent the north, the midlands and Scotland have made the criticism that the development of the Eurotunnel will act like a plughole in a bath—once it is there, all the business will flow out through it, leaving nothing in the north. That is not the case. The further improvements in communications and the high-speed trans-shipment of bulk quantities of materials by the railways through the Channel link can only improve the viability and future of industries in the north.

One substantial industry that will be improved is tourism. The fact that the European tourist has to make the physical change on to a ferry to come to this country acts as a certain deterrent to making that change and visiting us. The opportunity to be able to put his car on the train, to be whisked through a tunnel at 100 mph, to get off the other end within 30 minutes and to have access to our road system can only encourage tourists not just to come to the south and London but to travel much further north. It is notable that the number of European tourists as opposed to American tourists that we seem to attract to this country in comparison with the number of British tourists who go to Europe is tending to stagnate. We need to encourage better communications and opportunities to get such people to visit our country, and I think that the Channel link will provide that.

I favour the Channel link immensely. I think it is a great challenge. It is a rare opportunity indeed for a generation such as ours to have the privilege of representing our constituents, to be able to make a decision like this that will substantially improve the well-being of society and the well-being of the country and to open up a new future and prosperity for many areas, which is what will happen as a result of the decision that we are about to make. My one regret is the Channel tunnel entrance does not reside within the city of Birmingham.

8.1 pm

Mr. Tony Lloyd (Stretford): If the Channel tunnel entrance were to be located in the city of Birmingham, it might engender greater sympathy in the north of England, Scotland, Wales and other parts of the country that will be severely affected for the worse by the building of the Channel tunnel.

I listened closely to those Conservative Members who spoke in the interests of their constituents in the Kent area who are fearful of development. I have sympathy with their views, which they are well able to put, but I should like to express a view that has largely gone unheard so far in the debate from a different part of the country.

It is almost a sign of the way in which the country is now going that a subject that has such massive regional implications has been dominated so far not only in the Chamber but in its wider discussion by the views of the interests of one region—the south-east. There is, I am afraid, a tendency for many in the south-east to forget that unity, if one is to talk seriously of a nation that is united, depends upon the interests of all parts of the nation being taken into consideration in such a major issue as this. Almost inevitably the Channel tunnel, if it is to be of any benefit, will prove to be detrimental to areas like mine, for reasons that it is difficult to establish.

To illustrate to the House how much the north of England is still dependent on manufacturing industry, I would point out how location decisions have been made in the present recession. In my constituency a company called Sterling Greengate Cables has decided to close its plant in Trafford park, Manchester, and to resite some of the production into its existing plant at Aldermaston in the south of England. The reasons for the decision, I am sure, are commercially logical, but it is obviously a tragedy for the Manchester area.

If Conservative Members who support this Channel tunnel enterprise can convince themselves that the location decision in the case of such a company is more likely to be made in favour of the north of England, they are kidding themselves. It is obvious that there is already a very strong trend in favour of location in what is already the most prosperous region of the nation, because the dominant markets and financial back-up are in the south-east. All that will be enhanced by the decision to build the Channel tunnel. A manufacturer who is considering serving the market not only of the United Kingdom but of the north of western Europe is far more likely to pick a location in the south-east than in the north of England.

Mr. Snape: Why?

Mr. Lloyd: For the simple reason, as has already been observed, that the dominant market of Great Britain is the south-east, and the south-east is most easily served from within that region. The decision to try to serve that region from the north of England may make sense so long as the plant is serving only one nation, but once one is dealing on an international scale, it makes more sense to serve the north of France from the south-east rather than from the north of England.

Mr. Lester: Anything that lowers the cost of transportation is likely to keep people in Manchester and the north where the skills and plant already exist. The fact that one is lowering transport costs and improving the efficiency of access to the markets is more likely to make businesses stay where they are than to move.

Mr. Lloyd: The hon. Gentleman speaks as if this is a one-way equation, but it is not. We are talking of lowering transportation costs in more than one direction with a number of consequences that I will try to expound. The traffic is two-way. To the already greatly weakened manufacturing sector in this country—it has experienced great competitive strain in recent years—there will be added further competitive pressure because, by reducing travelling times from the north of England to Europe, if that be the case, inevitably we shorten the travelling time from Europe into Britain. Hon. Gentlemen should not forget that we have a very high propensity to import. Imports will be increased because the Channel tunnel will make it relatively easier for European exporters to move their goods into the United Kingdom.

Throughout the north and Scotland the idea of a Channel tunnel is greeted with extreme concern and reluctance. The Government are seen as being committed to the interests of just one part of the country and exercising that commitment at the expense of other parts of the country.

I turn next to public spending. My hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) made the point that one of the deliberate myths about the Channel tunnel is that it is all private capital. That is absolute nonsense. We have heard Conservative Members demanding money for the M25 and for the rail network. That money will come not from the private sector but from public funds. Those of us who have tried to get some assistance for investment by British Rail into the north-west have seen how difficult it is to get any public spending in that part of the country.

Mr. Crouch: What about the Windsor link?

Mr. Lloyd: Indeed, it is of great importance that we should have the Windsor link coming through, as it will. It is also important to have a rail link to Manchester airport. However, we cannot persuade the Government or British Rail to put that money in with alacrity. They will put money in the Channel tunnel and into one region which in many ways has more than the national average of investment in infrastructure, but there will be no increase in investment for British Rail or to allow for the development of rail links to other parts of the country. Even were my fears unfounded and the enterprise proved to be to the advantage of the north, we will not be granted the infrastructure investment and rail links to allow us to take advantage of the Channel tunnel. That money will be spent in one part of the country.

The employment benefits will be marginal. The point has been made that investment in the initial project will create jobs throughout the country. Ministers have been pressed on that before, but they have not come up with convincing answers. What guarantee is there that the steel or the machinery will be produced in Britain? None whatsoever. There are sound reasons for believing the opposite. The capital investment will simply create jobs overseas. That will work against the interests of areas outside the south-east, and it will not be in the interests of any part of Britain.

For those reasons, the project is deeply flawed. It is not just a balance of probabilities. There is almost a fundamental imbalance in the arguments that have been put forward. No attempt has been made by the Government to explain the benefits for my region or for any other region. The Government know as well as I do that they cannot put forward a convincing case to show that the investment in this large infrastructure will be in the interests of any region, apart from one small area of the United Kingdom.

8.10 pm

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd), because I share his view that the project is deeply flawed and that the case that was persuasively but somewhat superficially presented by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport when he opened the debate has by no means been made out in the convincing depth that is essential if the House is to approve the project on Second Reading. Indeed, my right hon. Friend seemed almost to have acquired with his seals of office, on which I congratulate him, a pair of rose-coloured spectacles. Although he was fluent, he did not give any evidence to support his thesis on the excitement, the jobs and the benefits for industry that would come our way.

In the interests of brevity, because many of my right hon. and hon Friends wish to speak, I shall not dwell on any of the local issues that concern my constituency. I am sure the House knows by now that I am deeply concerned about them. Nevertheless, I recognise that the tunnel is above all a national and not just a regional project. It will make a permanent change to the geography of Europe. It will create massive trade and development advantages for our competitors, the French. It will shift a great slice of Britain's economic activity towards the south-east of England, and perhaps out of England altogether when one considers the El Dorado style grants to the Nord-Pas de Calais region of France that were referred to earlier. Above all, it will hand out a near-monopoly to one group

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

of private interests on privileged terms and conditions unheard of in this country since the days of benefit of clergy.

Even those of my hon. Friends who support the Channel tunnel concept should have serious doubts about whether the Government have struck the right balance between the public interest and the private interest. My hon. Friends should have sleepless nights about whether we have not already conceded game, set and match to the French. As parliamentarians, we should all be deeply worried by the fact that we are allowing this great adventure to take place at such breakneck speed that only minimal and woefully inadequate parliamentary scrutiny can take place.

If the Select and Standing Committees of this House and of another place are allowed and encouraged to do what the Government have so far signally failed to do, and give all aspects of the mega-project full and careful investigation and amendment, with the public interest at long last given proper priority above, or at least alongside, the private interests of Eurotunnel, we shall end up with a different Bill from the one that we are debating today.

One point that worries me greatly is not seeing the right balance between the private interests, including those of my constituency, and the national and public interest. One of the first steps in getting the balance right means putting the lid on the cornucopia of special privileges to which Eurotunnel seems to think it has become entitled at public expense.

Let me list three of Eurotunnel's special privileges that should be removed, or at least reduced. There is the privilege of having public money spent on a large scale to benefit a private consortium. At the outset of this enterprise we were given the impression that it would be entirely a privately financed project — a piece of mumbo-jumbo that is still being repeated by hon. Members in this debate. Now at least we know differently. We know that a sum of £400 million is to be spent by British Rail and that at least £75 million is to be spent on road infrastructure. We have heard request after request from every corner of the House for more public money to be spent.

This is only the beginning of the story. If the Select Committees do their job properly and respond to the pleas of petitioners for more roads, special grants, compensation funds, extra environmental measures and so on, this will be a much more expensive bill both for the taxpayer and for the promoters. My prediction is that the taxpayers and ratepayers will in the end be footing a bill of at least £1 billion of public expenditure, all to boost the commercial interests of this essentially private development.

The whole basis of the Government's policy towards this private development is set out in their recent White Paper on the fixed link, which was published in February. It is a remarkably slender and deficient document, partly because of its curious inaccuracies and omissions. For example, it was able to reach its sanguine forecast that the Channel ports would suffer a net loss of 3,000 jobs in 1993 only by the device of omitting all mention of Britian's second biggest Channel port, Ramsgate, from the calculations.

There was something much worse about the White Paper. It gave Eurotunnel the privilege of publishing all the consortium's self-servingly optimistic figures on traffic flows, revenues, employment and so on, while the Government deliberately suppressed their own calculations on those vital matters. The Government's justification for this bizarre act of suppression is contained in paragraph 7 of the White Paper, which says:

"The Government . . . does not intend to publish its own assessments of traffic volumes, tolls and the revenue which might be earned by each project."

It goes on to explain why:

"Given the wholly private nature of the financing, it is for the Channel Tunnel Group-France-Manche to produce a prospectus in the usual way, with the necessary detailed analysis for potential investors."

What an extraordinary abdication of responsibility stands revealed by that paragraph. The Government have made their own forecasts on all those vital issues, but they are different forecasts. I happen to know that they are much more pessimistic than the CTG's forecast, but the Government will not publish them in case they upset potential investors. What a con trick, not just on the investors and their Japanese banks, but on the British public as well. Imagine the outcry if any Government published a White Paper on, say, lung disease and printed only the statistics supplied by cigarette manufacturers. Yet that is just the kind of privilege that was extended in the White Paper to Eurotunnel. That is wrong. This is not just a hybrid Bill, but a hybrid project. Taxpayers' money will go in on a large scale to help private investors.

The Select Committees and the Standing Committees must put a full stop to the secrecy and suppression. The Government must be forced to publish the results of their own computer model calculations and their forecasts on traffic flows. Only in that way can we hope to reach the vital truth on certain questions for the taxpayer as to whether he will get value for money and whether the project is truly viable. Therefore, it is vital that we pass the amendment to the committal motion, which will ensure that Committees have the right to send for persons and papers.

I am also concerned that Eurotunnel will be given special legal privileges under the Bill. Some relate to matters such as simplified and speeded-up customs and immigration procedures which would be the envy of every Channel port. The most controversial privilege appears to be that Eurotunnel has won for itself a legal entitlement to disturbingly lower safety standards than those that are enforced on all comparable forms of transport. If I may explain, on all ferries, hovercraft and surface motorail trains in this country the Department of Transport has regulations which include two strictly enforced requirements relating to cars. The first is that passengers must travel in compartments separate from the cars and their petrol tanks. The second is that cars must be lashed down. For obvious reasons those are critically important safety requirements.

Sir Anthony Meyer: Can my hon. Friend recall having his car lashed down when he has been on a cross-Channel ferry? I have never had mine lashed down.

Mr. Aitken: It is usual for them to be either tied down individually or for the first and last vehicles of every row to be tied down so that they are all immobilised — *[Laughter.]* I would not laugh if I were my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer). Eurotunnel has different safety standards from those enforced on the ferries and elsewhere.

In addition, paragraph 52/4 of the Department's guidelines to promoters makes it clear that the omission

was deliberate. Eurotunnel's own brochures illustrate passengers, drivers, children and vending machines in the same compartment as their cars with their full petrol tanks, which shows that the designers are intending to make full use of those relaxed and privileged safety standards. Even if it costs the promoters an additional £100 million to redesign those trains, they must put the safety standards for the chunnel on the same high level as the ferries and hovercraft are legally obliged to uphold. Let us not give Eurotunnel any privileges that may lower safety standards.

We should not be under any illusions that Eurotunnel has anything other than an award of a monopoly from the state. It might not be a total monopoly, but it is one whose nearest legal equivalent in this country is the award of a television franchise. I know something about the business of obtaining monopoly licences from the state in the broadcasting industry. When we obtain a monopoly licence in television—and it can be a licence to lose as well as to make money—it is under the most rigorous conditions. Among other things, the Government authority has the power to scrutinise, in meticulous detail, all aspects of the licence holder's finances and financial arrangements—such things as pricing policy, contracts with advertising customers, cost structures, verification of revenue and true levels of profitability. All those matters are, quite properly, the subject of continuing supervision by the Government authority. That is part of the price that television companies pay to obtain a state monopoly.

Where in this Bill is there any comparable degree of supervision of Eurotunnel on behalf of the public interest? My understanding is that there will be no watchdog mechanisms to prevent monopoly power from being abused, other than the limp wrist of European competition law. That omission makes the Channel tunnel not a competitive free market project, but a monopolistic freebooter's paradise.

Already a whiff of scandal is emanating from some of the deals that Eurotunnel has been able to make by the force of its monopoly power—incidentally, deals in which public money is indirectly heavily involved, to the possible disadvantage of the taxpayer. I shall give the House a specific example. During the bidding process for the concession, the other leading bidders such as Channel Expressway and Euroroute were negotiating with SNCF and British Rail to provide a rail service. Channel Expressway struck a deal with the railways that would have resulted in SNCF and British Rail being charged a minimum of £56 million and a maximum of £112 million per annum for use of the tunnel. Euroroute had a deal at similar prices.

However, once Eurotunnel was able to announce itself as the winning monopoly concessionaire, from its superior bargaining position it was able to extract much more money from the poor old railways. My information is that British Rail and SNCF will pay £140 million in the first year of the tunnel's operation at 1985 prices, rising to £200 million. That is quite a difference from the £56 million to £112 million that the railways would have paid Channel Expressway.

Those tariff arrangements may constitute an effective subsidy by the state railways of Britain and France to the private business men operating Eurotunnel. Therefore, on behalf of the taxpayer I want to know a great deal more about the contract details. Already some eminent figures in the railway world are very concerned about the matter, which privately they have described as a rip-off. However, let us not prejudge the issue—let everything be out in the open, in Parliament and in front of the Committee so that we can judge for ourselves.

On the face of it, it appears mighty strange that the charges to the railways for using the tunnel should have shot up by £100 million per annum now that there is one monopolistic concessionaire rather than three bidders. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the matter, I am sure that my right hon. Friend the new Secretary of State for Transport is far too wily a Cabinet Minister to fall back on the old slogan that these are matters of commercial confidentiality. They are no such thing.

The taxpayer is already forking out £400 million for British Rail's rolling stock, and apparently now has to fork out between £140 million and £200 million a year for British Rail's annual subscription for the use of the tunnel. If the railways have to pay Eurotunnel £100 million a year more than they would have had to pay Euroroute or Channel Expressway, that amounts to an additional £5 billion of public money going out of the Exchequer during the lifetime of the concession. That is surely a matter of the highest public interest for the Treasury, Parliament and everyone else. We must investigate that aspect of the monopoly to ensure that the Eurotunnel consortium is not obtaining some privileged subsidy from the state railways.

Although I am concerned about the privileges of Eurotunnel, my biggest worry relates to the future pattern of our trade with France. Here, I suggest, lies the real threat to our national interest. I fear that we may have already conceded game, set and match to the French. Let us consider for a moment the British cross-Channel transport industry. It is a success story. Measured by revenue, 72 per cent. is in the hands of British ferry or hovercraft companies, with only 12 per cent. being controlled by the French and the remainder by the Belgians and others. The logic behind those figures is that Britain needs more access to Europe than Europe needs to Britain—70 per cent. of the cross-Channel cars, coaches and passengers are British and the majority of freight is transported by British lorries. Unfortunately, most of the advantages of that profitable, labour-intensive supremacy in the cross-Channel transport industry will be lost on the day that the Channel tunnel opens.

The concession agreement provides that 50 per cent. of the tunnel's revenue and profit go to France. Therefore, whatever slice of the cross-Channel traffic the tunnel takes—and according to its merchant bankers the break-even point is 66·3 per cent. of cars—France's market share will leap overnight, at a stroke, from 12 to 50 per cent. of the market—an uplift of 38 per cent., whereas Britain's will go down from 72 to 50 per cent., a drop of 22 per cent. What a great victory for Britain's national interest.

French ascendency will not stop after seizing a larger share of the cross-Channel market. I have read a copy of Plan Transmanche, the state protocol signed between the French Government and the Channel regional area Nord Pas de Calais. It is a document that every hon. Member who cares about this issue should read. His first reaction will be one of admiration, but the delayed reaction will be one of fear of its consequences to Britain. Plan Transmanche is one of the greatest examples of pork-barrel political funding since the days of the Marshall plan.

The French Government have decided to make what they call an exceptional investment effort into the Nord-Pas de Calais region. Its features include a 3 billion francs investment in roads and motorways to the ports and tunnel,

[Mr. Aitken]

a 5 billion francs investment in linking the coastline with the national electrified high speed network, new training schools and institutes, a new high technology education centre, an aquaculture centre, a European marine observatory, large grants for the hotel industry, big action contracts for the coastal resorts, a housing programme, an urban development programme, a campaign for promoting tourism, a major environmental protection programme and a whole range of grants and incentives to attract business to France.

Mr. Adley: Splendid.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend may say that, but the purpose is to attract business to France——

Mr. Adley: We should do the same.

Mr. Aitken: What hope is there of that? That programme will grab so much of the investment action that Kent—and our country generally—will look like a poor little churchmouse by comparison. It is an area of great concern, that should be considered by the Select Committee.

Mr. Faulds: Does the hon. Gentleman not think that it is incumbent upon the Government to publish an English version of the document to which he referred, so that all hon. Members—some of us speak fluent French and some less fluent French—and the less enlightened of our colleagues are aware of this enormous challenge? France is in it, as France is always in it, to get the biggest cut of the cake. It is only fair that the Government should make hon. Members aware of that by publishing an English version of that document.

Mr. Aitken: I agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is incumbent upon the Government at least to place in the Library this important state protocol of France.

The most serious implications of the plan are for Britain's ports. What emerges from that and other pieces of evidence is that the French have again planned for their ports, and this will undoubtedly have a devastating effect on our ports. Under the Plan Transmanche alone, the French will spend 52 million francs modernising Dunkirk, 73 million francs modernising Boulogne, they will add two deep-water berths at Calais, and in other French ports as far away as Marseilles, Toulon and Le Havre even bigger port modernisation programmes are under way. All that is a deliberate strategy.

Mr. Adley: My hon. Friend said a few moments ago that on the day the tunnel opened Britain's market share would fall from 72 to 50 per cent. Is he assuming that on the day the tunnel opens there will be a 100 per cent. traffic transfer, that all the ferries will close down on that day and that all traffic will go through the tunnel? If that is likely to be the case, why is Townsend Thoresen buying new ships?

Mr. Aitken: In his eagerness to intervene, my hon. Friend was not listening to what I said. I said that Britain's share of the Channel tunnel traffic would immediately drop to 50 per cent.

Mr. Robert Hughes: I entirely accept the point made by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) about the French gain plan. It will be a gain plan for the French ports and the French railway system. However, instead of simply cavilling against the French, why does he not ask the Government to institute their own gain plan? That would make more sense.

Mr. Aitken: That is a perfectly sensible option, and the British Government should be asked to spend money on that scale. Even if they were to do that, why should we give away what we already have? My main anxiety about the French plan is that it is designed to seize a very large slice of Britain's ports' business as soon as the tunnel is opened.

At present all cargo coming into this country must enter via a British port. That is self-evident. However, from 1993 onwards a cargo ship from the far east or South America will have an alternative option for a cargo destined for Britain. It might be more convenient, cheaper and quicker even, with some inducements, to offload that cargo at Marseilles and have it shipped through to Britain via the high speed rail network and the tunnel.

The British Ports Association is deeply worried about that. It has forecast that 40 per cent. of its import trade could be lost if the French gain plan succeeds, as it undoubtedly will unless dramatic measures—for which the Opposition Front Bench are asking—are implemented in this country. If they are not implemented, the British Ports Association is correct to suggest that all its 175,000 jobs may be at risk. Not one port in this country will be unaffected and many will be devastated. I hope that we are still enough of a seafaring nation—and I hope that the Government recognise this—to realise that the threat to our ports and our maritime industry will be an explosive political and election issue in the months ahead.

When I started out on what was originally a somewhat lonely road of outright opposition to the Channel tunnel, I did so largely for constituency reasons. I have said nothing about my constituency tonight. However, like my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) I passionately believe that a deep and wounding wrong will be inflicted on east Kent if the tunnel is built unless dramatic new safeguards are written into the Bill.

In the long war of parliamentary attrition that lies ahead of the Bill, Kent will fight its corner, and will fight it well. We will somehow or other take care of ourselves, even if the hybrid Bill procedure has to become the longest marathon in parliamentary history. Something is at stake here that is ten times more important than the interests of Kent, and 5,000 times more important than the interests of the Eurotunnel consortium.

The gravamen of my charge against the Government is that in great haste and in poor judgment, they are hooked on a Bill which is not in the national interest and which will destroy a great deal of our maritime success. The Bill is more friendless than one might think from some of the speeches in this debate. The Bill will grow in unpopularity as understanding of its implications grows in the country. I will oppose the Bill tonight, and I will continue to oppose it.

8.33 pm

Sir Anthony Meyer (Clwyd, North-West): My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) has made a powerful case, but I believe that there is an element of whistling in the dark about it. The debate, with the exception of two lengthy, moaning speeches from the Opposition, more truly reflects the feelings of the country about the project.

I wish to speak unusually briefly tonight. However, I cannot begin without paying a tribute to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. He made one of the ablest ministerial speeches that I have heard in the Chamber for a long time, and it bodes well for his success in his new post.

I speak as an unabashed supporter of the Channel tunnel, and not simply for constituency reasons, although I believe that even my constituency, far away though it is from the tunnel, will benefit because I believe that the project will be of enormous benefit to British Rail, as my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) explained in his eloquent speech. I am in favour of the tunnel because it will lead to an expansion of trade and that must, by definition, be of benefit to this country because this, of all industrial countries, is more dependent on external trade than any other. To moan, as several of my hon. Friends have moaned, that an expansion of trade would necessarily be to our disadvantage is pure defeatism.

I do not want primarily to speak as a supporter of the tunnel. I wish to make a brief contribution as the chairman of the Franco-British Parliamentary Relations Committee and to say a few words about the importance of the project to relations between Britain and France.

It is only natural that hon. Members, properly representing their constituency interests, should worry about whether northern France should receive more benefit from the tunnel than Kent or some other area. We should not forget how badly northern France has suffered from its over-dependence on traditional heavy industries—steel, textiles and now worked-out coal mines. However, to concentrate on these issues is to distract attention from the economic, social and cultural benefits which will accrue to both countries from easier, faster and, above all, more certain means of access between our countries. The tunnel not only facilitates these contacts; it symbolises them. It symbolises a closer relationship between this country and our nearest neighbour.

If we were to allow this project to fail for a second time —the Labour Government ruthlessly cut it out in 1975 — we would undoubtedly do great lasting harm to Anglo-French relations. In fact, we would do something more serious, something which far outweighs the dismal consequences foreseen by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South: we would call into question our reliability as a partner in any international enterprise. If, on the other hand, we complete the enterprise and take it through its complicated parliamentary procedures, it will undoubtedly contribute to a strengthening of our relations with France.

I know that we often quarrel with our nearest neighbour and our closest relation on the Continent. Families do quarrel. None the less, history proves that when relations between France and Britain are bad things go badly for Europe. When relations between France and Britain are good, things go well for Europe. This project is important to Britain, to France and to the rest of Europe and I support it with enthusiasm.

8.38 pm

Mr. David Crouch (Canterbury): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer), who speaks with such experience and knowledge of the French and of our alliance with the French in our hearts and minds and in our trade and defence. It is wrong for some hon. Members like my honourable and dear Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)—he now has that description from me and it will be with him for ever—to describe the fear that they have about the French.

What is wrong with my dear and hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South? Was he born in the Napoleonic era? Is he still hiding behind the Martello towers? Something about my dear hon. Friend makes me believe that he is afraid of the French. He seems to be frightened that they will come marching here. I understand that the French were asked whether they were afraid that the tunnel would provide the Red Army with access to Britain. When asked what they would do about it, the French had a practical answer. They said that they would charge them double.

There has not been a great deal of interest in the debate tonight in this greatest engineering project in Europe for a century. I suppose that that is because it is now taken for granted. I am sorry about that. The House has been thinly attended. As I look across for those great Europeans, the Social Democrats, I see none. I look for the Liberals, but I see none. However, we have had a speech from the Liberal party's transport spokesman tonight. I welcome that because the Liberals are wholeheartedly in favour of Europe, of our being in the Community, and of a fixed link, and so is the SDP. Let us put that on the record, because in some parts of the country, not least in Kent, in Folkestone, Hythe and Shepway, they sometimes talk about being against the fixed link. There are no parties more keen or united in the House than those two parties to have the fixed link, and that must be fully understood.

What is the motivation of those who feel so strongly against the fixed link and the Bill tonight? I respect hon. Members who have strong views. I respect my dear and hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, and I respect my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), who is not in his place at the moment, for their views. I know why they hold them. I am their neighbour in Canterbury and I know why there is a fear of the fixed link in the Channel ports of Dover, Folkestone and Ramsgate. Those ports will suffer a loss of employment over the years when the tunnel is built and working and providing transport under rather than over the sea. There will be a loss of jobs. Of course, there will also be job gains, but those who work on boats and who serve the ferries fear that they will lose jobs, and it is admitted that they will. I understand that.

I also understand those who are against Europe. My dear and hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, in his anti-Napoleonic way, spoke of being against our connection with Europe and France. He spoke about the great development that the French will provide in the Pas de Calais in the Nord region. I have known of that for years. I talked to the mayor of Calais 13 years ago in 1972 or 1973 about that very question. The French are not encumbered by public inquiries or by having to ask constituents what should or could be done. They just go ahead and do it, whether it is a nuclear power station or a collection of nuclear power stations or a vast Sellafield at Cap de la Hague. They do not ask anyone; they just pay through the nose and do these things. They say, "Take it or leave it."

In a way, the French still have a Napoleonic way of doing things. We would say that it is not entirely democratic. I prefer our way. On Tuesday night we debated the need for full democratic rights to be given to

[Mr. David Crouch]

those who will oppose the Bill, and I fully support that. I shall be seeking later tonight to support the demand that more opportunities should be given for such protests from those who are genuinely against this. But to those who oppose Britain being linked to Europe I can only say that it is old-fashioned. It is born out of a fear. I respect the views of the right hon. Members for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin) and for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore), who are against our connection, political and economic, with Europe. They have always said so. They have argued their case succinctly and well over the years, as has my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. So we must say that that is why they do not like it and write that into the record.

But that is not the Government's policy, nor the policy of the British people who, by referendum, accepted that we should be in Europe. All I would say about the Bill is that we are in Europe and we are growing more and more in Europe. Sixty-four per cent. of our exports are going to Europe, so we must give ourselves a greater opportunity to pursue that course and enlarge it. That is essential. To call the link the lifeblood of the British people and the economy would not be an understatement. That is why I support it. As I said the other night, I have supported the principle of the fixed link through thick and thin, and it has been very thick in my constituency.

In east Kent there is a strong fear, not of our being connected to Europe politically or economically, but of having a fixed link which will cause an environmental disturbance and all that the environs of the tunnel will mean — the marshalling yards, the extension of the roads, the engineering activity, the building and the removal of the spoil. I live nearer that part than my constituents—a good 12 miles nearer. I am not worried, but I can understand them being worried, particularly those in the Folkestone-Cheriton area, because they will have it on their doorstep.

I would say only that the future for Britain can be bright for this connection. I look to the future, beyond my lifetime. I am looking to the next century and thinking of my children and grandchildren and their future. I get a warm welcome from schoolchildren in my constituency for the idea of the tunnel. It is a pleasure to talk to sixth formers today. They say that they support me on this, but their parents do not. I can understand that. Who wants several million cubic feet of spoil going through the small narrow roads of Kent?

The Bill is designed not only to build a tunnel but to build it correctly in 21st century manner. I hope that when my hon. Friend the Minister replies to the debate he will tell us something of his consultations through his committee in Kent and the progress he is making on all aspects, but on one aspect in particular about which my constituents have a genuine worry, and that is the environmental impact.

I agree that areas of high unemployment in Thanet, the Thanet towns and Herne Bay and in Whitstable in my constituency, where unemployment is 22 per cent.—in Thanet it is 27 per cent.—there is a fear that with the tunnel built and the wonderful motorway connection to London and the north and the west and the M25 that traffic coming out of the tunnel will come off the train and shoot at 70 or 80 mph out of Kent, bypassing them and leaving them derelict without the opportunity of the employment that will be generated around the tunnel.

The Government must do something, working with the county council, to provide road connections for the Thanet towns, Herne Bay and Whitstable. They must be such that people living there have a proper connection with the tunnel and Ashford. That will enable them to have the employment that such a crossing as this will produce. When London bridge was built, London became a city. Wherever a river is crossed is the juncture where trade begins and communication is possible. This will produce in Kent in 20 or 50 years' time a great opportunity for modern industrial and commercial developments. Of that I am sure. How much unemployment do we see around Gatwick today? It is virtually nil. Industry has grown around Horsham and Crawley because of the communications that Gatwick has provided, and so it will be around Folkestone in the future, but not at once.

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will bear in mind my thoughts about the understandable concern of the people in Kent about the environmental impact and the concern in other parts of the country where people feel that there should be job opportunities for them and that they should be able to get near the job opportunities.

I am not one who has a fear of the French. I am a competitor of the French. I am prepared to have this link across to the Pas de Calais, but I do not expect the French to come here and take command of our market. Nor do I expect us to go through the tunnel and take command of the French market. There will be a bit of each, a bit of competition. It will be fierce, but it will also be fair because the communication will be two-way. Such two-way communication offers us a great future.

Our duty in the House is to ensure that we provide a great future for the country, which will help Scotland, the north-west, the north-east and Wales as well. The direct rail communication will do that. The opportunity of increased trade will regenerate industry in the north, which is so necessary. There are great opportunities. However, we, as representatives of the people, have a duty to see that not only are their views heard and represented, but that something is done to ensure that in this age we build a great engineering project in a 21st century manner and not in the sprawling, disregarding way of the 19th century.

8.52 pm

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): I am happy to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). I use that term because he and I work closely in a whole range of areas. His judgment is infallible when he deals with practical measures on foreign affairs and most domestic issues. But when he becomes theoretic and visionary I am afraid that his judgment slips and his decisions are often pretty misguided. Although there were happy passages tonight about expectations of what we would be doing for our children and grandchildren, I felt that his arguments were not quite based on Dover cliff and the solidity that that area suggests.

I want to take a very different point of view from my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury, and there are a number of reasons for doing so. Because of the damaging implications of Government policies and because of neglect over many years by different Governments, we have a massively decaying infrastructure. We all know that is true, because it hits every one of our constituencies.

And yet we are prepared to see massive amounts of private money going into a totally unnecessary enterprise, such as the tunnel project. Why cannot the Government, particularly a Government who work so closely with British and international business men, give some guidance to those gentlemen who are eager to spend their money not on the improvement of the infrastructure of Britain, but on the monopoly exercise, which the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) was talking about, to their own advantage? Why can the Government, supposedly committed to recreating Britain, not tempt those gentlemen, by various means, into putting their money where it is needed—the decaying sewers, roads, housing, and hospitals in Britain? It is a total misjudgment of how resources should be used.

I mentioned the fact that it is not necessary. We have been talking about this silly idea for years. One of the Labour Government's best judgments in their last period of office was cancelling the damn silly thing. They made a sensible judgment and withdrew what they had launched —the building of a two-line tunnel.

We do not need to travel across the Channel any faster. Aeroplanes by the thousand do the trip every day. We have moved into the Concorde era. If one gets into one of those planes, one arrives 20 minutes before one left. It is ridiculous to think that we will need to travel faster to France to improve our relations and trade.

Mr. Crouch: That is a Luddite view.

Mr. Faulds: Very Luddite, because the benefits will be not to Britain but to France. That argument was extremely well put by the hon. Member for Thanet, South. Everybody has to declare in this matter, "I am not against the French." When we are members of Europe, do we need to make the point that we are not against the French? I happen to be rather more pro-British than pro-French, but nobody could be more committed to our links with France than I am. I am a member of the executive of the Franco-British Council which was set up on the initiative of two fairly distinguished gentlemen, an ex-Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), and President Pompidou, to improve relations with France. The hon. Member for Clwyd, North-West (Sir A. Meyer) is a fellow member of the Council. On this issue we can both be utterly pro-French but disagree profoundly about where the advantages of the exercise will lie. They will accrue not to this tired country under this disastrous Government, but to a French Government who know what time of day it is and are prepared to put Government money into seeing an improvement in every aspect of French life.

One matter which I do not think has been much discussed much tonight——

Mr. Adley: The hon. Gentleman has not been here most of the time.

Mr. Faulds: I have not been here because there are other parliamentary duties. I have been at an extremely interesting meeting tonight mourning——

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. We can do without an explanation of the other meeting. The hon. Gentleman should stick to the matter before the house.

Mr. Faulds: It was a meeting to do with parliamentary matters. Simply, it was— I see your beady eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I shall withdraw any comment on my activities of an hour or so ago.

My third consideration—an aspect that I do not think has been discussed tonight — is whether, in the calculations of these business men, the risk of danger has been taken into account. International terrorism will not go away even if the British, French, German and American Governments, who could play the biggest role in this, do something to remove the main reason for international terrorism— the denial of Palestinian rights. Even if and when that is put right, international terrorism will not subside. It has become part of the international political world.

Weapons will get smaller, but be no less effective. There will come a time, unfortunately probably in our lifetime, when there will be manual atom bombs which can be carried about and detonated. The damage that some misguided idiot could cause with those developments in the confines of the Channel tunnel are unthinkable. It would be a disaster. The thousands of people who would be affected by such an organised accident would be catastrophic and unbearable to contemplate. It would be ridiculous to dismiss that danger as something unrealistic. It is not unrealistic. Anybody who can think otherwise in the present political climate and in the light of the appalling developments in international terrorism is not facing reality when we discuss the construction of the tunnel.

The fourth and most important argument why we should not contemplate this exercise is the damage that it will do to the regions. None of us beyond Watford needs to argue any more about the appalling effect of the industrial policies of this Government on every one of the regions. We shall simply magnify that damage. There will be a concentration of industrial, commercial and every other activity from which Britain makes her living in the south-east of England, even more than it is already concentrated. We shall deprive the regions of developments that could take place if the moneys were more sensibly spent on other aspects of the infrastructure. It is a dishonest argument to pretend that the regions will benefit from this development. It is not true.

The traffic problems will be terrible. Those of us who drive round this corner of these lovely islands know that the traffic problem is becoming worse and worse. One can see how much traffic has increased on the M25, the north circular road and other roads in the south. If it is further increased in the way suggested by this exercise, the roads will become blocked. It is a ridiculous abdication of responsibility on the Government's part that no study has apparently been made of this implication, or, if it has been made, it has not been made public. If the Department has made an examination of what is likely to happen to the traffic flow and traffic congestion once the tunnel is in operation, can hon. Members be made aware of it? Can we be told what the actualities of the damage will be? The regional implications and the traffic implications are the worst aspects of this silly enterprise.

I had not meant to be here tonight because earlier in the day I felt a little flu-ey and I thought, "This is a Thursday and I want to return to the bosom of my family in Warwickshire."

Mr. Roger King: What about Smethwick?

Mr. Faulds: Smethwick is my constituency, where I serve like a parish priest, and Stratford is my home where I go back to the arms of my family.

I had contemplated a happy evening with my feet up, supper brought on a tray, and the usual devotions to which, happily, I am heir. I rang my wife to say that I should be catching what is now, under the appalling new arrangements of the midland region of the railways, the 7.27 or the 7.01. The service has been wrecked over the past few years and the latest timetable, which is six weeks overdue, will be even worse than before in providing the services that the passengers need. However, I diverge and I must not offend Mr. Deputy Speaker. I must keep to the point.

When I rang my wife at tea time to say that I would be catching the 7 whatever it is, she said, "Oh no, you won't. If it is the Channel tunnel vote, you stay and vote." I said, "No, darling, I want to come home." She said, "Wait a minute." She had some friends round for tea — by misjudgment, we live in a very Tory area of Stratford-on-Avon—but not one lady there said, "Yes, let him vote for the tunnel." My wife's advice was, "Everybody here says that it is an unnecessary, silly idea. Stay and vote against it." That is why I have had to impose myself on the House for the past few minutes. I shall be voting against this nonsense.

9.2 pm

Mr. Roger Moate (Faversham): I am alarmed to find myself, probably for the first time, in agreement with many points made by the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds). I am so alarmed that I am almost thinking that perhaps I am on the wrong point. I was glad that he made a couple of points in response to my hon. Friend —do I say my hon. and dear Friend and neighbour—the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). My hon. Friend does a disservice to the debate by introducing into it such ideological considerations as he does and by suggesting that the tunnel is a symbol of a link with Europe, and that those who are opposed to it are, as he went on to say, afraid of the French or against links with Europe.

Let us be clear that we have immensely close links with Europe. Many of us are passionately attached to our association, the closest possible association, with France. Whatever one's view about the European Common Market, which is something fundamentally different from the continent of Europe—these trading arrangements are not identical with the geographical expression of Europe —we are in favour of the freest possible trade with Europe and the removal of obstacles to trade with Europe. I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury would leave alone his obsessional attachment to the tunnel as though it were a symbol or as part of the European Communities Act. It is not. What he sees as a romantic adventure can be seen in contrast with the valid, real and powerful points made by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken).

Mr. Crouch: Powerful Luddites.

Mr. Moate: My hon. Friend is again making an emotional point about Luddites.

Mr. Crouch: It is in *The Times*.

Mr. Moate: I saw the article in *The Times*, but it was as wrong then as it is wrong now. It is offensive to use the term Luddism to contrast his idea of a tunnel, which is hardly modern technology, with the shipping services provided by the ferry companies. Luddism was against progress. Is my hon. Friend saying that the modern ferries, which are a tremendous success story in this country, are so outdated, old-fashioned and inadequate that we must use the term Luddism? That is offensive to the companies which operate the ferries because they have achieved quite remarkable results in recent years. Perhaps my hon. Friend has not seen or been on a ferry in recent years. He talks as if he has not.

We are not talking about a symbolic attachment to the continent of Europe. We are talking about alternative transport modes. We are talking about the contrast between a highly proficient ferry service, which provides a great variety of services around the south and east coasts of England, and a Channel tunnel which in itself can alter quite dramatically the nature of our county. I am not ashamed to sound parochial in that respect. In presenting the case for Kent, I believe that I am also speaking from the national point of view.

Over the past century at least, there has been immense maritime investment in the ports of the south and east coasts of England. The country can be proud of that.

Mr. Crouch: My hon. Friend suggested that I have not travelled on a ferry for a long time. I have certainly been on sea ferries and the hovercraft which is called an aircraft. I think that both are old-fashioned and inefficient ways to travel. Very often they do not keep to time schedules because of rough weather. It is as simple as that. A more up-to-date method of travelling would be by way of a tunnel or bridge. I ask my hon. Friend, who happens to be my Member of Parliament, to bear that in mind.

Mr. Moate: When all our constituents, including those of my hon. Friend, say that the trains run on time, we may have a fairer analogy.

I turn to two points raised earlier by my hon. Friends. My dear hon. Friend and constituent the Member for Canterbury said that we are afraid of the French. There is no suggestion that we are afraid of the French. But we must recognise the prospect of unfair competition from northern France. That is the fundamental point.

As soon as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South listed the many benefits that the French are seeking to give to their industry in north France, hon. Members on both sides of the House said, "We must do the same." I ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Government Front Bench and Members on the Opposition Front Bench whether anyone seriously suggests that either a Conservative Government or a Labour Government would pour into the south of England all the industrial and regional grants and infrastructure investment that go into many of the development areas of this country. We know that that is not realistic. It is fair to ask my right hon. and hon. Friends on the Front Bench, how do we propose to deal with the problem?

The north of France is recognised as an area requiring major regional investment; the south-east of England is not. There is the prospect of unfair competition, but no one has spelt out how we intend to deal with it. I know what I would like as a very minimum for my constituency. I would like more investment in roads such as the M2— the widening of it—and the dualling of the A249 to the port of Sheerness. I would like enterprise zone status for the Isle of Sheppey which suffers high unemployment and

could be adversely affected because of its immensely successful and efficient ferry service. I invite my hon. Friends to say that we could have all that, but realistically I do not believe that any British Government could match the French at their game.

An immensely valid consideration which brings the debate into perspective is the speed and handling of customs formalities. One of the major complaints of business men and private travellers is the delays that occur at our ports. With the prospect of the Channel tunnel, the Government are suddenly offering facilities for the chunnel that will simplify customs formalities and reduce delays. Simplification of customs formalities at our airports and on the ferries would produce a greater saving of time, especially for hauliers, than any saving that would result from traffic passing through the tunnel. We could introduce simplified formalities now and the result would be much greater savings in time and a considerable increase in efficiency in freight handling. The present delays constitute a considerable problem, especially at Sheerness, and the same can be said for other ports.

It will be evident that I am entirely opposed to the Bill, but it would be churlish not to recognise that it is a far better proposition than the one which we faced in the early 1970s. We must recognise that the project does not involve public money, and that is a distinct improvement on the previous scheme. We should recognise that the rail-only link is probably the best of all the options in terms of the environmental impact on Kent. It will probably inflict the least damage on the ferry ports. It would be churlish of those of us who oppose the Bill not to recognise the engineering excitement of a challenge of this sort. We should accept that the tunnel will be a great engineering enterprise.

Having said that, I still say that we in Kent are entitled to put to the rest of the country the problems that will face us. Kent will face the harsh reality, whereas many others will regard the tunnel as a symbol, an abstract idea and a theoretical link with Europe. It will be a harsh reality for the people of Kent, the only community that will have to face the impact of the project on their homes, their farmland and the roads in their county.

People have been talking naively and over-optimistically about the amount of freight that will be carried through the tunnel, especially by long-distance trains. The prospect for long-distance freight haulage are much more limited than that for which some have allowed. The proposed Channel link, like the one that was put forward in the 1970s, is essentially a rolling motorway. That is its main claim to financial viability. Most industrialists, except for those who happen to engage in major bulk deliveries or who are located in the right places, will continue to use their lorries. The lorries will still be driven down to a south coast terminal to cross the Channel by means of the rolling motorway.

Not all lorry operators will use the M20. They will not all confine themselves to the road that the Government believe is the right one for the tunnel. They will flow along every major road and all the tributary roads throughout the area. The greatest environmental damage to be inflicted upon Kent will be caused by the many and heavier lorries that will travel to the tunnel. I suspect that the rail lobby will be greatly disappointed by the increase in long-distance traffic volumnes.

The tunnel has been presented as something that will offer faster, easier, more reliable and cheaper communications. That is not true. None of those claims is valid. How much cheaper will it be? The answer is a few per cent. Is that really worth the sacrifices that Kent will have to make in lost jobs at the ports and damage to maritime interests? Are slightly cheaper prices worth such sacrifices? I should have thought not. The saving in time will be an hour at the very most. Is it worth the price to save one hour when so many other considerations make journeys so much slower? The tunnel will not offer significantly faster travel to the continent and it will not be significantly cheaper. Reliability remains to be seen.

If more damage is done to the ferry industry than is forecast, we may end up with a monopoly situation. Therefore, one industrial dispute on that tunnel could suddenly mean that many potential travellers would find themselves without an alternative means of transport. We could become increasingly dependent upon an increasingly unreliable and neo-monopolistic form of transport. On those grounds, the project does not seem appealing.

If the forecasts are over-optimistic — and I believe them to be so — the only way in which the tunnel will pay its way is by a price war. If a price war takes place, the ferries will be pushed out of business. All the fears that we have been putting forward would be realised and we would be worse off.

For all those reasons, I believe that the people of Kent are right to spell out the harsh realities and to say that they do not want the Bill. They do not believe that the case for the project has been proved. I do not believe that the quality of life of the British people will be enhanced. If one asks people — in or out of Kent — whether they wish to travel by tunnel, they will say no. Basically, people would rather stay on the surface and travel by sea than go in a tunnel.

Those who are in favour of the project either support it for ideological reasons or are members of the rail lobby, which is immensely enthusiastic about it. If we ask ordinary people whether they feel that their quality of life will be enhanced, I think that they will say no.

It is a privately funded project and to that extent it is fine. It is a better project than it might have been because it is a rail tunnel. We in Parliament are being asked whether we think it is a good thing for Britain and whether it will enhance the quality of life. We are entitled to say yes or no. I assuredly say no. It is not good for this country, it will not make it a better place, and we should reject the Bill.

9.16 pm

Mr. Keith Speed (Ashford): Having listened to my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) and other hon. Members who have spoken, I am bound to say that if this country's economic survival depends upon the optimism that they have shown, we are going down the plughole in a big way.

The Channel tunnel is the biggest construction project that has been attempted in Europe, perhaps the biggest this century. It offers all sorts of things for the country, economically and environmentally. We have heard hon. Members on both sides of the House take the worst case in each area and argue that the whole thing is desperately bad and wrong. They believe that we should throw up our

[Mr. Keith Speed]

hands in horror and leave the whole thing to the French, who will make a great go of Calais, and that we cannot compete in Kent. I absolutely reject that pessimism.

One argument that has been advanced against the project is that it will exceed its estimated cost and not be completed in time. The British civil engineering industry has an unrivalled reputation throughout the world. Terminal 4 was completed within cost and within time, and the various motorway schemes and the fantastic new airport that has been completed in the Falklands bear witness to my contention. We can do the job, and no doubt we will do it, because, after all, it is a medium-technology scheme.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) argued that, because the new road and rail improvements will be associated with the tunnel, public money will be used to help a private scheme. That is a fallacious argument. When the M20, the M2 and the Lydden diversion to the A2 were being built, I did not hear my hon. Friend or anyone else argue that that was helping the ferry operators. Yet the justification for those routes was the ferry traffic going to Folkestone and Dover. Whether or not the fixed link is developed, these improvements are needed, because what has not yet come out in this debate is that within the next 14 to 15 years there will be at least a doubling of heavy goods vehicles coming to the Channel ports and a substantial increase in passenger traffic.

Much has been made of traffic forecasts. The one thing that we can say with certainty about Department of Transport forecasts is that they are always wrong and always on the low side. Hon. Members need only look at the forecasts for the M25, the M6, the M1 or any motorway they like to see that. The Department always gets it wrong on the low side. My right hon. Friend is right not to publish the forecasts because the Department will get them wrong on the low side. I challenge hon. Members to tell me when a traffic forecast of the Department of Transport has been optimistic. They cannot do so, and they know that to be true.

Much has been made of the Merchant Navy. I put my reputation on the line on naval and maritime matters five years ago. If I thought that ferries would be destroyed by the scheme, there is no way that I could vote for it tonight, but I do not believe that that will happen. It is in consumers' and customers' interests that there should be a proper mix of traffic. Ferries, hovercraft and jets will operate, as well as the tunnel and aircraft. I agree that on the passenger side short-haul airlines will lose out, but that has environmental advantages for those who live near airports, not least those near Crawley and Heathrow.

Some hon. Members have damned British Rail with faint praise, but during the 18 years that I have been a Member of Parliament I have received a plethora of letters from divers environmental groups arguing that we should transfer more and more traffic from road to rail, and that more and more passengers should leave their cars and travel by train. I agree with them, and this is our one big chance to do just that.

Last December I spoke about the possibility of 365,000 lorries a year coming off the roads—the equivalent of going on to rail—which is 1,000 a day. As the hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) and others have pointed out, I was pessimistic. I believe that at least 1,500 lorries a day and perhaps more could come off the roads. This will depend a great deal on British Rail's drive, marketing, and ability to seize its opportunities. The House should back British Rail, not sneer at it and knock it, as we so often do. British Rail has a chance to link into the biggest, most up-to-date rail system in the world, the European rail system, and if we believe in the environment and in getting traffic off the roads and on to the railways, we should give British Rail every possible encouragement.

I wish to raise a local matter that has considerable implications. Many of my constituents are bothered that the tunnel may be used as an excuse to build more and more houses, especially in Ashford, which will benefit from the creation of new jobs. We have the international station, the freight transport terminal and other facilities, so many jobs will be created in the Ashford area. My constituents and others in Kent fear that the Weald, the Downs and elsewhere will be covered in houses to provide homes for people employed in those jobs. I understand the fear of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) and of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), that there could well be employment difficulties in the short and medium-term, because there will undoubtedly be a downturn in ferry traffic and dock opportunities, thus increasing unemployment.

We should consider south-east Kent as a whole for employment and housing. It makes no sense to build more and more houses on good agricultural land in the Ashford area to cater for the incumbents of the new jobs when nearby constituencies face increased unemployment among people who are reasonably and decently housed. Communications are improving and there will be good road systems. Ashford to Dover will be a 20 to 25-minute drive, and Ashford to Folkestone will take 15 minutes. I agree that communications to Thanet should also be improved. The Committee should consider the area as a whole, so that we can match houses with jobs. We should not take a narrow parochial view and say, "I want all the jobs and houses in Ashford." That would not be a sensible use of resources or a sensible way to proceed.

On 5 December 1973, when moving the Second Reading of that Channel Tunnel Bill, the Minister said:

> "Generations have talked about the tunnel, dreamed about the tunnel, argued about the tunnel. There comes a time when the talking has to stop and the aspirations have to be turned into achievements. This Bill is a significant step in doing just that." —[*Official Report*, 5 December 1973; Vol. 865, c. 1310.]

That was said 12½ years ago by me, as the Minister on the Bill. Now, 12½ years later, perhaps it is time that we started to do something about it.

9.24 pm

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): In some ways, the views expressed in this debate have been as entrenched as those expressed in all the other debates, going back as far as the 1973 debate, which has just been referred to by the hon. Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed). Even if I was the greatest orator in the House—and I certainly am not—I would have great difficulty in persuading any hon. Member that his view on this issue was wrong. Consequently, I shall not even attempt to do so.

I congratulate the Secretary of State on his appointment and welcome him to his new post. I am afraid that the

precedents are not good for those who move from the Treasury to the Department of Transport, but I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be able to overcome that hurdle, and that there will at least be some rational dialogue between the two parties on this important topic. Time will tell whether I am being over-optimistic. Although I have the honour to speak on behalf of my party, I should make my position clear. In 1974, I supported the Labour Government's intention to build a Channel tunnel. Indeed, I voted against my own party when, in my view, it foolishly decided to cancel the project in 1975. But I got my just deserts, because I was made a Whip inside a week. That at least taught me a lesson about voting against my own party. But I hold the same views now as I held then. For various reasons, which I shall come to, I believe that of the schemes submitted to this Government, the rail-only scheme was the right one to choose.

However, if we accepted the views so graphically and even luridly expressed by my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) and did nothing, what would happen to cross-channel traffic? If we did nothing, would we please those Members of Parliament who represent constituencies in Kent who, quite properly, have reservations about the scheme? If the project was abandoned, the number of motor cars and heavy goods vehicles going to and from the continent would increase year by year, and life would become even less tolerable for those constituents whom Kent Members have quite properly sought to defend. Traffic to and from the continent would increase, just as it has done during the past decade or so. Doing nothing is not a recipe for a better environment for Kent of for better transport links between this country and Europe. The hon. Member for Ashford was the most recent hon. Member to point out that a rail Channel tunnel will persuade those who use other modes of transport to use trains.

Recently I was in Paris, talking to the Anglo-French chamber of commerce about the project. Those people who travel backwards and forwards the whole time were virtually unanimous that anything was better than the present system. The organisation that is somewhat fancifully entitled Flexilink has behaved deplorably in the past few months with its campaign of non-stop denigration and its pretence that the present system is the best way of moving passengers and freight across the Channel. That is just not so. Whatever our views of the project, all hon. Members will concede that it is a nightmare to try to sail from Dover on, say, a bank holiday. Under the system that some hon. Members wish to preserve, traffic at bank holidays is frequently backed up as far as the constituency of the hon. Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch). Should we seek to defend that by saying that we are against this project? It is nonsense to defend such a system.

Hon. Members who attack this scheme do so for various reasons. Some hon. Members from Kent say that the scheme will be disastrous for employment and would have a severe effect on the economy of west Kent. The hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) graphically outlined what he saw as the economic disasters that would result from this project. He will not like me saying this, but he made one of the finest arguments for socialism in west Kent that I have ever heard. [AN HON. MEMBER: "East Kent."]

Mr. Stuart Holland: East or west——

Mr. Snape: East or west, socialism is best, as my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) reminds me.

The hon. Member for Thanet, North made a plea for Government intervention in that part of the world. He spoke about the differences between the French approach to these matters and his own Government's approach and made a plea for infrastructure expenditure. I do not know how his speech affected his right hon. Friend the Minister, who has just escaped from the Treasury, but it certainly warmed my heart. It has taken seven years for economic reality to dawn on the hon. Member for Thanet, North. It may have been delayed, but it is none the less welcome. The Opposition have called for Government intervention of that sort for a long time, but, regrettably, the Secretary of State for Transport has resolutely opposed it for seven years. I hope that even the right hon. Gentleman's Treasury-hardened heart will melt in the face of this plea from his own hon. Friend, even if nothing that I say convinces him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East and my hon. Friend the Member for Stretford (Mr. Lloyd) and a number of hon. Members talked about the benefits that would accrue to the south of England as a result of this scheme. Geographically, it is impossible to put a channel tunnel anywhere else. That disposes of that argument straight away. The group that now calls itself Eurotunnel supplied me with a preliminary list of United Kingdom suppliers of materials and services for the construction and operation of the project. No doubt the same list has been supplied to other hon. Members. In the east and west midlands there are no fewer than 117 companies on that list, and one of them is based in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Snape: I share with my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East a constituency boundary and one of the subsidiary companies is in my constituency. I respect the view of my hon. Friend, but if that company approaches me I will do my best to make sure that it stays on the list of suppliers.

Mr. Faulds: I am moderately aware after 20 years of what industrial activity goes on, or, more to the pont, used to go on, in my constituency before the advent of these dreadful days of Tory government. I do not share my hon. Friend's apparent gullibility about all the promotional bumf that is put out by these self-concerned and self-interested companies.

Mr. Snape: I concede straight away that my hon. Friend has been here a lot longer than I have. *[Interruption.]* I cannot say that about him because he has a constituency next door to mine. My hon. Friend thinks that I am being gullible in accepting this preliminary list of United Kingdom suppliers, but he must surely concede that not many of the suppliers for this sort of construction work, if it gets the go-ahead, are based in the south of England. Only a few of them are based there.

Mr. Faulds: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Snape: No, I shall not give way again to my hon. Friend. He has not had a bad innings, especially since, as he said, he was unavoidably detained elsewhere for most of the debate.

The fact is that most of the suppliers—

Mr. Faulds: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Snape: No.

The fact is that 90 per cent. of the suppliers are not based in the south of England. Opposition Members in particular ought to be more conscious of that fact.

Mr. Aitken: I am anxious that the hon. Gentleman should not be taken for a ride by the propaganda. He keeps calling these firms "suppliers." All hon. Members hope that British firms will turn into suppliers for this project, if it takes place, but the fact is that no one is a supplier until the tender has gone out to European competition, in which case the list of so-called suppliers may, alas, be a good deal thinner.

Mr. Snape: I am glad that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned that point. Had it been up to the Labour party, there would have been no doubt about who would get these contracts, because we should not have been daft enough to go into the Common Market on the terms that the Conservative Government — the one that the present Conservative Government never talk about these days — went into it. The fact that we are members of the EEC means that we are bound by EEC rules.

Having looked at the list of names that are part of the consortium which forms Eurotunnel, I should have thought that a substantial number of the contracts could be built in-house. Many of the names on the preliminary suppliers list are subsidiaries of companies that form part of the Eurotunnel consortium. Therefore, do not blame me for the rules of the Common Market. I never wanted this country to join it in the first place. If we are stuck with that organisation, as we seem to be, contingencies are built into the project which ensure that the bulk of the work goes to United Kingdom companies, most of which, I repeat, are not based in the south of England.

As for the other aspect of the scheme——

Mr. Faulds: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Snape: No, I do not intend to give way to my hon. Friend.

As for the railways side of the argument, the hon. Member for Ashford rightly said that many right hon. and hon. Members on both sides of the House frequently receive letters from organisations and from their constituents demanding, in my view rightly, that more use should be made of our under-utilised railways system.

British Rail says that, under this project, 20 through freight trains will be running each day in each direction through the tunnel. I should have thought that those who are concerned, if only for environmental reasons, with halting the seemingly never-ending onrush of heavy goods vehicles would be prepared to concede that 20 freight trains each way per day is better, environmentally, than the present position. However, all hon. Members know — at least, we ought to, because we debate these matters often enough — that at the moment there is nowhere near the kind of capacity in British Rail's freight wagon fleet to provide 20 freight trains a day. Therefore it follows that there must be a substantial wagon building project in the United Kingdom to cater for the additional freight.

I hope that it will not be suggested by the hon. Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) or by any other hon. Member that those freight vehicles are to be imported from abroad. I hope that the latest cuts so blithely entered into by the present Government concerning British Rail's freight and passenger carrying manufacturing capacity will not prevent British business and British workers from making railway wagons and locomotives for shuttle train use by both British Rail and the Eurotunnel consortium. We are not talking about an insignificant project. British Rail has said that it plans to spend £400 million on rail facilities necessary for the services. I remind my hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East that up the road from both our constituencies Metro Cammell is rather anxious to get its teeth into this sort of business.

Mr. Faulds: I have at last prevailed upon my hon. Friend to give way; I was getting exhausted with waiting. [HON. MEMBERS: "Get on with it then."] I will, but in my own good time.

My hon. Friend made the point that there would be sudden bursts of activity throughout the country caused by the construction of the tunnel. Would it not be better if those bursts of activity in a number of constituencies were to do with the re-creation of the infrastructure of Britain rather than this unnecessary project of tunnelling under the Channel? If these bursts of activity are going to be caused by sensational exercises like this, is my hon. Friend arguing that under this Government and perhaps under the next one — our own — we should have a series of Channel tunnels to create these bursts of activity?

Mr. Snape: I knew that it was a mistake to give way twice to my hon. Friend. I am delighted to try to answer him, although obviously I will not convince him, because he is unconvinceable on this project.

Neither I nor my hon. Friend has any control over the capital that is to be invested in the Eurotunnel scheme. It is not state capital. The straight objection to the 1975 Labour Government scheme was that capital thus employed would be better employed in infrastructure projects — although why on earth we do not regard modernising the railway system as an infrastructure project, I do not know—than in the Channel tunnel and associated works. That argument will not wash on this occasion because it is private money and we have no control over the direction of that private capital. If the money is not spent on this project, it will not be spent on those infrastructure projects that both my hon. Friend and I would like to see carried out in the United Kingdom. For those reasons, we believe that, of the three schemes, the Government have opted for the right one.

We shall in the passage of the Bill be seeking reassurance on other matters, particularly on the question of customs procedures and the understandable view held by hon. Members on both sides of the House that there should be equity in these procedures. However, all these matters can be debated and, one hopes, settled in the passage of the legislation.

I remain as convinced now as I was in 1975. I do not wholeheartedly embrace the slogan that if it is good enough for the railways it is good enough for Britain, but at long last we are doing something about the infrastructure of the railways. It is long overdue. Governments of both parties have been talking about it long enough. At least, under this project, there is some hope that at last something will be done.

9.45 pm

Mr. Robert Adley (Christchurch): I am grateful for the opportunity to intervene briefly. The debate that took place

between the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and his hon. Friend the Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) illustrated, I think, that the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East was right and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) was wrong when my hon. Friend claimed that there was a growing band of opponents to the Bill. The fact is that the Labour party this time has been much more reasonable in its approach to the Bill, and the debate has shown those of us who have been here for a long time that we might as well have had the vote first and the debate afterwards, if anyone seriously thought that anyone would change their views.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) said, it really has been rather depressing to hear the whingeing, dismal Jimmies who can see nothing but problems, damage and chaos arising from the proposal. To give one example, although I do not want to dwell on his speech, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South suggested that if the Channel tunnel was built transcontinental ships would dock at continental ports in order to gain access to the British market via the Channel tunnel. If we put that argument on its head, he would say that transatlantic ships would soon be docking again in huge numbers at Liverpool to gain access to European markets via the Channel tunnel. Most of us settle our views first and make our arguments to fit them.

If there is one thing that is not true—my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford mentioned this—it surely is that the Government are trying indecently to rush this through. The project has been under discussion in and out of the House for well over 100 years. Among the things that I have discovered in research in slightly unusual places is that the borings for the Channel tunnel in the last century led to the discovery of coal below the chalk of east Kent. Who knows what might be discovered underneath the middle of the Channel when we get that far, as I am sure we shall.

I support the principle of the Bill and I support very much the Government's decision to build a rail tunnel. It will do the least damage to the environment. The railway aspects of the tunnel give far and away the best prospects for the regions. I beg hon. Members from the midlands and the north to consider carefully what the Bill, with its rail input, could do for their regions.

I want to ask the Minister about one point that I raised with the Secretary of State when I intervened in his speech. Will the Government please give serious consideration to making the maximum use of the investment by both the private and the public sectors in our railway system? I shall give only one example, the Tonbridge-Redhill-Reading route. I think that the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) would agree that we should be able to find ways of giving London a wide berth in order to maximise the opportunities for the regions.

I have now extracted from British Rail the expenditure that would be involved. The Tonbridge-Redhill electrification would cost £12·5 million, which is presently not included in the proposals. The Redhill-Reading electrification, which would include electrification provision for gaps and reinforcement where already provided, would cost £20·5 million extra. The main bottleneck on that line, caused by the need to reverse at Redhill, could be eliminated by the construction of a fly-over at a cost of £5 million. British Rail, in not wanting to do this, is unlikely to have underestimated for me the cost of this work.

In the second Beeching report the line to which I have referred was retained—that is why it still exists—clearly and specifically for the possible future construction of a Channel tunnel. I shall not weary the House by quoting from the report. However, I urge my hon. Friend the Minister to study the map included in that report, dated February 1965 on the development of the major railway trunk routes. At the moment we have the unhappy situation of the Government, due to the restraints that they are putting on British Rail, actually out-Beeching Beeching because they are not encouraging investment in the railway infrastructure for that vital part of the railway system.

I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford that we have been talking about this project for long enough. It is a great and exciting project. I look forward with enthusiasm to voting for the Bill.

9.48 pm

Mr. Jim Lester (Broxtowe): I am delighted to have the opportunity to contribute briefly to this part of the debate. We need to return to first principles. Future employment prospects depend entirely on the development of the internal market within the Common Market, of which we have been a member since 1972. The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) talked about infrastructure. We need a European infrastructure if we want to develop the Common Market into the largest market in the world.

To talk about internal infrastructure without having a vision of the way the Common Market is developing and the important part that the tunnel will play in an efficient transport system means that we are living in the period before 1972.

The employment prospects for this country are vital. The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) and I went down the original tunnel workings. I remember the profound sense of disappointment when that project was cancelled. It set back for 10 years the development of an efficient transportation system, open 24 hours a day despite the weather, to take increased freight into that greatest market in the world—11 other countries.

Hon. Members have spoken of what the French will gain from the market. We are all in the market—we are working for it and to develop it, and the Channel tunnel is an important part of it. Unless we have that clear in our minds, all the moaning Minnies and dismal Johnnies will never see employment in this country that will really take us forward.

In no way do I criticise the present systems. We will have a choice between ferries and business efficiency, with rail and other contacts through the tunnel, which will be a great advantage. It will set the different pattern of trade that we all want. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) mentioned figures that gave some idea of the impact that the project might have. When the M1 was built, did anyone suggest that even the most advantageous figures from the Department of Transport would be wrong by factors of 12 for freight traffic and four for overall traffic? When Hitler built the autobahns in Germany, with great effect for regional development, did anyone suggest that he was talking about need? When Mussolini built the autostradas in Italy in the 1930s, which had a profound effect on development in that country, did anyone suggest that he was talking about need?

When the Abercrombie committee considered transportation around London in the 1930s, we rejected its

[Mr. Jim Lester]

recommendations as we rejected so many recommendations, and only now have we built the M25 and carried out its recommendations of all those years ago.

I understand the concern of colleagues in Kent and accept that they must put forward environmental considerations in the interests of their constituents. However, I am a Nottingham Member and I know about the impact of mining, opencast mining and power stations, all of which have caused severe environmental difficulties. Yet we accepted that they should be developed as a natural consequence of our geographical position and the fact that we are part of the national scene and they are national resources. It is now the turn of east Kent to fulfil that function within the development of the Common Market.

Although we all want proper consideration to be given to legitimate fears, in a wholly different legal position from that which we faced in the early part of the century, we would look badly upon unfair and unacceptable practices that would delay the project from 1993.

Important industrial decisions will be made as soon as the Bill is clearly under way. There are companies in this country that want to expand. Inward Investment wants to develop and double the size of its factories because it recognises that access from existing factories will be so much better. We need to give a clear signal that we support the Bill and the tunnel. We need the concrete and constructive impact that it will have on the investment decisions of our industrial base, because that is the only way that we will get through in the future.

9.53 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): The House has had a full and thoughtful debate, not for the first time, on whether to build a Channel tunnel. Indeed, this is the fifth time that I have had the privilege of replying to a debate on various aspects of it. But tonight is different, for tonight the House is to take in a historic decision, by its vote, on the principle of whether the Channel tunnel is to go ahead. I am sure that every hon. Member will wish to participate in that decision, which involves the biggest civil engineering project every undertaken in this country through the centuries.

Naturally there is concern in Kent, especially in the parts most affected. I accept that in a major national project of this nature there is bound to be local environmental disadvantage, but in Kent there will also be opportunities for new developments and new businesses, and the prospects are good for them — indeed, rather better than for English football.

In an attempt to provide help in Kent by identifying the problems and finding solutions, we have brought together in a consultative committee elected representatives of the Kent county council, the district councils that will be affected, British Rail, the Department of the Environment, the promoters and the Department of Transport.

I am chairman of the committee, it meets approximately monthly and it is already hard at work trying to minimise the disadvantages and maximise the potential advantages of the tunnel. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Will my hon. Friend reconsider the position that he has taken in the committee, which means that the public are not allowed in to listen to its deliberations?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend will know that the chairman does not decide the procedure in this kind of committee. However, we have ensured that the minutes of the meetings are made available to all local authorities, and at the next meeting we will consider making the minutes available to the press. That should meet my hon. Friend's request. We do not intend that there should be any secrecy about what is happening, but we like to discuss our problems objectively without having to think all the time that every word must be weighed for how it will be interpreted or misinterpreted.

The Kent joint consultative committee is breaking new ground in many respects by bringing representatives of all those who are affected together in a working committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) asked whether it would be possible for the Kent association of parish councils to be represented on the committee. I was originally informed that that association did not represent all the parishes in Kent, but representatives of that association have been to see me recently, and as a result of the convincing case that was put for representation I shall propose at the next committee meeting that an invitation be extended to the association to be represented. I hope that that will meet the point raised by my hon. Friend.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) — if I may have his attention — addressed the House with his usual courtesy and level tones. However, he left me with the impression that he wants to see the tunnel go ahead, but is uncertain whether he can lead his supporters into the Lobby. On such a major national issue, the Labour party surely cannot funk the decision and abstain.

The hon. Gentleman made a number of important points and asked several shrewd questions which deserve an answer, and I am pleased to help the hon. Gentleman by providing them. He wants to know who will get the contracts. He wants to know whether United Kingdom firms will secure the bulk of the work and create jobs here. I can tell the hon. Gentleman that the whole project is a joint venture by two consortia. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the members of the consortia can award themselves contracts.

Mr. Speed: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a most important reply, which some of us would like to hear. It is difficult to hear it because of the hubub from other hon. Members.

Mr. Speaker: I had already called for order. Will the hon. Members who are beyond the Bar of the House kindly refrain from talking.

Mr. Mitchell: The position on the contracts is that the consortia can award consortia members contracts without risk of challenge in the European Court of Justice. In the case of third party contracts, 30 per cent. must go to competitive tender. However, I am confident that British industry can compete successfully. We are increasingly competing successfully in international markets and our ability to do so on our own doorstep is considerable.

I was asked about the failure to develop plans for fully equipping British Rail. I do not understand what the hon.

Member for Aberdeen, North means. I have already given approval, in principle, to all the investment requested by British Rail in connection with the Channel tunnel. There will be a full commercial return, and therefore there is no question of Government subsidy.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North also talked about the focal points in the British Rail network. I agree with him. At present there are six main inland clearance depots, at London, Birmingham, Glasgow, Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. It is fair to say that these provide the opportunity for the assembly of a large amount of cargo which can go right through the tunnel for distribution on the continent. A lot of traffic will be taken off the roads. My hon. Friends from Kent are worried about the impact of the tunnel on the roads in Kent. British Rail calculates that——

It being Ten o'clock, the debate stood adjourned.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Channel Tunnel Bill, the Motion in the name of Mr. Secretary Moore relating to the committal of the Channel Tunnel Bill to a Select Committee and any Motion for an Instruction relating to the Channel Tunnel Bill may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour.—*[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

Channel Tunnel Bill

Question again proposed. That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Mr. Speaker: Before the Minister rises again, I call for quietness, so that he may be heard.

Mr. Mitchell: British Rail tells me that its planned 20 freight trains a day in each direction equate to 1,000 38-tonne lorries a day off our roads. As one who cares deeply about the environment and our countryside, I think that that is something we can all look forward to with considerable satisfaction. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Ashford in appealing to people to stop knocking British Rail. It is certainly putting its back into trying to achieve success here.

The Kent association of exporters says——

Mr. Robert Hughes: Before the Minister leaves the questions that I put to him, will he reply to the point about the golden share?

Mr. Mitchell: I intend to reply to a number of other points that the hon. Gentleman made.

The Kent association of exporters, representing over 80 companies engaged in manufacture and goods handling, has welcomed the Channel tunnel as a major way of stimulating Britain's export potential, and it expects a major increase in exports from Kent.

The hon. Member for Aberdeen, North asked about the golden share. This is a complex issue of company law. No decision has been taken yet, and we are examining the possibilities with Eurotunnel. When a decision is taken, I shall bring it to the House.

The hon. Member for Isle of Wight (Mr. Ross) made a robust and honest speech as the official spokesman on transport for the Liberal party. He gave his unrepentant support for the Channel tunnel. I note that he laid it baldly on the line that he would take the same view as the Government if he were in government. *[Interruption.]* I hope that he will convey that view to the Liberal spokesman in the constituency of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who, as always, is in his place.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich (Sir J. Ridsdale) made some technical points, about which I shall write to him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Mr. Wardle) made a series of local points affecting Folkestone. *[Interruption.]* I shall write to him and to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe. I recognise that this is another example of my hon. and learned Friend's ingenuity in raising points in the House on behalf of his constituents. *[Interruption.]*

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees) made, as always, a valuable contribution to our debates and stressed the need for clear competition. He assured the House that the ferry operators can hold their own. *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Speaker: Order. These are very important matters.

Mr. Mitchell: My right hon. and learned Friend assured the House that the ferry operators can hold their own, but only if competition is fair, and I agree with him. I think that he will be interested in the speech of the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Mr. Silkin), who dwelt on the attraction of hovercrafts and ferries and drew attention to the advantages that the ferries will have because of the long rest periods required for long distance lorry drivers, which make the ferries particularly attractive. There will be ferry work in the future as well as the tunnel work.

Mr. Silkin: I know that this is difficult for the hon. Gentleman to grasp, but I was saying that the advantage of the ferries would disappear if they were wiped out by the competition of the tunnel, which is what I imagine will happen.

Mr. Mitchell: It is interesting to note how both sides in this competitive endeavour are frightened of the competition. Both sides see the other as having an advantage. That leaves me with the suspicion that there will be a fair balance of competition between them.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover, asked me some specific questions. He asked whether the money resolution would give covert financial aid to the Channel tunnel operators. I can give him an absolute assurance that it does not do so. He asked for an assurance on their being no faltering in the intention to complete the A20 extension into Dover. I can give him that assurance. The only reason why that is not included in the Bill is the uncertainty of the route between the GEC factory and the old battlements at the entrance to Dover, and some other local controversies. My right hon. and learned Friend asked for a timetable for improvements to the M2/A2. We expect these to be completed by 1991. My hon. Friend the Member for Faversham (Mr. Moate) asked for an assurance that there would be no question of spoil being moved by road. We had 65 options as to where spoil could go. We have whittled that down to 10, and in doing so we have taken out every one of the proposals that involved moving spoil by road. I hope that my hon. Friend will feel encouraged by that.

I was asked about the Tourism Act being administered sympathetically in the Dover area. I am meeting Mr.

[Mr. Mitchell]

Duncan Bluck, the chairman of the English Tourist Board next Tuesday, and I shall have in mind the points that have been raised.

Mr. Peter Rees: I am grateful for the comments in my speech that my hon. Friend has taken up. However, I asked about the movement of shale from Kent.

Mr. Mitchell: My right hon. and learned Friend is right. He asked a number of other questions, but the hour is late and some hon. Members are getting restless. No conclusions have yet been reached about shale. We are discussing with the promoters the way in which shale should be moved.

The House was greatly interested in the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). He referred to many misconceptions, which were illustrated in his article in *The Times* headed:

"How the Chunnel will hit our pockets."

My hon. Friend quoted with reproval a recent pamphlet alleging the cost to the public purse, which said:

"To take only one small example, the Department of Transport is to acquire compulsorily land for the 14-mile stretch of the M20 between Maidstone and Ashford not yet built. This it is thought, will cost £60 million."

My hon. Friend is under a misapprehension in thinking that £60 million will be spent because of the Channel tunnel. It would have been spent anyway, because by the end of the century double the present number of people will be going through the ports of Kent, and extra roads would have been required anyway. Therefore, my hon. Friend is under a misconception.

My hon. Friend also talked about British Rail's expenditure of £400 million, which he says will come from the Exchequer. It will not. It is all fully commercial, and it is because of that, and because it will make a profit, that British Rail is being given the go ahead.

Mr. Stuart Holland: Is the expenditure of £60 million on Waterloo station to be private or public money?

Mr. Mitchell: I was about to deal with the speech of the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland), if I can make myself heard above the comments of his hon. Friends sitting around him.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) mystifies me. I listened to his speech with considerable interest. He praises the French for spending money on infrastructure in north-east France, and regards that as right, but he attacks the British Government for proposing to do something similar in Kent. The hour is late, so on the question of safety I shall say only that my hon. Friend need have no concern.

I understand the concerns of the hon. Member for Vauxhall. If he wishes to invite me to come and see the problem on the spot, I shall be happy to accept the invitation.

The hon. Member for Warley, West (Mr. Faulds) put on his great act. He attacked the Government for the lack of jobs, and then proceeded to oppose an infrastructure project that will create jobs.

My hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Mr. Adley) called for wider use of British Rail routes round London, and I take on board the points that he raised.

I return to the rhetorical question raised by the right hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford: is there any need for this project? There is a need, not just for the jobs that will be created now, but because of the much better position in which it will put British exporters in the future. Not only will our business community and travellers be able to move more safely, but our goods will be able to get into the export markets of Europe more cheaply, more competitively and more quickly than they have been able to do so far.

Future generations will not only look back on tonight as a historic occasion, but will ask themselves why the hell we did not do it before.

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 146, Noes 317.

Division No. 206] **[10.14 pm**

AYES

Adams, Allen *(Paisley N)*	George, Bruce
Archer, Rt Hon Peter	Gilbert, Rt Hon Dr John
Ashley, Rt Hon Jack	Godman, Dr Norman
Ashton, Joe	Gould, Bryan
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*	Hamilton, James *(M'well N)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*	Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Barnett, Guy	Hancock, Michael
Barron, Kevin	Harman, Ms Harriet
Beckett, Mrs Margaret	Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Bell, Stuart	Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Benn, Rt Hon Tony	Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*	Heffer, Eric S.
Bermingham, Gerald	Hogg, N. *(C'nauld & Kilsyth)*
Bidwell, Sydney	Holland, Stuart *(Vauxhall)*
Blair, Anthony	Hughes, Dr Mark *(Durham)*
Boyes, Roland	Hughes, Robert *(Aberdeen N)*
Brown, Ron *(E'burgh, Leith)*	Hughes, Roy *(Newport East)*
Buchan, Norman	Jones, Barry *(Alyn & Deeside)*
Caborn, Richard	Kaufman, Rt Hon Gerald
Callaghan, Jim *(Heyw'd & M)*	Kilroy-Silk, Robert
Campbell-Savours, Dale	Leadbitter, Ted
Canavan, Dennis	Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Clarke, Thomas	Litherland, Robert
Clay, Robert	Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
Clelland, David Gordon	Lofthouse, Geoffrey
Clwyd, Mrs Ann	McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Cohen, Harry	McKelvey, William
Conlan, Bernard	MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Cook, Frank *(Stockton North)*	McNamara, Kevin
Cook, Robin F. *(Livingston)*	McTaggart, Robert
Corbett, Robin	McWilliam, John
Corbyn, Jeremy	Madden, Max
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*	Marek, Dr John
Craigen, J. M.	Martin, Michael
Crowther, Stan	Maxton, John
Cunningham, Dr John	Maynard, Miss Joan
Dalyell, Tam	Meacher, Michael
Davies, Rt Hon Denzil *(L'lli)*	Michie, William
Davies, Ronald *(Caerphilly)*	Mikardo, Ian
Davis, Terry *(B'ham, H'ge H'l)*	Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Deakins, Eric	Mitchell, Austin *(G't Grimsby)*
Dewar, Donald	Morris, Rt Hon A. *(W'shawe)*
Dixon, Donald	Morris, Rt Hon J. *(Aberavon)*
Dobson, Frank	Nellist, David
Dormand, Jack	Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Douglas, Dick	O'Brien, William
Dubs, Alfred	Orme, Rt Hon Stanley
Dunwoody, Hon Mrs G.	Park, George
Eastham, Ken	Patchett, Terry
Evans, John *(St. Helens N)*	Pendry, Tom
Fatchett, Derek	Pike, Peter
Faulds, Andrew	Randall, Stuart
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*	Raynsford, Nick
Fields, T. *(L'pool Broad Gn)*	Redmond, Martin
Fisher, Mark	Richardson, Ms Jo
Flannery, Martin	Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael	Roberts, Ernest *(Hackney N)*
Forrester, John	Robinson, G. *(Coventry NW)*
Foster, Derek	Rogers, Allan
Foulkes, George	Rooker, J. W.
Fraser, J. *(Norwood)*	Ross, Ernest *(Dundee W)*

Rowlands, Ted
Ryman, John
Sedgemore, Brian
Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Short, Ms Clare *(Ladywood)*
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Smith, C. *(Isl'ton S & F'bury)*
Snape, Peter
Soley, Clive
Spearing, Nigel
Stott, Roger
Strang, Gavin
Straw, Jack
Thomas, Dr R. *(Carmarthen)*
Thompson, J. *(Wansbeck)*
Tinn, James
Torney, Tom
Wardell, Gareth *(Gower)*
Weetch, Ken
Welsh, Michael
Williams, Rt Hon A.
Winnick, David
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Haynes and
Mr. Allen McKay

NOES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Banks, Robert *(Harrogate)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Hon A. *(Plym'th S'n)*
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Critchley, Julian
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
King, Rt Hon Tom
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Needham, Richard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Prior, Rt Hon James
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard

Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Walker, Rt Hon P. *(W'cester)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put forthwith, pursuant to Standing Order No. 41 (Amendment on Second or Third Reading.)

The House divided: Ayes 309, Noes 44.

Division No. 207] **[10.25 pm**

AYES

Adley, Robert
Alexander, Richard
Alison, Rt Hon Michael
Alton, David
Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Amess, David
Ancram, Michael
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Aspinwall, Jack
Atkins, Rt Hon Sir H.
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Rt Hon K. *(Mole Vall'y)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Batiste, Spencer
Bellingham, Henry
Bendall, Vivian
Benyon, William
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brinton, Tim
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Browne, John
Bruce, Malcolm
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Budgen, Nick
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butcher, John
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Campbell-Savours, Dale
Carlisle, John *(Luton N)*
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Carlisle, Rt Hon M. *(W'ton S)*
Cartwright, John
Cash, William
Channon, Rt Hon Paul
Chapman, Sydney
Chope, Christopher
Churchill, W. S.
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Clark, Sir W. *(Croydon S)*
Clegg, Sir Walter
Cockeram, Eric
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dickens, Geoffrey
Dorrell, Stephen
Douglas-Hamilton, Lord J.
du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Edwards, Rt Hon N. *(P'broke)*
Eggar, Tim
Evennett, David
Eyre, Sir Reginald
Fallon, Michael
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Fletcher, Alexander
Fookes, Miss Janet
Forman, Nigel
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fowler, Rt Hon Norman
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Freud, Clement
Galley, Roy
Gardner, Sir Edward *(Fylde)*
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Glyn, Dr Alan
Goodhart, Sir Philip
Gow, Ian
Gower, Sir Raymond
Grant, Sir Anthony
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Griffiths, Peter *(Portsm'th N)*
Grist, Ian
Ground, Patrick
Grylls, Michael
Gummer, Rt Hon John S
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hannam, John
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Haselhurst, Alan
Hawkins, C. *(High Peak)*
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney
Hayward, Robert
Heath, Rt Hon Edward
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Henderson, Barry
Heseltine, Rt Hon Michael
Hickmet, Richard
Higgins, Rt Hon Terence L.
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Holt, Richard
Hordern, Sir Peter
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Howell, Ralph *(Norfolk, N)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunt, John *(Ravensbourne)*
Hunter, Andrew
Irving, Charles
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Kennedy, Charles
Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Knox, David
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Latham, Michael
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lester, Jim
Lewis, Sir Kenneth *(Stamf'd)*
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Ian *(Havant)*
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCrindle, Robert
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacGregor, Rt Hon John
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
McNair-Wilson, M. *(N'bury)*
McNair-Wilson, P. *(New F'st)*
McQuarrie, Albert
Madel, David
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Marshall, Michael *(Arundel)*
Mates, Michael
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Miller, Hal *(B'grove)*
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Miscampbell, Norman
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Moore, Rt Hon John
Morrison, Hon C. *(Devizes)*
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nelson, Anthony
Newton, Tony
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Oppenheim, Rt Hon Mrs S.
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Percival, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Price, Sir David
Proctor, K. Harvey
Pym, Rt Hon Francis
Raison, Rt Hon Timothy
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhodes James, Robert
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Rifkind, Rt Hon Malcolm
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Ross, Stephen *(Isle of Wight)*
Rossi, Sir Hugh
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
St. John-Stevas, Rt Hon N.
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Giles *(Pudsey)*
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shelton, William *(Streatham)*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Shepherd, Richard *(Aldridge)*
Shersby, Michael
Sims, Roger
Skeet, Sir Trevor
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Squire, Robin
Stanbrook, Ivor
Stanley, Rt Hon John
Steel, Rt Hon David
Steen, Anthony
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*

Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman
Temple-Morris, Peter
Thatcher, Rt Hon Mrs M.
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townend, John *(Bridlington)*
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Vaughan, Sir Gerard
Viggers, Peter
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walden, George
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Wallace, James
Waller, Gary
Walters, Dennis
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wheeler, John
Whitfield, John
Whitney, Raymond
Winterton, Mrs Ann
Winterton, Nicholas
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Woodcock, Michael
Wrigglesworth, Ian
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*
Younger, Rt Hon George

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Carol Mather and
Mr. Robert Boscawen.

NOES

Aitken, Jonathan
Atkinson, N. *(Tottenham)*
Banks, Tony *(Newham NW)*
Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Bermingham, Gerald
Bidwell, Sydney
Canavan, Dennis
Clay, Robert
Clelland, David Gordon
Cohen, Harry
Corbyn, Jeremy
Cormack, Patrick
Cox, Thomas *(Tooting)*
Craigen, J. M.
Crowther, Stan
Deakins, Eric
Douglas, Dick
Eastham, Ken
Farr, Sir John
Faulds, Andrew
Field, Frank *(Birkenhead)*
Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Godman, Dr Norman
Hancock, Michael
Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Lewis, Terence *(Worsley)*
Lloyd, Tony *(Stretford)*
McNamara, Kevin
Madden, Max
Maynard, Miss Joan
Mikardo, Ian
Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Nellist, David
Pike, Peter
Rees, Rt Hon Peter *(Dover)*
Roberts, Allan *(Bootle)*
Sedgemore, Brian
Silkin, Rt Hon J.
Skinner, Dennis
Spearing, Nigel
Strang, Gavin
Taylor, Teddy *(S'end E)*
Young, David *(Bolton SE)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Roger Gale and
Mr. Roger Moate.

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

CORRIGENDUM

Official Report, 3 June 1986, c. 773, at the end of Mr. Sedgemore's speech insert:

I am being denied the right to speak on that, and I finish my speech.*

---

* See Vol. 99, column 25.

Channel Tunnel Bill (Committal)

10.37 pm

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is reported on the tape that the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) has sent a letter to a large number of his hon. Friends urging them to delay business tonight—to "filibuster", the word he has used—to ensure that my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) will not have an opportunity tomorrow to move the motion which stands in his name. This matter was raised earlier in the day.

I hope that you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that such a filibuster would represent a disgraceful attempt by Conservative Members to deny one of my hon. Friends, who has been successful in the Ballot, the opportunity to debate the subject of his choice. Will the Leader of the House, who is in his place, say whether this filibuster is being actively encouraged by the Government?

It is clear that the letter of which I spoke has been sent out by the hon. Member for Lancashire, West and that it contains the word "filibuster". That hon. Gentleman says in it that, should tomorrow's debate go ahead, Opposition Members would have a platform from which to attack the Prime Minister. Have we reached the stage when an hon. Member cannot debate an issue, having won a place in the Ballot, because to do so would embarrass the Government?

Mr. Speaker: That is not really a point of order.

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): Is it not a point of order?

Mr. Speaker: That was not a matter for the Chair. I know nothing about letters that may or may not have been sent out.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): You will be as aware as hon. Members, Mr. Speaker, that the second motion for debate tomorrow stands in my name and is about the privatisation of local government services. I know, Mr. Speaker, that you are unaware of such matters as three-line Whips, but the Government have been kind enough to give me a three-line Whip tomorrow so that my hon. Friends can be here to support my motion. Having listened to the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), I am worried that, if what he said is correct, my opportunity to take part in the second debate tomorrow may be missed. I understand from the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), who shares my wish that the debate on the privatisation of local government services should take place, that he intends to keep his remarks to an absolute minimum. I look to you, Mr. Speaker, for protection.

Mr. Speaker: The sooner we get on with this debate, the more likely we shall be to get to the motion of the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks).

Mr. Peter Shore (Bethnal Green and Stepney): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious matter. Questions were put to the Lord Privy Seal this afternoon about whether or not what I described as a disgraceful manoeuvre was to be organised during the course of this evening and tonight in order to eliminate the debate that is to take place tomorrow. We now know from the letter, which has apparently been published and which came from the hon. Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind), that Government Whips take the view that this must be a Back-Bench filibuster. We have a right to ask the Lord Privy Seal whether he was aware of this manoeuvre when he answered questions this afternoon, and whether he will take an opportunity to condemn what is undoubtedly a disgraceful and squalid manoeuvre.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: The right hon. Member for Bethnal Green and Stepney (Mr. Shore) has asked about something that you, Mr. Speaker, have ruled is not a point of order. That prevents you, Mr. Speaker, from telling the House whether, unknown to the Labour Front Bench, you have had any representation from the Labour Whips asking you to do exactly what you will do.

Mr. Max Madden (Bradford, West): The point of order by the Hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) was a hybrid one.

On a point of order which I hope is a proper point of order, Mr. Speaker, can you advise us whether it is within the power of the Leader of the House, if he so wishes, to table a motion which would allow business tabled for tomorrow to be taken at any hour if the filibuster that is being talked about takes place tonight? Can you tell us, Mr. Speaker, whether that power is available to the Leader of the House if he wishes to exercise it?

Mr. Speaker: It is not for me to organise Government business.

Mr. Roger Gale (Thanet, North): Further to the original point of order raised by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick), it was suggested that discussion of the committal proceedings on the Channel Tunnel Bill is in some way a filibuster. Those hon. Members who have been in the Chamber all day will know that hon. Members, and especially those hon. Members from north-east Kent, feel strongly about the Channel tunnel. Forty-five hon. Members, many of them from the Opposition Benches, have just demonstrated that strength of feeling by voting against Second Reading. We deeply resent the suggestion that the debate that we wish to take place at considerable length is called a filibuster.

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): I should like to raise a quite separate point of order about the way in which our proceedings tonight are to be conducted. I understand that the Minister responding to the individual amendment and the group of amendments is my hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport. All right hon. and hon. Members know that my hon. Friend is a very good Transport Minister, but I am not aware—though he will tell me if I am wrong—that he is a great expert in matters constitutional or in matters legal. What we are being asked to discuss tonight is wholly different from what lies within the compass of his Department. Looking at the committal motion and bearing in mind that we are talking about a hybrid measure that affects private interests to a very marked and substantial degree, I am extremely uneasy that a Minister of State who is not versed in constitutional and legal matters should be replying for the Government.

I appreciate that the choice of those who are to speak from the Front Benches is not a matter for you, Mr. Speaker. On the other hand, the House may well feel that it would profit from the advice of my right hon. Friend the

Leader of the House, my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General, my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General and, indeed, my right hon. and noble Friend the Lord Chancellor, were he able to appear in this place. I do not in any way want to be thought to be partisan—you know, Mr. Speaker, that I am never partisan—but I am very anxious that we should also have the opportunity to hear the words of the shadow Leader of the House, not to mention the words of the right hon. and learned Member for Aberavon (Mr. Morris). —*[Interruption.]* I have not quite finished.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) said a moment ago that he knew that it was not a matter for me. He is absolutely right.

Mr. Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order. The points that the hon. Gentleman is now making would be much better made during his speech, if he is fortunate enough to catch the——

Mr. Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: Order—if he is fortunate enough to catch the eye of the Chair during these proceedings. I take fully into account what has already been said about tomorrow's debate by both Government and Opposition Members. The sooner that we can get on with this debate, the better the chance that we shall reach the important Back-Bench motions.

Mr. Hogg: I apologise for rising again on a point of order, but I was conscious of the fact that until I had reached the point that I have now reached I was, as it were, only laying the foundations for my point of order.

My real point of order is that the choice of Front Bench spokesmen is clearly a matter for the Front Benches of each party. I suggest that there should be an opportunity for consultation between the Front Benches, which would take place through the usual channels. For that purpose, it would be necessary to adjourn this sitting. The point of order that I am putting to you, Mr. Speaker, is that you should adjourn this sitting so that the Front Benches can consult through the normal channels.

Mr. Speaker: I am not prepared to accept that suggestion.

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am a member of a private Bill Committee which during its proceedings has received evidence from a Government Department. I am very concerned that a Minister who represents the Department of Transport should be responding on behalf of the Government when it is quite possible that when the rules for the private Bill Committee have been framed, on the recommendation of a Department of Transport Minister, witnesses will be called from the Department of Transport, probably by the promoters of the Bill.

It seems to me that it would be very unfair to the petitioners against the Bill if they found that the promoters of the Bill were calling as witnesses representatives from the Department of Transport, who would have an advantage over the petitioners, through the motion that my hon. Friend the Minister of State intends to move. The motion would remove the impartiality of the private Bill procedure if the rules were to be framed, on motions emanating from the Department of Transport, by their Minister here, because officials of the Department of Transport will be appearing as witnesses for the promoters and therefore the petitioners will not have a fair opportunity to present their case.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman asked a hypothetical question, and in any case we are discussing a Government measure.

We now come to the committal motion for the Channel Tunnel Bill. I have published a list of selected amendments and the proposed groupings, and I wish to explain how the debate will proceed. Although motions such as this appear as one motion on the Order Paper, they are made up of separate propositions, each of which is a motion in its own right. I propose that each motion—that is to say, each paragraph beginning with the word "That"—should be moved separately and debated, together with the amendments that have been grouped with it. At the end of each debate, amendments to that paragraph may be moved formally, and when they have been disposed of the Question will be put on the paragraph as a whole. In this way, I believe that we can have a more orderly debate and the House will be aware at each stage which issue is being discussed.

We come to the first motion, which is in lines 1 to 3 on the Order Paper, with which it will be convenient to discuss amendments (a) and (b). I call Mr. David Mitchell.

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell) *rose*——

Mr. Andrew Bowden (Brighton, Kemptown): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, what you have just ruled means that we are dividing the motion into several isolated and separate sections and debating those accordingly. Will there be an opportunity for the House to debate the motion as a whole? I submit that the parts of the motion hold together and make a complete picture and that there should be some stage during the proceedings when we have the opportunity of debating the complete motion.

Mr. Speaker: I hope that I have made it clear to the House that to ensure good order in the debate I have divided the motion. These are five separate motions. The whole motion will be debated, but in good order, with the amendments which appear on the Order Paper.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. As I understand it, you have an ultimate discretion as to how the debate should be conducted. I support the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden). Although it is perfectly true that the formula that you have set out enables the House to criticise or scrutinise the committal motion paragraph by paragraph, the House is unable to take a broad view. At some stage during tonight's debate, the House should be enabled to take a broad view on such essential matters. It is within your discretion, Mr. Speaker, to enable the House to vote on the motion in its totality. May I ask you to invoke that discretion?

Mr. Speaker: The hon. Gentleman will have his opportunity to do that on the first motion, which is that the Bill be committed to a Select Committee.

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. In view of what you have just said, if the House votes in principle at the beginning, what account can it take of what may subsequently happen in

[Mr. Eric Forth]

the votes on the amendments? What my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Mr. Bowden) meant was that the House should have an opportunity, after it has considered and voted on each of the separate propositions and amendments thereto, to consider the proposition as a whole, as amended. My hon. Friend is correct in asking you to consider giving the House, after dealing with the amendments in the way that you have so kindly allowed us to do, an opportunity to debate and vote on the matter as a whole.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) referred to the motion, as amended. You are being asked to rule hypothetically on what would happen if the motion were amended. The points that have been put to you would be properly put if any of the amendments were carried, but they are prematurely put to you before the House has decided on any of those amendments. May I respectfully suggest that the questions put to you do not arise unless and until, after the sectional debate, an amendment has been carried?

Mr. Speaker: That is entirely correct. In order to save any further time being spent on this, I must say that this is well precedented and has been frequently done before. I believe that it is in the best interests of the debate to deal with it in this way.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to the point of order, Mr. Speaker. In the presentation of my argument, I did not make myself wholly clear. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) put my argument even more clearly than I did. I owe you, Mr. Speaker, and the House an apology.

My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is clearly right. What you are suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that we can debate the totality of the committal motion in the first debate. That would be splendid if there were no amendments. What I respectfully suggest, Mr. Speaker, is that you do not come to a hard and fast decision on this matter, but that if any amendments be made in the course of tonight's debate I or some other hon. Member may renew the application, and you will consider it then.

Mr. Speaker: Most certainly.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. May I go back to the very serious point that was raised by the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) when——

Mr. Speaker: Order. We have disposed of that. We cannot back deal on it. I have dealt with it.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. It has been suggested that the debate may carry on too long and put at risk the motions due to be debated tomorrow. If that appeared to be the case—and I doubt whether it would be, because it is a very important matter that we are debating—would it not be possible for hon. Members to ask that we report progress if it was felt that there was any danger of tomorrow's important business being lost? Were that the case, the House surely would be able to take a view on that and would itself be able to safeguard the business.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is merely repeating what was said earlier this afternoon when I stated that that would be perfectly in order.

Sir John Farr (Harborough): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Through the usual channels, some of us who have sat here all day and who tried to speak in the debate on Second Reading but were not successful were informed that, if we did not press our claim so that the vote on Second Reading could take place at about 10 o'clock, the subsequent proceedings would be fairly flexible and the grounds of the debate on the four groups of amendments would not be too narrow.

May I ask, Mr. Speaker, whether you will give the necessary instructions that, when some of us who have sat here all day but were not called in the debate on Second Reading may be successful in catching the eye of the Chair, we are not called to order too strictly because for a second or two we depart from the narrow track of one of the amendments?

Mr. Speaker: It would be very dangerous, I think, for the House to invite me to say that Members do not have to confine themselves to the motion on the Order Paper, but I draw the attention of the hon. Gentleman to the first motion that we are about to discuss, which is wide,

"That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee".

I am well aware that the hon. Gentleman and a number of other hon. Members have been sitting in the Chamber hoping to take part in the debate on Second Reading. They will get precedence later this evening — maybe early tomorrow morning.

10.58 pm

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): I beg to move,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection.

Mr. Robert Hughes (Aberdeen, North) *rose*——

Mr. Douglas Hogg *rose*——

Mr. David Mitchell: It was my intention to move the motion briefly, as I have, and to reply to the debate. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) and the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) were seeking to catch your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Hughes: I simply want to inquire whether I shall be called to move amendments (a) and (b), which have been selected.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Ernest Armstrong): No. They will be moved formally at the end. The hon. Gentleman may speak to the motion.

Mr. Hughes: In the interests of progress, I do not intend to move amendments (a) and (b).

Mr. Richard Hickmet (Glanford and Scunthorpe): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have just had a number of points of order relating to the relevance of sections of the motion as proposed to be amended. Would it be in order for my hon. Friend the Minister to reply to the whole debate at the end of our proceedings, whenever that may come, in relation to parts of the motion, as amended? Would it be in order for him at the end of the proceedings to answer on all parts of the motion, as amended or not?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that Mr. Speaker made a clear statement to the House as to how we will proceed. The motions will be discussed in turn.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I should very much appreciate your guidance before the House commences this debate. I understand from what the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes) has just said that he will not formally move amendments (a) and (b). I have put my name to amendments (a) and (b). I should like clarification from you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on whether it is open to me to move them.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Yes; the hon. Gentleman will be allowed to move them at the end of the debate. We can have a full debate on the first paragraph, as said by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Franks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. About half an hour ago I said to Mr. Speaker that I was concerned that the debate tomorrow on the second motion, standing in my name, was in jeopardy. The more I listen to these points of order——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows very well that Mr. Speaker has already dealt with that matter. He should not waste the time of the House by raising it again.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I have clarification? I am a supporter of amendments (a) and (b), in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. Having heard you say to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) that it will be in order for him to move those amendments formally at the proper time, may I ask——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. As I have said, I thought that Mr. Speaker had made a clear statement. We will discuss the proposition and hon. Members may refer to the amendments, but the amendments will be moved formally at the end of the debate. There is no bother about that.

Mr. Brown: My question is simple, and I can summarise it in one sentence. Will it be in order, in debating the motion in the name of the Secretary of State for Transport, to refer to amendments (a) and (b)?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: There is a simple answer to that simple question: yes.

Mr. Andrew Bowden: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am getting rather confused. When Mr. Speaker was in the Chair, he said, as I understood it, that we would debate the first three lines of the motion and the amendments together. As the amendments have not yet been moved, how can we debate them at the same time? Therefore, can we not debate the motion as it stands as a whole rather than in sections?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I must remind the hon. Gentleman that we are having a joint debate, as happens often in the House. It is not necessary to move the amendments formally now. I thought that Mr. Speaker had made it very clear. He proposed that each paragraph beginning with the word "That" should be moved separately and debated with the amendments grouped with it.

Mr. Ivan Lawrence (Burton): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You are, of course, the guardian of the interests of Back Benchers, and in your high capacity you also ensure that the procedures of the House are not abused in any way.

It appears that the Government are proposing that, following Second Reading, the Channel Tunnel Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine members, but they are not prepared to explain to people such as myself —innocent Back Benchers who have just come into the Chamber to hear the arguments—the basis for making that committal. I look forward to hearing a speech from the Minister explaining the basis for the committal so that I can form a judgment on it and decide within the powers that I have as a Back Bencher which way to vote. To my absolute astonishment, the Minister sat down without giving any reason. That must be an abuse of parliamentary procedure.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Fortunately, the Minister's speech is not a matter for me.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to support my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence). This is a most extraordinary procedure, and I say that with great respect to my hon. Friend the Minister. We are dealing with a hybrid Bill that affects private interests and individuals. What we are setting out now is the method, formula and timetable for disposing of people's private rights.

I understand that it does not usually fall within the competence of the Minister of State, Department of Transport, to speak on these matters. I appreciate that and do not blame him. However, in support of what my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton said, I say that this House needs positive guidance and precedent as to the constitutional implications, the parties' legal rights and what we are about. My hon. Friend the Minister, for whom I have very great respect, does not wish to do that tonight. Therefore, we should adjourn so that my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General can come to this place and tell us what is going on. Alternatively, my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, who is present, could do that admirably. I hate to wake him from his slumbers; he looks so attractive when he is asleep.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman knows that the way in which the Minister handles the affair is not a matter for the Chair. I suggest that the House is ready to press on with the procedure motion.

Mr. Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I never argue with the Chair, as you know, but we are dealing with the rights of private individuals who are affected to a very real degree. My hon. Friend the Minister——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is pursuing the way in which the Minister has handled the affair, which is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would never do that, as you know well. I always put points of order that fall exclusively within the jurisdiction of the Chair.

The jurisdiction of the Chair is to protect the rights of individual Back Benchers and, perhaps more important, the dignity and standing of this place. I do not see how we can debate private rights of this moment and consequence unless we have guidance from those Ministers——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is again pursuing matters that are not for the Chair. It is not——

Mr. Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must resume his seat. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Mr. Forth: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Can you give us some further guidance on this matter and help me by confirming that once we follow the proposed procedure, whereby speeches on the motion will be made and then the Minister will speak, it will be in order for hon. Members to speak again in the light of what the Minister has said? That might go some of the way towards helping my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). Will that be in order?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Further speeches from hon. Members will not be in order.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I listened carefully to what Mr. Speaker said, and I do not think that he envisaged the possibility that the amendment might not be moved. It might be for the great convenience of the House if the amendment were moved formally. If one signatory to the amendment does not want to move it, others can. It would be for the convenience of the House if the assumption that Mr. Speaker clearly made in announcing this procedural decision bore fruit by the technical movement of the amendment now. There are separate motions but only one motion in the name of the Secretary of State for Transport. It is therefore only possible to divide matters up in the way Mr. Speaker has divided matters, on the assumption that the amendments are moved. If any of the amendments are not moved, Mr. Speaker's assumption is nullified and the motion cannot be divided. I recommend, with the greatest respect, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the amendment be moved, at least formally, so that debate can take place on the basis that Mr. Speaker clearly assumed and anticipated in his statement to the House.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have listened very carefully to the hon. Gentleman and I have a high regard for his concern about the procedures of the House. However, I must reiterate Mr. Speaker's words:

"I propose that each motion—that is to say, each paragraph beginning with the word 'That'—should be moved separately and debated, together with the amendments that have been grouped with it."

For instance, there are no amendments to the third motion.

"At the end of each debate, amendments to that paragraph may be moved formally, and when they have been disposed of the Question will be put on the paragraph as a whole."

That seems to be a sensible way of interpreting the orders and the discretion of the Chair. I think we should now proceed.

Mr. David Mitchell *rose*——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With the greatest respect, I do not think that Mr. Speaker, in making that announcement to the House, anticipated that amendments might not be moved. The House needs to know whether it will be debating each section beginning with the word "That" which encompasses the amendments which Mr. Speaker, by announcing his selection of amendments, clearly anticipated. It would be best if the House could know immediately whether the amendment will be moved. If not, we are doomed to have two debates on each section rather than one: one on the section beginning with the word "That," and another when it is moved formally. If it is moved formally, the Chair will be unable to deny a debate after the formal moving. There will therefore be two debates on each section rather than one. I do not think that Mr. Speaker envisaged that when he made his statement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: As I understand it, the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who is a signatory to amendments *(a)* and *(b)*, has already said that he is willing to move those amendments. Whether the others are moved is a hypothetical question which we shall deal when we come to them.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. With respect, my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) is correct. The provision is that if amendments *(a)* and *(b)* are moved only at the conclusion of the debate, until we reach that magic moment we will be debating the substantive motion only. Accordingly, when, and if, I move amendment *(a)* we will have a fresh debate. Would it not be far better to allow me to move amendments *(a)* and *(b)* now so that we can have an open debate that would encompasss the totality of what Mr. Speaker had in mind?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman knows that we discuss amendments again and again without them being moved formally or without them being moved. The hon. Gentleman will be able to refer to the amendments if we can proceed to discuss paragraph 1, and we should do that now.

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): Following the ruling which you have now reconfirmed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which was given earlier by Mr. Speaker, as one of the hon. Members sat through the earlier debate, I crave the indulgence of the Chair and ask that we be allowed to get on with the debate on the first motion now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Mr. Speaker said that he had taken into consideration those who have been here all day. The Minister is anxious to intervene.

Mr. David Mitchell: It might be for the convenience of the House if I went a little further than I did when I first got to my feet. My intention then was formally to open the debate and allow it to proceed on the amendments and on the substantive motion in the form selected by Mr. Speaker. From the points of order, it is apparent that a number of my hon. Friends are a little perplexed by the procedure which is being followed. It is perhaps true to say that this is not a procedure that we follow on frequent occasions. Perhaps I should say that we are now about to debate the committal motion, and its basic role is to set up the Select Committee.

After Second Reading of the Channel Tunnel Bill it is proposed:

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection:

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 17th June——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is now going to the second motion. He should stick to the first.

Mr. Mitchell: The complexities of procedure are such that I have gone further than I should at this stage, and I apologise. I am as anxious as other hon. Members to make progress in this matter.

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. You will recall that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) raised with the Chair the possibility of a Law Officer or the Leader of the House being in their places in order to recognise the fact that we are talking about procedural matters. He said that my hon. Friend the Minister of State, with all due deference to his ministerial abilities, is not the proper, competent Minister to deal with what is essentially a procedural matter.

You have just told my hon. Friend the Minister, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he should not be pursuing a debate at this stage on the second motion. On the basis of that injunction from you, I strongly submit that we would save ourselves a great deal of time if he could be guided and assisted by somebody from the Government Front Bench who is experienced in the constitutional and procedural matters of the House. For example, the Leader of the House should surely be in his place to assist and guide us, because if my hon. Friend the Minister finds himself in another difficulty we shall find ourselves——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is repeating what has already been made clear to Mr. Speaker, and, indeed, to me. The hon. Gentleman knows that it is not a matter for me which Minister is to open or reply to a debate.

I remind the House what is before it. I have already put the Question on the motion,

"That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection".

Amendments (a) and (b) have been tabled and we shall discuss those with the motion that I have read out.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having clarified the matter. It is clear that we are now debating the motion,

"That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection".

I understand that amendments (a) and (b) have been tabled, and it was my intention to reply to those. Am I right in understanding that, quite apart from the question whether the amendments are moved or not, I shall have the opportunity to reply to the debate on the terms of the motion selected by Mr. Speaker?

Before you took the Chair, Mr. Deputy Speaker, a number of hon. Members raised with Mr. Speaker the fact that they had sat through the earlier debate and were not able to participate in it, but expressed the hope that they would be able to do so now. I am concerned because I know that there are some points of substance which hon. Members wish to have clarified, and I am anxious not to mislead them into assuming that I will be able to reply to those points later if I will not be able to do so. I understood from Mr. Speaker that he would allow a fairly wide ranging debate on the first of the amendments so that there would be an opportunity for hon. Members who were cut out of the debate earlier to participate and for the debate to be properly concluded.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I was in the Chamber when Mr. Speaker made his statement and replied to the points of order. He said that the first motion, which refers the Bill to a Select Committee, would give an opportunity for those hon. Members who are acquainted with the procedures of the House to participate, and, no doubt, they will use the procedures accordingly. However, that does not mean that they can get out of order. That would be for the Chair to decide. I cannot rule hypothetically by saying that anything that hon. Members raise will be permitted. However, it is a fairly wide motion, which is to decide whether to commit the Bill to a Select Committee. I have no doubt that those who were here during the debate this afternon will be able to relate their comments accordingly.

Mr. Mitchell: We are debating the motion, That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine members, and there are amendments to increase the number to 11. That is where the debate will now take place.

Mr. Roger Stott (Wigan): You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that my hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes), in a brief intervention in the interest of moving the debate forward, told the House that he did not wish to move the two amendments to increase the number on the Select Committee. As I understand it, it is permissible for the House to debate the substantive motion, but I must make it clear that we have not moved those two amendments in the interest of progress.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The hon. Gentleman is wasting time.

Mr. Stott: If anybody is wasting time it is certainly not the Opposition. We have not moved those amendments. The Chair will decide what the debate will be about in the light of what we have not moved.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Perhaps I should clarify the position. I have said that the debate will be on the motion and that we can consider the amendments. It will be for any hon. Member at the end of the debate to move an amendment formally if he so desires.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Is it not irresponsible and an abuse of procedure for Opposition Members to table amendments and then not seek to move them simply in order to make a political point?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: All kinds of things happen in the House from time to time.

Mr. Andrew Faulds (Warley, East): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If my hon. Friends on the Front Bench have failed to move amendments they have put on the Order Paper, would it be in order for other hon. Members to move them so that we can get on?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thought that I had made that perfectly clear. We are to have a general debate, including the amendments. If any hon. Member wants to move the amendments at the end of the debate, that will be in order. They will have to be moved formally, of course.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield): On a further point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I wish to see these proceedings speeded up, as I am sure you do. Am I correct in assuming, with reference to the answer you gave to the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), that if a Conservative Member, while speaking to the substantive motion, makes specific reference to the amendments, you will not rule him out of order because that is part of the argument——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I thought that I had made that clear a number of times.

11.25 pm

Mr. Douglas Hogg (Grantham): It seems to me that the time has come for these amendments to be moved, and I should like——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Again the hon. Gentleman is wasting the time of the House. I have made it quite clear that we can go ahead with the general debate, including the amendments, which can be referred to. At the end of the debate, I shall ask whether the amendments are to be moved.

Mr. Hogg *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman is not pursuing the point.

Mr. Hogg: No, I am not, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to catch your eye. Will you forgive me for asking whether you called me?

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Gentleman must not tempt me.

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was in some doubt about whether I had been called to speak on the motion.

I am deeply concerned about the position that the Opposition have adopted. Those of us who are concerned about private rights—and however one looks at the Bill it affects private rights to a considerable and grave extent—are deeply concerned that the Labour party, which presumably thought that it was making points of immediate consequence——

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I understand that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is under the impression that he has been called by you to speak in the debate, but he is under a misapprehension. I understood that you had called my hon. Friend the Minister of State, whom the House wanted to hear on the general question, to open the debate, but you are now under the impression that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham is speaking on a point of order, and he thought that he was not.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. Had the Minister finished his speech?

Mr. David Mitchell: I had finished explaining to the House what we are about, and I shall now sit down to listen to the debate, and reply later.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I have already proposed the Question, so the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) is making his speech.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I am extremely grateful——

Mr. Ian Gow (Eastbourne): On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think that I heard my hon. Friend the Minister of State ask you whether at the end of the debate he would be able to reply on behalf of the Government, but I did not hear your response to that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman. The Minister will be able to reply, as he has that right.

Mr. Hogg: I apologise to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) in that I clearly did not make my commencing remarks sufficiently clear. I see that I might be thought to be raising a point of order, but I was seeking to make the preamble to my speech.

I am concerned about the position that the Labour party has adopted in this matter. However one looks at the issue and the motion before the House, this is inevitably a matter of great concern to the people of Kent. The procedure that we are adopting touches private rights to a profound degree. More than that, it goes behind the normal procedures that are adopted in such development planning. Therefore, it was right that the Labour party tabled these amendments. It was because we shared its concern that I and others, for example, my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) put our names to these amendments.

I suspected that there was something funny about the Labour party's amendments and attitude when I put my name to the amendments. I am not one whit surprised that the Labour party Benches are so empty and that it has but one Front Bench spokesman. What does it suppose it is doing? The Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, the shadow Secretary of State for Employment, the shadow Leader of the House, and Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all put their names to amendments that affect people's lives, do not move them, and go away.

What kind of nonsense and claptrap is this? Why are they treating the people of Kent in this way? Ah, we have another Labour party Back Bencher. We now have four Members of the Labour party present, so the people of Kent——

Mr. Faulds: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is not one of us.

Mr. Hogg: We have three and a half members of the Labour party and the alliance. That is the way in which they are treating a matter that is of profound concern to the people of Kent.

I have a fairly agnostic view of the Channel tunnel, but one thing that I am not agnostic about, and never have been, is that we should be very careful to ensure that private rights are protected. Whatever we do in this matter—I tend to think that the Channel tunnel is necessary and desirable—it will have profound consequences for the constituents of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and all the other constituents represented in this place. To find that the debate is not being participated in by the Labour party is a shame and a humiliation to that party.

Mr. Gow: In the marvellous invective to which my hon. Friend has treated the House, is there not one omission? He has not referred to the absence from the House of Members of the Social Democratic party. Will my hon. Friend please direct his invective to that absence, as well as to the absence of others?

Mr. Hogg: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). The only reason why I did not direct my fire at the SDP for its absence is that its Members are never here. The House has become used to their absence. We do not particularly want to see them any more.

As for the Liberal party, it is always very nice to see the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). He is quite a very good attender. That singles him out from the rest of his brethen, who are not here tonight. I wonder whether they will be voting here tonight. I do not see anybody on the SDP Benches. They will not be voting tonight. What about——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have listened very carefully to the hon. Member's preamble. He really ought to get to the meat of the motion.

Mr. Hogg: Mr. Deputy-Speaker, you are as always wholly right. May I say to you, if I have by any chance transgressed, that I am extremely sorry.

The point that I am making is a serious one. We are dealing with the rights of individuals. I do not think that the Select Committee procedure is an appropriate way of dealing with private rights. We shall come in a moment to subsequent amendments about dates, but a whole range of private rights will be touched on, affected and sometimes diminished. The most obvious ones are rights of property, where there are compulsory purchase orders; and questions of diminished values or blight, but many other rights will be touched upon. There will be diminished employment, diminished employment prospects, diminished trade, and damage to the environment. A whole host of rights will be touched on.

I do not see how a Committee of nine, even nine highly effective and well-informed hon. Members, will be able to determine whether the Bill affects those rights to an extent that we should amend the Bill. If we are to do it in that way, surely we are contemplating sitting for months and months. Worse than that, the petitioners — — *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Gerald Bermingham (St. Helens, South): Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will address his hon. Friends.

Mr. Hogg: I was addressing those present in the House —the hon. Gentleman and my hon. Friends. It must be said that, with five exceptions, the Labour Party —— *[Interruption.]*

Mr. Faulds: We all appreciate the hon. Gentleman's literacy, but he seems to be innumerate.

Mr. Hogg: I have never regarded the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) as a full Member of the Labour party. When I add up the numbers, I never give him a complete digit.

Mr. Faulds: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. It is late at night, and he has probably had a cup or two, as I have. I welcome the goodly fellow making pleasant chat, but he must not call in question my 20 years of very loyal service to my party, about which there is no question.

Mr. Hogg: That is the only thing concerning the hon. Gentleman about which there is no question.

Mr. Faulds: The hon. Gentleman is obviously unworldly and out of touch with the realities of his colleagues' lives. I am extraordinarily close to the realities of a range of issues, and I am normal.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I think that we should return to debating the motion.

Mr. Hogg: I feel that we are straying from the straight and narrow ways on which the hon. Member wished to keep us. I am making a serious point. We are talking about rights. We are talking about money and property interests, employment prospects and the environment. I do not believe that such a development can be considered properly by a Select Committee. I do not think that we can go forward in that way.

If we are to go forward in such a way, we need to have as large a Select Committee as we can muster. We need to bring to bear on the questions a diversity of experience and background. We need sympathies that are not always tempered, as it were, by the establishments of both parties, and we need a Select Committee that is prepared to approach the matter independently.

I understand—this is why I wanted the Leader of the House and the Law Officers to be present in the Chamber —that the only way in which the Bill can be shaped so as to reflect the private interests is through the mechanism of a Select Committee. If the Select Committee is narrowly drawn, if it does not have within its number people of sufficient independence and of critical mind, the Committee's report to the House will not reflect the true interests of the people of Kent.

I know that I have spoken for a long time tonight — [HON. MEMBERS: "More".] Hon. Members have never said "More" to me before. I shall disappoint them.

Mr. Hickmet: My hon. Friend has not defined or explained why, in his view — we have not heard from the Minister, so we do not have a view from the Front Bench—the Bill is a hybrid Bill. As it is a public Bill which affects certain private interests in a number of counties in the south-east of England, does my hon. Friend agree that it is not suitable for committal to a Select Committee as a hybrid Bill?

Mr. Hogg: That is precisely why I urged upon Mr. Speaker and yourself, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the need for the Leader of the House to respond to the debate, or, if the Leader is unable to do so, either my right hon. and learned Friend the Attorney-General or my hon. and learned Friend the Solicitor-General.

There is no doubt that the Bill is a hybrid Bill. Later, my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton will tell us about hybrid Bills. He is a great expert on them. The Bill touches individuals and their personal proprietorial interests. That makes it a hybrid Bill. There is no doubt that a hybrid Bill has to be treated in the way in which we propose to treat it. The point I am making is not that it is not a hybrid Bill, but rather that the procedure that we have evolved over centuries for tackling the problem of hybridity is inappropriate to a measure of this scale.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend accept that, contrary to what he said about the definition of a private Bill, there are many types of hybrid Bills? I refer him to the report of the Committee on Hybrid Bills (Procedure in Committee) of 1948. As we go on through the evening we shall be able to——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief and relevant to the motion.

Mr. Hogg: I have never found it so difficult to persuade hon. Members to allow me to resume my place.

Mr. Gow: I wonder whether my hon. Friend is departing slightly from the motion. Would he think it wise to give to the Committee of Selection some advice about those who might comprise the nine, the 11 or the 15 Members who should serve on the Select Committee? that is surely germane to my hon. Friend's arguments.

Mr. Hogg: What my hon. Friend has said is profoundly important. We return to the premise from which we start, which is an important one. The Bill touches on people's proprietorial interests and on their employment. The only way in which the Bill can be shaped to reflect these conflicts of interest is through the mechanism of the Select

[Mr. Hogg]

Committee. It would be a tragedy if the Select Committee were to follow too tightly the views of the establishments on either side of the House. The Select Committee is the only way of adjudicating on genuine complaints. When the members of the Selection Committee, which is chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Fox), come to examine the question of those who are to serve on the Select Committee, they should not take the advice of any Front Bencher. They should ask themselves these questions: first, whether the hon. Member whom they are proposing to select is independent and whether he or she has a financial——

Mr. Michael Brown: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Hogg: I shall finish this point and then I shall give way.

The Selection Committee should ask itself whether the Member in question is financially independent. Secondly, it should ask itself whether he or she has a critical mind. Thirdly, it should ask itself whether he or she can be bullied. If the Member can be bullied, he or she should not serve on the Select Committee.

Mr. Brown: This is a vital issue. It will not have escaped my hon. Friend's attention that just about every Member of this place has received during the past few weeks briefing or lobbying material from various parties that are for the Bill or against it. As for the need for independence on the part of those who serve on the Select Committee, does he agree that it will be difficult for there to be true independence, bearing in mind that those who are selected to serve on the Committee may well have been influenced already by the briefing material that has been deluged on us by various public relations companies during the past few weeks?

Mr. Hogg: This is a serious question because independence matters. By "independence", I mean Members who do not have a direct geographical interest in the constituencies that will be affected. Members such as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South will no doubt be presenting evidence and speaking on behalf of their constituents. Members who have a geographical connection with the area should not serve on the Committee.

We know that there are financial, trade union, business and City interests which seek representation.

Mr. Rob Hayward (Kingswood): My hon. Friend has referred to geographical connections. Will he identify what he would define as a geographical area and "interest"?

Mr. Hogg: That is a fair point. Many Members think that they will be affected directly or indirectly by the Bill. For example, many Members who represent Scottish constituencies say that they will be adversely affected, and Members from the west midlands take a similar view. Virtually no hon. Member has no geographical interest. I am saying that Members who have an immediate geographical interest should be excluded. That is because the Committee of Selection should try to balance the interests of those who serve on the Select Committee. The business of the Members who represent the geographical areas that will be affected is to make representations to the Select Committee, and it will be for the Select Committee to adjudicate on those representations.

Mr. Gow: Before my hon. Friend comes to the end of his most interesting speech, will he address himself to the key question in the motion, which is that the Committee should be composed of nine Members? Has my hon. Friend directed his formidable intellect to that number? Were there not 12 disciples and are there not 22 members of the Cabinet? Will my hon. Friend disclose to the House why we should hit upon nine Members, bearing in mind the two excellent precedents I have given?

Mr. Hogg: There were indeed 12 disciples, but one proved wanting. There are 22 members of the Cabinet, but I hesitate to say how many are wanting. I recall that when I came into this place seven years ago——

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): I am seeking a hint from the hon. Gentleman as to the number that might be regarded as wanting out of the 22. The hon. Gentleman obviously cannot give a conclusive answer, but he may be able to help.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member answers that, he will be out of order.

Mr. Hogg: I am extremely grateful, as I did not wish to blight my prospects for ever by going through a great part of the Cabinet.

There is no great magic in nine, 11 or 15 Members, but there is a magic in having as many independent Members, incapable of being bullied, as possible serving on the Committee. As 11 is the only number on the Order Paper which is in excess of nine, I am moving in favour of 11 rather than nine.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: Does my hon. Friend consider that his argument is strengthened by the fact that the Standing Orders Committee, of which I am a member, found it necessary, because of the tie in the Committee, with the Chairman finding it inappropriate to use his casting vote, that the matter relating to people's proprietary rights should be referred to the House? The House debated this matter at length yesterday. My hon. Friend's amendment is correct because to have nine people on a Select Committee is totally inadequate to deal with a matter of this gravity.

Mr. Hogg: I agree. I do not see how any Committee of this House can examine proprietorial interests that are affected by a Bill of this complexity. I agree with my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton) that 11 is better than nine. Of the unworthy choices presented to us, I prefer 11.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): As a lawyer, does my hon. Friend agree that 12 is an appropriate number? The petitioners should have the right of challenge of at least three members of the Committee. In that way there would be a great degree of fairness in the composition of the Committee.

Mr. Hogg: That is a most ingenious suggestion. If each petitioner had the right to challenge three members of the Committee, no Select Committee would ever be formed in this place because, at one stage or another, there would be objections to all hon. Members.

Mr. Nicholas Soames (Crawley): Will my hon. Friend ignore the blandishments of my hon. Friend the Member

for Macclesfield (Mr. Winterton), who has for a long time now borne the imprint of the last lobbyist to have sat on him? The important point is not the number but the geographical content of the Committee.

My hon. Friend will be aware that much of the detail of the Bill and much of the land acquisition hangs upon the highly tenuous forecasts of the Department of Transport. The recently constructed motorway, which runs near to my constituency, is virtually at a standstill for five hours a day because of the Department's incompetence in assessing the volume of the traffic that would use it. Hon. Members who have had experience of the Department's incompetence should be included on the Committee.

Mr. Hogg: Regarding my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield, I have always thought that the imprint was the other way round. My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) is right about the geographical connection. As we are dealing with traffic projections which will affect people's proprietorial interests, we need both people of an independent mind and people capable of assessing independent expert evidence.

Mr. Hickmet: When addressing his mind to the number of Members to serve on the Select Committee, what will my hon. Friend think about how those Members should be selected? The motion proposes that they should be nominated by the Committee of Selection. What does he say about his amendment that five hon. Members should be nominated by this honourable House?

Mr. Hogg: We always have this problem with the selection of Members. The Committee of Selection is the most independent body we have yet achieved, but some of us suspect that sometimes the Whips' Offices of the Labour party and the Government have had some influence on it.

Mr. Gow: It is most uncharacteristic of my hon. Friend to ignore serious points put to him. The Leader of the House is present. Is it not open to my hon. Friend to offer advice to the Committee of Selection about those who should serve on the Committee? Would my hon. Friend care to comment on two suggestions? First, that——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions should be brief. The hon. Gentleman is almost guilty of making a speech.

Mr. Gow: My intervention will be brief. My suggestion is that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) may with advantage serve on the Committee, and, since geography has been mentioned, perhaps the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace).

Mr. Hogg: I certainly take the first part of that suggestion seriously.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: Why?

Mr. Hogg: Although there has been a certain levity in this debate, we are talking about a serious matter. *[Interruption.]* I apologise for being repetitive and I am willing to sit down, which is what I have been trying to do for the past few minutes. We are talking about major rights which can be protected only by this House. This House can form a view about the extent to which those rights are affected by the Bill only through the mechanism of the Select Committee. Therefore, it is important that the Select Committee which is considering the petitioners' claims should be as distinguished and independent as possible. It should be chaired at the highest possible level. I can think of few people more distinguished or more independent than my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath).

Mr. John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West): My hon. Friend said that hon. Members may be disqualified from sitting on the Committee for geographical reasons. Does he agree that it is possible to conceive that any hon. Member representing a port may be considered to have a vested interest, no matter where that port is? The implications are great when one thinks of all the hon. Members who may be disqualified on the ground that they have major construction companies, steel manufacturers or manufacturers of boring equipment located in their constituency. One can give a long list of hon. Members who may be disqualified on that ground. Does my hon. Friend agree with that?

Mr. Hogg: I agree, and an enormous number of vested interests—financial, geographical and trade union—are involved in this issue. The Committee of Selection will have a difficult, perhaps impossible, task to form a Select Committee which will be seen to be independent.

Mr. Cash: Is my hon. Friend aware that it is normal with a hybrid Bill for the Select Committee to be chosen partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection and that the proposal in the motion departs significantly from precedent in that respect?

Mr. Hogg: Yes. There is always a necessary tension, as it were, between the view of the House as a whole, which tends to be more independent on the question of nomination, and that of the Committee of Selection. Although no Front-Bench Member would admit it, discussions can sometimes affect the composition of a Select Committee as determined by the Committee of Selection. That is why the House should have an element on the Select Committee which is nominated otherwise than through the Committee of Selection.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend is providing hon. Members with the only guidance to be given on the motion. According to Mr. Speaker's direction, if we voted for the committal motion, we should have to vote for the series of amendments, and that would allow us to vote to have nine or 11 Select Committee Members. According to my hon. Friend's guidance, it would be extremely difficult to find nine, let alone 11, Members to sit on the Committee. That gives rise to the problem—remembering that no Members of the Liberal party have turned up tonight to move any of the amendments that stand in their names, and no Members of the SDP are here either—that if any Members of the alliance were appointed to sit on the Select Committee there would be no guarantee that they would ever turn up.

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, and I recall that a small fine may be imposed in those circumstances, but the SDP is so rich that that would not matter to the Members of that party.

Mr. Michael Brown: Is it not a fact that Members serving on Select Committees considering private Bills are required to attend and that those who fail to attend must be reported to the authorities of the House?

Mr. Hogg: Indeed, and that fact has given rise to problems in the Labour party in recent weeks.

[Mr. Hogg]

I imagine that thousands of people will be affected by the tunnel development, and we look to my hon. Friends who represent Thanet to spell that out in detail. Many will have a direct pecuniary or personal interest in this matter. It is difficult to see how justice can be done to them through the Select Committee mechanism.

Mr. Ashby: My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) spoke about the geographical composition of the Committee. I have the honour to represent a constituency which includes the town of Ashby de la Zouch. Contrary to the words of the song which puts it by the sea, it is in the centre of this fair island.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels: No, it is not; Leicester is.

Mr. Ashby: It is equidistant from the sea on all sides. Perhaps it is people living in places like that that my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) had in mind when he talked about there being no geographical connection to the sea.

Mr. Hogg: I agree; but the point I am seeking to make is that the geographical content consists of the hon. Members and the local interests who make representations to the Select Committee. It is for the Select Committee to be as powerful, as independent, as impartial and as prestigious as possible so that its reports to the House carry real weight.

Mr. Gow: My hon. Friend said that it was of supreme importance in connection with the Bill that the membership of the Select Committee should be as prestigious as possible. Despite the criteria set by my hon. Friend, he has failed to address his mind to the key question that I put to him earlier: would it not be in accordance with my hon. Friend's criteria of great importance and of great prestige if my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) were to be a member of the Select Committee? My hon. Friend may think that our right hon. Friend should be the only member.

Mr. Hogg: I have a great respect for my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup. I certainly accept that the only prospect of getting a wholly unanimous report would be if he were indeed the sole member of the Select Committee. Although he would bring a highly critical eye to bear on the Government's proposals, I do not think it would be wholly fair to the people of Kent to leave it to him.

12.3 am

Mr. Mark Wolfson (Sevenoaks): I am delighted to follow the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). During the interesting, amusing and also serious speech that he made in the short time avaiable to him he made many references to the worries of the people of Kent. It may be convenient for the House, and I hope helpful to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) in making up his mind about how he will vote on the motion, if I spell out some of the specific worries felt by the people of Kent.

It is now clear to the House that the concept of a fixed link between Britain and the continent is highly unpopular with a great many people in Kent. There are several reasons for that unpopularity, and among them is the importance of our island status. That was referred to in the earlier debate. That importance has been proven many times in war and is valued for what it has given our nation over the centuries in peace. Distrust of the French by the British is historic, and that distrust is still alive and kicking in villages and towns on this side of the Straits of Dover. People feel that in some way or another the French rather than the British will gain the bulk of the benefits from the building of the Channel tunnel.

Increased traffic by road and rail, more commercial activity, more building, more population pressures in an already crowded corner——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must relate what he is saying to whether the Bill should go to a Select Committee. He must not make the speech that he originally intended to make on Second Reading.

Mr. Wolfson: I fully appreciate that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in my opening remarks I made the point that I thought that these factors would be of benefit to the House in deciding whether the Bill should go forward to a Select Committee. These are the concerns, in specific terms, to which my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham has already referred in very general terms, and I believe that I am putting flesh on those bare bones to which he referred.

Mr. Faulds: A few moments ago the hon. Gentleman referred to the adverse reaction to France of the people in the area near to his constituency and in his constituency, but is it not the case that those of us who are opposed to the tunnel—and there are many more of us than the Government suspect—are not primarily worried because of the French challenge? Some of us are Francophiles, but we can still adopt an anti-tunnel attitude without being considered anti-French.

What we are worried about is that the French, who are much more subtle in their governmental backing of the interests of France than are the present Conservative Government in backing the interests of Britain, will steal a march on us. It is not that we are anti-French. We just think that they are rather cleverer than this Government will be in their conduct of this matter.

Mr. Wolfson: The hon. Gentleman obviously speaks for himself and puts forward his own views. On this occasion, and in this context, I am speaking only of the concerns of constituents, as I know them.

My constituents' further concerns are about increased traffic by road and rail, more commercial activity, more building and the pressure of population in this crowded corner. It is a horrific nightmare to those who expect to be directly affected by the terminal, by new roads through or close to their properties and by more, and noisy, rail traffic both on already crowded lines and on those that are little used at present and are therefore reasonable to live by.

In bringing these matters to the attention of the House, I believe that I am not only helping it to decide whether it is right that committal to a Select Committee should take place, but giving it an opportunity to consider the membership of that Committee, which was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton: My hon. Friend has mentioned a number of important aspects, but will he direct his attention to the question of employment, which certainly concerns every right hon. and hon. Member of

the House and which must influence those who are to be members of the Select Committee? Will he direct his attention to the probable ultimate increase in employment in Kent by the creation of 5,500 long-term jobs after the beginning of the next century as a direct result of the building of the Channel tunnel and to the substantial increase in the number of jobs in other regions of the country that will be provided by the increased opportunities for industry and commerce as a result of the Channel tunnel? How does he believe that this might be reflected by those who are members of the Select Committee?

Mr. Wolfson: My hon. Friend leads me very comfortably and happily into my next point, which is that although there are present concerns about the anticipated loss of jobs in the ferry industry and about our capacity to maintain a ferry fleet, which has relevance in time of war, I am quite clear that once the Channel tunnel is built and running the benefit to other parts of Britain from the increase in the number of jobs will be very real, and certainly the members of the Select Committee should reflect that concern, opportunity and interest.

Mr. Faulds: I do not follow the hon. Gentleman's argument. He seems to be saying that benefits will come to the regions after the tunnel has been opened. That is not my understanding. Is it not the case that the benefits, however small they are, will come during the construction of the tunnel? There will be no benefit to the regions after the tunnel is completed, because all the jobs related to the construction of the tunnel will have finished.

Mr. Wolfson: The hon. Gentleman misses the point completely in the second part of his intervention. I agree with him, and I am grateful to him for reminding the House, that great benefits will accrue to all regions during construction, provided that British industry is competitive enough in its tenders to win a large slice of the available contracts. Once the building is finished and the tunnel is in operation, industry in the regions will have the benefit of being able to export on an equal basis with other European countries instead of bearing the expense of the Channel sea crossing. That will be a major and continuing benefit that will be clearly reflected in increased job opportunities.

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): Does my hon. Friend agree that the composition of that Committee must also reflect the genuine anxiety felt in the country outside Kent that we are simply changing one system of communication for another? In some areas, people do not believe that it will give us an advantage over the French, the Germans or anyone else, because communications may be better——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. First, the hon. Gentleman should address the Chair, not turn his back on it. Secondly, if the hon. Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) were to pursue that matter he would be getting away from the question whether the Bill should go to a Select committee.

Mr. Walker: I apologise for not addressing you directly, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am trying to point out that the Select committee, if it is to consider the Bill carefully and objectively, must reflect the genuine views and concerns throughout the country. If it is to be independent, its members must realise that, under the present system, the Europeans import less from us than we import from them and that nothing will change. All that we shall do will be to improve communications, but competitiveness will remain the same.

Mr. Wolfson: I accept my hon. Friend's point that those serious matters must be reflected in the membership of the Committee.

The fears of constituents in Kent, which I have mentioned to help the House to decide how the Bill should go forward, have been increased by the apparent attempt by the Government to push through the necessary legislation with undue haste. I take the opportunity to quote from a thoughtful and erudite correspondent, who said:

> "The Anglo-Saxon detests being pushed around in a hurry. It's up hackles, in toes. Often the poet sees it clearest, and Kipling lived in the Weald. 'But don't try that game on the Saxon; you'll have the whole brood round your ears. They'll be at you and on you like hornets, and if you are wise you will yield.'"

His point about not pushing them around is good advice. In deciding about the move forward to a Select Committee, the House must take into account the fact that people do not wish to be pushed round, but wish to be certain that they will get a fair and balanced hearing, with as much time as they need on the matter——

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Wolfson: I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman in a moment.

People should have enough time to be fully heard on the matters of their concern, and that will go some way towards dealing with the problem and difficulties that I am representing to the House this evening.

I am a supporter of the concept of the tunnel, and I believe that there is great benefit to the country in it. However, the project can be carried out fairly only if the Select Committee is of the right composition.

Mr. Faulds: I am pleased that the hon. Gentleman put his arguments in such a succinct form in terms of the short verse that he quoted. I had not heard those words before. I would be most grateful to him if he would repeat them, so that I can remember them. Having once read them and rehearsed them, he might do better next time round, and it might be that much more memorable and effective. I entirely endorse what he had to say.

Mr. Wolfson: I do not have the benefit of the training of the hon. Gentleman in learning lines and then repeating them word for word. I was merely quoting what a constituent had written to me.

I should like to turn now to other concerns that again bear on the procedural future of the Bill. A great deal of work has been carried out by Eurotunnel, the group, carrying out the project, in endeavouring to develop effective consultation in Kent. I think that it is an important point for the House to bear in mind that the promoters of the project, who have come in for a good deal of criticism in previous debates on the matter, are taking great trouble to involve, and to be available to, those who have concerns about the development that will be caused in Kent. I think that that is an important point to take into account.

Mr. Butterfill: As we are dealing with the composition of the Committee and as my hon. Friend has graphically illustrated the emotions that the Bill has built up in Kent

[Mr Butterfill]

and the strong views and interests that exist in Kent regarding the Bill, may I ask whether he is suggesting that this would automatically disqualify from membership of the Committee any Kentish man or man of Kent who was an hon. Member of the House? If so, would that not disqualify automatically and rather sadly our right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), as was so eloquently suggested by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow)?

Mr. Wolfson: No. I remind my hon. Friend that it is not I who was suggesting specific qualifications for members of the Committee, and certainly not I who suggested that geographical qualifications should work against their selection. In my view, to achieve a balanced Committee, there has to be representation from the areas most concerned. I do not think that any of us in the House would be here if we were not prepared on occasion to speak for local interests. That is part of the job, just as it is part of the job to take a national view on things. That is why from my own viewpoint I support the Channel tunnel as a project, because I believe that it will be of value to the nation in the future. However, I also see it as part of my job to air the concern of my constituents about the way in which it may affect them exactly.

I deal now with another area where any constituents will be directly affected and where they may well wish to petition the Committee about the problems that they are likely to face. They are very concerned about the effect that increased rail traffic will have on the commuter services that they currently enjoy.

Mr. Gale: Enjoy?

Mr. Wolfson: My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) makes a good point. The benefits that they have now, such as they are, may be curtailed by increased rail traffic and their current rights therefore adversely affected. So the matter is relevant to this debate.

Additional trains will run on the line through Sevenoaks to Charing Cross. That will be the main passenger link between the coast and London. There will also be increased freight traffic on the line running through Maidstone, Otford and Swanley. There is relatively lower use of that line now. The line running from Tonbridge to Redhill will also have increased freight usage.

All that will have an effect on my constituents and their concern at how their livelihoods, the peace and quiet that they enjoy, the opportunity that they have to travel up and down to town in British Rail——

Mr. Butterfill: Cattle trucks.

Mr. Wolfson: I thank my hon. Friend. Yes, in British Rail cattle trucks. I call them bone shakers. They are often dirty and are not in good condition. Nevertheless, even the low level of service that exists in some cases now could be further curtailed. Again they may wish to petition Parliament on those issues. Therefore, the membership of the Select Committee must include individuals who are in a position to take an enlightened and interested view, based on their own knowledge and background.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to bring some of these points to the attention of the House before it makes its decision about the committal of the Bill.

12.22 am

Mr. Simon Hughes (Southwark and Bermondsey): The hon. and learned Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) criticised the alliance earlier for not being here to move amendments which it had tabled. If he looked at the selection list, he would realise that there are four groupings of amendments and that none of the amendments tabled by my hon. Friends and myself is in this grouping. Unlike other parties, we shall move the amendments that we have tabled and we hope that they will be voted on.

None the less, it is important that our view should be put on the other amendments that are not in our names. In relation to the amendments which we are discussing at the moment, which I understand are to be moved, although not by a member of the Labour party which originally tabled them, I endorse the view that on a matter of such importance the Select Committee procedure should allow the maximum number of participants. Therefore, I commend the amendment which suggests that there should be 11 Members on the Select Committee.

Amendment (b), which proposes that five of the 11 should be nominated by the House and six by the relevant Committee, is the most democratic way of ensuring that the membership of the Select Committee is not carved up by the usual channels. It is important that hon. Members who have an interest, and who respect and understand the national importance of the matter, should have a chance to participate in the Select Committee.

It will be difficult to find any number of hon. Members, be it nine or 11, who do not have an interest and who are not in some way affected by the Bill. That is accepted by hon. Members on both sides of the House. But, because of the controversial nature of the Bill, and particularly because of the importance of the Bill to the people of Kent, who will be most substantially affected, they will be better served by the larger rather than the smaller number of Members, who will represent a wider variety of views and will hopefully, therefore, be better able to represent their interests and respond to the concerns put forward by the petitioners.

I hope that when the time comes the House will agree to both the amendments that have been selected and debated with the first motion. That will allow the procedures of this place to be seen in a good light and, perhaps, give somewhat more encouragement to the people of Kent than the performance that they would have witnessed had they been here for the two hours until now, when they would have heard very little on the important substantive issues and a considerable amount that would not have given them any great enthusiasm or encouragement to believe that their views would be represented.

I hope that, if we are to be here for a long time through the night, more than four or five of the 16 Members elected to serve Kent constituencies will attend and participate in the debate. If the matter is of importance to the people of Kent, their representatives should be here to put forward their views.

12.25 am

Sir John Farr (Harborough): I wish to raise a couple of points about the desirability or otherwise of keeping members of the Select Committee informed as and when they deliberate on the Bill.

One matter that many of us have had drawn to our attention is that it is thought widely in this country that if we are to have a tunnel—and many of us are not convinced that it is necessary—it should be of the right sort. When the Select Committee considers the representations made to it, one of the overriding factors that it should bear in mind is whether the right sort of tunnel has been chosen by the Government.

There is a view that if a tunnel is considered necessary, it would be wrong to choose one that would be hostage to the railway system. The original idea, when we first considered a tunnel, was for a combined road and rail link, and I believe that was right. I have listened to all the arguments today, but no one has deployed an argument in any convincing detail why we abandoned the original road-rail link idea and are now stuck with only a rail link.

I am a great believer in the railway system, and while we have an onward looking rail authority the project may be successful. However, it places us very much in the hands of the railway unions, and we cannot but continually bear in mind the militant attitude of some of them. For example, millions of pounds worth of new rolling stock cannot be brought into use on the London-midlands line because of lack of co-operation from the unions. Therefore, the first matter that the Select Committee should consider is whether we have chosen the right sort of tunnel. I think it is the wrong sort.

Another view that will no doubt be put to the Committee by many of the objectors—and it is as well that it should be mentioned today—is whether we need a tunnel at all. Earlier in our debates there were speeches both in favour and against——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is debating the principle. He must relate his remarks to whether the Bill should be committed to a Select Committee.

Sir John Farr: I understand your point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I was attempting to stress the sort of matters that should be drawn to the attention of the Select Committee. I was guided by Mr. Speaker who earlier said that the debate could be fairly wide-ranging. I was——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not put words into Mr. Speaker's mouth. I was present when Mr. Speaker referred to those hon. Members who had been here all day and expressed his anxiety that they should have an opportunity to speak. However, he did not say that the debate would be wide-ranging. We are discussing petitioning and whether to refer the Bill to a Select Committee. The hon. Gentleman must relate his remarks to the motion before the House.

Sir John Farr: I will certainly do that.

We have heard lengthy speeches about the number of members for the Select Committee. If I so wish, I can deploy my arguments at considerable length and stay within the bounds of order. The numbers of members proposed for the Select Committee is in no way adequate, to deal with the many problems that are likely to arise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) referred to the composition of the Select Committee and suggested that it should consist of one person only. I believe that there should be a wide-ranging Committee with many members.

Mr. Faulds: Should the hon. Gentleman not examine with more care that very rational and sensible suggestion that the Committee should consist of one person and that that one person should be the right hon. Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)? With his long experience of Parliament, the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) must realise that integrity is not a constant element in every hon. Member. What is required is an hon. Member who, come hell or high water, friend or foe, after proper examination of the matter, will stick to his view with great resolution. There is much to be said for a man with such integrity examining an impossibly complex problem which has not, unfortunately, been subject to the proper examination of a public inquiry.

Sir John Farr: I accept the hon. Gentleman's point, but that would not be very successful. I do not believe that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) would be at all acquiescent to some of the representations that would be made to him. For instance, he would not be prepared to accept the fact that many thousands of jobs are at risk on our ferries and at Dover, Folkestone and the other ports. He would not be prepared to consider the fact that the jobs which are to be provided will be terminal jobs. There is no long-term future in these jobs. A few thousand people will be employed for a short period—only a few years—to build the tunnel. Those would be terminal jobs, like the terminal jobs of those who built the pyramids on the Nile. There is no future in those jobs. That is why my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup would not be a trustworthy person to have on the Select Committee.

Mr. Michael Brown: Of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir John Farr) will accept that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) is a man of great integrity. With regard to my right hon. Friend being the sole member of the Select Committee, my hon. Friend is correct to cast doubt on whether that is a wise course of action.

Does my hon. Friend recall that in 1972, when my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup as Prime Minister was petitioned by the people who now have the misfortune to live in the county of Humberside that they should remain in the old counties of the East Riding of Yorkshire and of Lindsay, he refused to listen to them? Does my hon. Friend agree that one of the important credentials for serving on a Committee of this kind is that one should not have a fixed or single-minded view? On such a Select Committee one should have a completely open mind. One should listen to the evidence from the promoters, on the one hand, and from the petitioners, on the other. One should not have a fixed view and not be open to persuasion on the basis of the evidence that is laid before the Committee.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's remarks. Of course, they bear more than an element of truth. However, I think that my hon. Friend was trying, as I was, to say that we are not really satisfied with the number proposed for the composition of the Select Committee, to which we are considering referral of the Bill.

The remark by my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) that my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup should be the only member of the Committee was probably made in a jocular frame of mind. But, to be more serious, no one person,

[Sir John Farr]

no six, seven or 17 persons, however knowledgeable, could absorb all the different facets which they will confront.

For instance, I know that teams of people from the National Farmers Union are waiting to find out the composition of the Select Committee to prepare submissions to them on the risk of rabies, which is a real possibility. Rabies is now at the Channel ports and there is a real possibility that it could somehow be transmitted on the rail link between the two shores. The NFU wants reassurances. I would take the word of my right hon. Friend on many things, but I would not accept any reassurance from him on rabies from Europe. He would give them a white sheet when, in fact, there are considerable risks.

It is important to have on the Select Committee experts on defence and shipping. We have on both sides of the House, thank goodness, some knowledgeable people who can speak for shipping, particularly naval shipping. They should be on the Select Committee and they should decide. Representatives from Sealink and the Dover Harbour Board came to the Select Committee on Statutory Instruments the other day. Experts must be on the Select Committee to analyse what such people will say about threats to the livelihoods of many tens of thousands of people in the Dover district and to our seafaring capacity and capability at the Channel ports and elsewhere. The evidence must be heard and analysed by the many experts on both sides of the House. The sort of evidence that we heard was that the fixed link would be damaging to employment, would lead to a rapid rundown of our ferry fleets, and would mean that we would never again have the naval capability to mount another Falklands expedition.

Mr. Spencer Batiste (Elmet): My hon. Friend touches on an important point in the skills available to the Select Committee. Will the Select Committee have access to independent advice in the same way as other Select Committees? He might consider what areas of advice should be available to such a Select Committee? In looking at the numbers that might be appropriate for the Select Committee, should not he and perhaps others speaking on this important constitutional matter therefore consider each of the 650 Members of the House to ascertain the ideal combination for deliberating on these important matters?

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harold Walker): Order. Those will be matters for the Committee of Selection. We are discussing numbers, not qualities.

Mr. Batiste: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Does it not say in the amendment we are now discussing that there is a possibility that some hon. Members should be nominated by the House? Is it not in order on this amendment, therefore, to consider who should be appointed by the House?

Sir John Farr: I was saying——

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Is the hon. Gentleman making an intervention?

Mr. Faulds: Yes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the hon. Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) giving way?

Sir John Farr: Yes.

Mr. Faulds: I am most grateful to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for ensuring my ability to intervene. The hon. Gentleman's reference to rabies disturbs me. He has set me thinking that there is a real danger here, because if the smooth running rail line is introduced——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. We are considering the numbers of those who will possibly comprise the Committee, not rabies. Sir John Farr.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Michael Brown: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Would you rule on the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet (Mr. Batiste), because it is fairly crucial? We are debating paragraph 1 with amendments (a) and (b). As you will see, I am a signatory to those amendments. I should like guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Surely we must be able to refer to the question of which hon. Members might be selected from the House. The amendments to which I am a signatory ask us to debate whether some members of the Committee should be nominated by the House and not selected by the Committee of Selection.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I do not understand the hon. Gentleman's point. It will be in order for the House to discuss what should be borne in mind in the event of the amendment being carried and the House called upon to make the nominations.

Sir John Farr: I was dealing with the composition of the Select Committee. I said that it would be helpful, when members are chosen in the usual way, to have experts on agriculture, animal health, defence and shipping. We should also have an expert on the Select Committee to deal with the possibility of sabotage.

Mr. Faulds: The hon. Gentleman has again referred to specialists being put on the Committee who have knowledge of agriculture and animal health. I am disturbed by the reference to animal health. Unless there is an hon. Member on the Committee who is knowledgeable about the dangers of the ravaging disease, rabies, we may find that within a few months of the opening of the tunnel the appalling disease is rampant in Britain. I am profoundly disturbed about the introduction of the disease through the tunnel. When a smuggled pet is on a smooth running railway line, the little thing is likely to sleep all the way. However—this is a guarantee to prevent rabies entering Britain — if that little pet is smuggled on board an aircraft the variation in pressure——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman is not only going wide of the debate but making a long speech in what I assumed was an intervention.

Mr. Faulds *rose*——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman has gone far enough for the moment.

Sir John Farr: As I said, when the Select Committee is appointed it should take on board the possibility of sabotage. It is absolutely essential that we should have on

the Committee Members, preferably from both sides of the House who are familiar with anti-sabotage techniques. Hon. Members with such expertise do exist.

I hope that the Select Committee will cast its mind to matters such as that when it is set up. For those reasons, I do not think that the Select Committee should be as small as is envisaged, and we shall come to the ridiculously low quorum of three later in the debate. However, I certainly think that the Committee should be considerably larger than is proposed.

Sir John Biggs-Davison (Epping Forest): The whole tenor of the debate has been to insist that there must be special qualifications and disqualifications as to area and interest. My hon. Friend is now saying that the Committee should be larger. Throughout the debate I have been coming to the conclusion that hardly any hon. Member, except my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), would be qualified. Therefore, I ask my hon. Friend to reconsider what he is saying. To ask for an increase is not in order because of the qualifications and disqualifications that have been mentioned.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup has all the abilities to which he referred. However, I cannot consider him as having the ability to absorb all the different arguments and to come up with a single fair conclusion alone. If he were in the job alone, the masses of conflicting evidence that he would have to sift would take until next year or the year after. The main objective in the life of my right hon. Friends on the Front Bench is to get the tunnel through as quickly as possible.

Mr. Bill Walker: Earlier, it was suggested that as well as my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath), an hon. Member who would be suitable for the Committee would be the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace). That would bring in another view that might be helpful.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his suggestion.

Mr. Gary Waller (Keighley): If my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) were appointed to be in sole charge of the Committee, might there not be a real risk that the tunnel would start from Dover, take a U-turn in mid-Channel, and return to Folkestone?

Sir John Farr: I am sure that as my hon. Friend has suggested that will be a real risk if we have a one-man Committee. We shall have to bear that in mind.

It is also important to have on the Committee specialists from both sides of the House who can analyse our trading position and the benefits and advantages of the tunnel to our trade. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, in his good speech this afternoon, said that we shall have tremendous opportunities as a result of building this tunnel. For example, our exporters would be able to move their goods from Manchester to Berne, almost overnight. I well recall that such arguments were adduced when we first joined the Common Market. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup and many others said that fantastic opportunities were waiting to be seized by our exporters.

What has happened since we joined? We were then net exporters to the EEC. Now we are big importers of its manufactured goods. Recently, we have become major net importers from the rest of the world. All that has happened since we joined the Community. Therefore, although my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has great knowledge and the facilities of the Department to call upon, I would not necessarily accept his analysis that the creation of the tunnel will benefit our exporters. I do not think it will.

Mrs. Elaine Kellett-Bowman (Lancaster): My hon. Friend is adducing unfavourable figures that cannot conceivably be blamed on the Channel tunnel, which does not yet exist.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her intervention. I am not saying that a tunnel will necessarily make the situation worse, although the leather, shoe and boot manufacturers in Northamptonshire have grave difficulties because of imports from the Community. Therefore, it will be important to have on the Select Committee several persons who are well informed on commercial, trading and business matters so that they can make an analysis of whether, as my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State said, the tunnel will be of advantage to our manufacturers.

Mr. Batiste: Would my hon. Friend concede that among the candidates for the Committee should be the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) who has two remarkable qualifications? First, he is the only Labour Back Bencher who has sat through the debate so far. Secondly, he is experienced in playing many different roles and therefore has many of the ranges of expertise that will be required.

Mr. Faulds: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. He is an experienced parliamentarian and follows the correct procedure, that when an hon. Member is referred to he should have the right to reply.

I am not eager to lose my summer holidays this year, but I am so profoundly opposed to this lunatic enterprise that I might even consider an invitation to serve on the Select Committee. In examining the arguments that would be put to such a Committee, I would be of enormous value. Few Members of the House, with the limited interests that most of them represent, have such a wide-ranging knowledge of all the riches and vicissitudes of life as the hon. Member for Warley, East.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr. Faulds: I was extolling my many virtues. My virtues are so many that I could speak for another 20 or 25 minutes, but I must have some regard for you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Were my expertise on a range of issues to be required —and we would need as members of the Committee those with reasoned arguments to oppose the introduction of this little tunnelling enterprise—I would be somewhat tempted to accept the invitation. I would do that, of course, only with the agreement of most hon. Members; but, knowing how very popular I am with hon. Members on both sides of the House——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. Interventions must be brief.

Sir John Farr: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was——

Mr. Faulds: I was just going to conclude my intervention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Knowing as I do my popularity with all parties and with hon. Members on both sides of the House, I might well make it to the Select Committee. Dear God, I dread the thought, but I might well make it.

Sir John Farr: I was saying that it would be important to have on the Select Committee specialists in trade. I gave an instance of the way in which the footwear trade and certainly the knitting and hosiery trades in Leicester have been hit by exports from the continent. Many hosiery and knitwear goods come in from Portugal and Italy, and Portuguese goods pose a real problem in that respect. The domestic industries of Leicester and Northampton have been ravaged by cheap imports from Portugal, and from Italy to a certain extent. All I am saying, in the absence of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who made the point this afternoon, is that it is not fair to say that there will be a one-way advantage to our manufacturers. The opposite will apply. Continental manufacturers will be able to get their goods to our shops much more quickly, or that much more quickly than they can now.

It will also be important to have on the Select Committee at least two financial specialists—preferably the chairmen of the relevant financial committees from both sides of the House. I say that because the Conservative party and the Prime Minister recently pledged that no public money will be used in the project.

I would want those financial specialists to cast their cool and analytical minds over the balance of payments and how the bill will be picked up. I gather that it will be on a fifty-fifty basis—50 per cent. of the project backed by French banks and 50 per cent. by British banks. As I understand it, the French banks are natonalised anyhow, which means that 50 per cent. of the cost of the project is certainly from public money.

I would want the financial experts, together with a specialist on transport, to consider the massive extra costs to British Rail's infrastructure — millions of pounds — which have been referred to in earlier debates. That is public money. When my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State was questioned about that this afternoon, he said, rather jocularly, that possibly a public loan or Government subsidy could be extended by hundreds of millions of pounds. Many hon. Members would not find that acceptable. We think that we have lent the railways too much already, and we would like a better show of good faith by the railways before casting more good money after bad.

Mr. Gerrard Neale (Cornwall, North): Does my hon. Friend accept that one of the great advantages of such investment is that the trains which will be able to run on the improved tracks down to and through the Channel tunnel would give British Rail, as an operator, access to virtually all the cities of Europe, especially with its freight, and give our exporters a tremendous advantage by being able to get through the tunnel in one journey? Therefore, that investment would be highly worth while.

Sir John Farr: I accept the optimistic analysis that my hon. Friend has made, but I completely disagree with him. The reason I disagree is that a few years ago members of the Council of Europe Transport Committee went to Paris and considered matters from the point of view of the French. I am convinced that if the British Government had had more financial acumen, they could have got the French Government to pay for the whole damned tunnel! They showed us a wonderful map of the Europe that was to be in the future. The missing link was a railway under the Channel tunnel. The French said that they were anxious to have the rail link built. They are sitting in the middle of a spider's web, as it were, with France and Paris at the centre of Europe.

Mr. William Powell (Corby): I know that my hon. Friend will draw some comfort from the fact that the French Parliament is considering a measure which will involve the denationalisation of French banks. That may assist him in——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see any relationship between public ownership of French banks and the matter before the House.

Sir John Farr: Years ago, we used to consider that Britain was at the centre of things. We are not even at the centre of the Commonwealth now, although I suppose we are still at the centre of the English-speaking world. When the Channel link is built, with a rail system only, we shall be on the fringes of a European transport pattern designed for traffic between the centre of Europe and the periphery, of which we will be part. That will be a detrimental step. We have avoided it for many generations, and we should avoid it in future.

Mr. Neale: Perhaps the Select Committee will consider evidence that the French could have paid for the tunnel. Does my hon. Friend accept, and perhaps reject, that if the French paid for the tunnel, they would have used French labour and machinery? The development would have benefited the French economy, and Britain would not have received any of the gains that are offered under the present suggestion.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not see that that has much relevance to the specific issue before us. I hope that we can return to the issue before the House.

Sir John Farr: I agree with what my hon. Friend has said. He made the point that it is important to have on the Select Committee people who understand the advantages to the French of building the tunnel. It is proper that experts on finance, transport and trade matters should tell hon. Members why a few years ago the French said that they would be prepared to fund the full cost of the tunnel if they were given the chance to do so.

It is important that we should have——

Mr. Batiste: Does my hon. Friend accept that there should be an expert on the Select Committee who understands geographical implications? Many of the important reservations which colleagues have about the Bill are based on a belief that the tunnel is being built in the wrong place. If someone understood the importance of linking the midlands and the east coast of Britain with the industrial heartland of Europe rather than the south-east with the north of France, some important expertise and knowledge might be brought to bear on the consideration of the Bill.

Sir John Farr: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, I think that he has reinforced my argument that the Select Committee should not be as is suggested in the motion. The proposed number of members is far too few. The

Committee should be full of experts. I respectfully suggest that the Bill should go before a Select Committee of the whole House.

I am

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): I regret that I have to disagree completely with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr). I disagree entirely with his proposition that the proposed size of the Select Committee is too small. I believe that the House is suffering from too many Committees, both Standing and Select. I speak as a Member who is currently serving on a Standing Committee and a Select Committee.

I shall recount my experience of this very day. I was the member of a Select Committee that was summoned to meet at 10.30 am, which I was unable to attend because I had to be present for a Standing Committee. The Whips kindly let me leave that Committee for a whole quarter of an hour during the morning so that I could attend the Select Committee. I then had to return to the Standing Committee. That Standing Committee met again this evening. I am casting no aspersions on the great and the good in the House, but I cannot help noticing that many of us who have the honour to be members of various Committees fall into the category, like myself, of rather humble and junior Back Benches, who perhaps form, if you will excuse the expression, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the poor bloody infantry of this place.

Much mention has been made of my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)——

Mr. Bill Walker: My right hon. Friend does not serve on any Committees.

Mr. Harris: Indeed. That is the point that I wish to make. There are many others who do not serve on any Committees. One of my senior right hon. Friends returned fairly recently to the Back Benches. To his amazement, he received a small white card, with which many of us are extremely familiar, which meant that the Selection Committee had summoned him to serve on a Committee. My right hon. Friend apparently asked his secretary to explain what the card was all about. Needless to say, he did not turn up to serve on the Committee as summoned.

There is difficulty in manning our Select Committees and Standing Committees and it is therefore quite wrong for several of my right hon. and hon. Friends to propose that the Select Committee that will consider the serious matter that is before us should have its membership increased from nine members to 11. Dare I suggest it, but I have the nasty feeling at the back of my mind that those of my hon. Friends who have advanced the proposition have been hijacked in some way by the official Opposition, whose amendment it is.

Mr. Michael Brown: I hope that my hon. Friend is not suggesting that those of us who have signed the amendments that are in the name of the Leader of the Opposition have done so for any reason other than the fact that we are wholly in agreement with them. I sign nothing in the House, be it an early-day motion or an amendment, whomsoever has tabled it, unless I agree with the proposal. I hardly look at the names of those who support it. I look solely at the amendment, and if it commends itself to me I sign it purely on that basis, and on nothing more or less than that. I ask my hon. Friend to withdraw his slur upon those of us who added our signatures to the amendments solely because we agreed with them.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is right to rebuke me and I withdraw my remark. I did not seek to cast a slur on his intentions or those of my hon. Friends who signed the amendment.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman *rose*——

Mr. Harris: I have been challenged on this point and I wish to withdraw in the most gracious way possible.

I do not wish to cast a slur on the intentions of my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg). No one who heard his speech would accuse him of being hijacked. I was ill advised when I used that word. I should have used the words "taken over". As I look at the crowded Opposition Benches, I cannot help noticing that none of the original signatories of the amendment has had the courtesy to be here to debate it. By their absence they are snubbing the House and not treating their amendment with the seriousness it deserves. I see a slight stirring from the temporary watchkeeper behind the Opposition Dispatch Box. I am willing to give way to the hon. Member for Blaydon (Mr. McWilliam) if he wishes to challenge me on that point.

Mrs. Kellett-Bowman: My hon. Friend has already made my point, which is that it is exceedingly fortunate that my hon. Friends had the foresight to realise that the Labour party might well renege on its duties and fail to be present. Therefore, my hon. Friends were able to take over the burden from them.

Mr. Harris: I intended to make that point. Perhaps that reflects the fact that my hon. Friend and myself spent five years together, sitting next to each other in the European Parliament. Perhaps that has resulted in a certain symmetry of thought.

I resist this amendment.

Mr. Batiste: My hon. Friend's objection to this amendment is that there are not enough Back Benchers to staff the Committee. He drew attention to the fact that a number of Privy Councillors do not sit on any Committees. If we follow the logic of his argument, one could suggest that, for this uniquely important Bill, there should be a Select Committee composed entirely of Privy Councillors who are not currently engaged on Government business.

Mr. Harris: That is rather a nice thought. I wonder whether we would have difficulty in meeting the quorum requirement. We might have to apply penalties.

Without casting aspersions I shall draw on my experience today. I was on a Standing Committee during the evening and a vote was called at precisely 5.15 pm. Two of my colleagues—one is a right hon. Member—happen to be members of the executive of the 1922 Committee and they disappeared from the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee on which I have the privilege and pleasure to serve — for tedious meeting after tedious meeting — is on the Salmon Bill. Three members of the Committee are also executive members of the 1922 Committee, including none other than the chairman of the 1922 Committee.

No one in living memory can recall the last occasion on which the chairman of the 1922 Committee sat on a Standing Committee. I am not sure about Select Committees.

Mr. Bill Walker: Do not my hon. Friend's observations show that if the issue is considered to be sufficiently serious, as obviously the Salmon Bill is, the same attitude will prevail for the Channel Tunnel Bill?

Mr. Harris: Yes, that is the case, provided the members are volunteers, not pressed men. Amendment (b) suggests that five of the members of the proposed Select Committee should be nominated by the House. That is the awful dilemma of the Select Committee.

Let us suppose that some hon. Members are selected by the House to serve on the Select Committee against their wishes, just as I in my humble position have been put on the Salmon Bill Committee. I do not wish to serve on it; I was put on it. My hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) was also put on it.

Mr. Walker: I wanted to serve on the Committee.

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend wanted to serve on the Committee. I would willingly swap places with him. The great and the good of the House—the people whose names have been bandied about frivolously—may be nominated to serve on the Select Committee, but they may not attend to their duties as lesser mortals, like me, must do because we live in fear and trembling of the Whips. I have not noticed that the great and the good pay much regard to the Whips. I see a Whip stirring. I am sure that he will not intervene, which would be against all our conventions, so I shall continue.

This evening two of my hon. Friends left the Committee to attend the executive meeting of the 1922 Committee and the Whip had to scurry down the Corridor to retrieve them. They returned willingly. That underlines the dangers that we face if the Select Committee is of such a size that it is not composed of volunteers who passionately want to serve on it and who will see it through from beginning to end.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham said, it is important to have hon. Members on the Select Committee who are independent and, above all, who want to serve on it.

Mr. Lawrence: Is it not a fact that hon. Members who are most passionate to sit on the Select Committee are most likely to have an interest which will bias their view, so they should be the least qualified to sit on it? If that is so, and bearing in mind all the other disqualifications mentioned, is not the substance of the debate whether we should have a Select Committee considering the matter because we cannot find anyone to sit on it?

Mr. Harris: That is another dilemma. I must tread carefully because the last thing I want to do is to appear to volunteer to serve on the Select Committee. I am completely disinterested, but I do not want to tempt fate.

Mr. Forth: In developing his possible role in this matter, does my hon. Friend agree that his almost unique experience of the European Parliament before he came to the House would qualify him to serve on the Select Committee because he could give it views from both sides of the Channel which few hon. Members could do?

Mr. Harris: My hon. Friend is better qualified than I to serve, for he, too, was a Member of the European Parliament, though he displayed a fervour for all things European, his aim being to build bridges with Europe, let alone tunnels, so I bow to any claim he may make to be a member of the Select Committee.

Mr. Roger King (Birmingham, Northfield): I rule out my ability to serve on the Select Committee because I have a wife and family. Is my hon. Friend aware that those who attend Committees diligently are likely to be well rewarded? For example, we read in *The Guardian* recently of how Mr Matthew Parris attended 90 Committee meetings in the Session 1984-85, and he seems to have been well rewarded.

Mr. Harris: I understand that our former colleague has not yet been rewarded by the job that he intends to take up having left this place.

Considering the activities of the Select Committee which considered the Okehampton bypass, one wonders whether this is the best type of body to consider issues of this type. That was not a happy Select Committee for those of us who represent south-west constituencies, particularly Cornish and Devonshire hon. Members who desperately wanted that bypass to be built.

While I do not question the integrity of the Members who served on that Select Committee, I fear that—in the House or in the Selection Committee—we shall fail to find nine, let alone 11, impartial Members with the necessary dedication and time to examine the issue of the tunnel.

I hope, therefore, that the House will reject the amendment which has been tabled by some hon. Members, though I will not say tabled in an unholy alliance between some of my hon. Friends and Opposition Members because I have already been rebuked for making that comment.

1.20 am

Mrs. Edwina Currie (Derbyshire, South): I have now sat through nearly nine and a half hours of debate on the Bill and I am grateful for this opportunity to take part in it and support the motion that the Bill go to a Select Committee. Most of us feel that the tunnel would be a great advantage to this nation, and we would be glad to see it. I am pleased that the Bill is to go to a Select Committee, because that will mean that an opportunity will be given for evidence to be taken and for papers to be called for. One hopes that that will enable a thorough discussion to take place on the merits and demerits of the tunnel.

The Channel tunnel is probably one of the most exciting developments ever to take place in the United Kingdom. It will end the isolation of this offshore nation and make us firmly part of Europe, where we belong. It will take us into the 21st century and profoundly affect the whole of Britain, not just the south-east, but the part of the country that I represent as well.

I should like to join hon. Members in all parts of the House who have made representations about who should serve on the Select Committee on the Bill. I hope that I can exclude myself by saying that it is my wish to serve on Committees considering other aspects of legislation that will come before the House in the near future. Therefore, I hope that I shall already be occupied.

I hope that the nine members of the Committee, or whatever number of members the House decides upon, will be truly representative of opinion in the House. That means that they should represent those in favour in all parts of the House, as well as those who are against. It should include hon. Members, not just from the south-east, and not just from London, who have tended to speak so forcefully on behalf of their constituents during this

debate, but those from the midlands and the north, because it is in many of those constituencies that we will see a number of the benefits, both in the short term and in the long term.

My constituents in Derby—not just those who work for British Rail Engineering Limited but many of those who work for companies involved in construction and for many of the companies which are involved in subcontracting to engineering firms all over the country—are jubilant and will be more than pleased when they win their share of the substantial sum of money that will be available to be spent on new rolling stock, signalling, track equipment and all the other things required. Orders for those things will soon be placed as a result of the Bill and the Select Committee report on it.

Membership of the Select Committee will no doubt include hon. Members of the Opposition, such as the hon. Member for Vauxhall (Mr. Holland) who spoke so forcefully in the debate. It is a great pity that those hon. Members who will find that substantial sums of money will be spent directly in their own constituencies—for example, £60 million will be spent on Waterloo station—have done nothing but whinge about it. If the Select Committee were to represent that as a result of this legislation £60 million should be spent in the heart of Derby, I would be thrilled to bits about it and the last thing that I would do would be to carp about it.

It seems that some Opposition Members prefer to have rundown, derelict sites in their areas, and poverty and misery and a lack of hope, instead of the growth, which the hon. Member for Vauxhall so aptly described, that will come about with new hotels and restaurants and all the other services that will deal with travellers. Perhaps if the rates base of an area like Lambeth were to be widened by the development of such facilities to take the place of the dereliction that exists there, the council would not have to charge such high rates. That includes the rates of those hon. Members who have flats in that part of the city. I suspect that some hon. Members whose constituencies are affected in this way and who might therefore be requested to serve on the Select Committee and be among the nine hon. Members whose names are put forward by the Committee of Selection, actually prefer to see that kind of misery. If their areas become gentrified in the way that I have suggested, some Opposition Members will lose their seats.

Under hon. Members who will be asked to serve will, no doubt, be hon. Members who have spoken so ably on the Second Reading, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). Perhaps the Select Committee, while listening carefully to the arguments put forward by people such as my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, would have more sympathy if he were simply to put the parochial case and say that this will cause distress and disturbance to his constituents, rather than claim to be speaking for the whole nation and by so doing casting slurs on those who wish to promote the Bill and who see themselves as doing that in the interests of the whole nation.

This will be the biggest civil engineering project ever seen in Europe. In the debate on procedure on 3 June my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South called it a

"monster to the inhabitants of the small coastal towns and villages where they will hurt most.—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1986; Vol. 98, c. 847.]

Of course, he is right in that, and I hope that the Select Committee, in taking evidence and in listening to the represenations made to it, will take that into account, because some of my hon. Friend's constituents and some of the constituents of other hon. Members who have spoken in the debate will be living for about five years on the biggest building site in Europe. Those of us who recognise the benefits will, I hope, nevertheless recognise that those private interests are being affected. There will be an obligation on all those concerned — the developers, the Government and the promoters of the Bill —to ensure that they operate at all times with respect for those who are living nearby. There is a considerable obligation on all concerned to listen to the objections and to try to accommodate them.

I hope that when the Select Committee is taking evidence, some of the evidence that it receives will be more sensitive, tactful and aware of the difficulties faced by the constituents in those Kent constituencies than was evident in some of the stuff that came out during the arguments that preceded the presentation of legislation to this House. I read with some interest and some alarm the paper called "We Need the Channel Tunnel Now", which no doubt the Select Committee will have to take into account. There is a splendid collection of cartoons of what will happen if and when the Channel tunnel, in its current form, actually happens. It is one of the most tactless pieces that has been produced.

There are eight pictures. They talk about the fast approach to the terminal, about passports being checked without passengers having to leave their cars and about the shuttle being ready and waiting. The family described in this set of cartoons may well be my constituents. They may not at any stage have spent any money in Britain before they get into the shuttle and are whisked across to France. When they reach France they stop because they need a pause for light refreshment. And where do they stop? They stop in Sangatte in France. Not a penny is spent in England.

If the promoters of the Bill wish to allay the fears of those who live in the south-east, I hope that when they present their evidence to the Select Committee and are questioned carefully by hon. Members, who no doubt will represent constituencies in Kent, they will take into account the fact that if at any time they had suggested that money will be spent in Kent and that Kent will suddenly become alive with fast food shops, hotels, boutiques and the very best sort of trading, which I am sure would be of great value to the shopkeepers, ratepayers and councils of Kent, there might not have been quite the opposition and determination to emphasise the negative side. Some of that material has been tactless in the extreme. I hope that the promoters of the Bill will take into account the fact that those colleagues who find that their areas are growing and developing as a result of the changes will therefore be encouraged to accept them.

The Select Committee will also no doubt be presented with a great deal of evidence about public opinion. One of its tasks will be to judge whether public opinion is right in this case, and whether public opinion is taking into account the long-term as well as the short-term benefits. According to a MORI poll, only 37 per cent. of the public in Kent are in favour, and the British public as a whole are in favour only by a very slight majority—51 per cent. The Select Committee should recognise that in Calais only

[Mrs. Edwina Currie]

9 per cent. of the public are against, while 89 per cent. are in favour. That is a ratio of 10 to 1 in favour, yet France has exactly the same problems.

The public in France will also be living on a building site for the next five years. They will also have all the difficulties surrounding the removal of spoil and the mess created by building works. They, too, will have all the worries about terrorism and God knows what, yet in Calais the public are 10 to 1 in favour. It cannot just be because the area around Calais is more deprived than the area around Dover. If we look at the whole of France, we find that the figures are much the same. Only 10 per cent. of the French people are against, and they are outnumbered seven to one by those who are in favour. And France is a more prosperous country than this nation.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that it is possible that the disparity between the economic wellbeing of France, the Pas de Calais, on the one hand, and the south-east of England, including Kent, on the other, goes a long way towards explaining the disparity in attitude? Does she agree that it is precisely because the tunnel will affect a relatively prosperous area in the United Kingdom where people——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I have allowed considerable latitude, but I cannot allow the debate to go so wide as the hon. Gentleman seeks to push it.

Mrs. Currie: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth) and to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I hope that the Select Committee will consider carefully whether there is any logic in the argument that a poor part of France is in favour and a wealthy part of England is against, when the whole of France is in favour and much of England is against. Yet France is the wealthier nation. The argument simply does not wash.

What worries me is that the people of France seem much more aware of the matter. I hope that the Select Committee will take evidence in France and that it will take every opportunity to balance the views presented to it with the views expressed in France. The people of France seem to be more optimistic about and interested in the scheme, and it would be a pity if some of the negative attitudes that we have heard tonight prevented us from making the most of the opportunities available.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend remember that the precedents in such matters lead us to the conclusion that there should be nominations, not only by the Committee of Selection but by the House, in accordance with the general principle applicable to hybrid Bills, so that such evidence is properly considered? Would she go further, in the light of her arguments, and suggest that we should invite French witnesses to appear before the Committee and give evidence?

Mrs. Currie: My hon. Friend will be aware that later in tonight's agenda—I suspect that we shall reach it at about 5 am—there will be the opportunity to consider whether the Select Committee should be able

"to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom."

If my hon. Friend is still following the debate with the great interest that he has shown so far, he will have the opportunity to suggest that the Select Committee might go further than the United Kingdom, which might make it a highly attractive proposition for the nine Members who are likely to be nominated to serve on it.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend also agree that, on occasion, petitions have been heard from the citizens of Boulogne, let alone the citizens of Calais?

Mrs. Currie: I am sure that that is the case, and I hope that the Committee will take every opportunity to hear both sides of the argument, and that includes the arguments from France. I would deplore any argument that simply suggested that we should consider only the benefit to the United Kingdom, for we are partners in Europe, and the welfare of our partners in Europe is of interest to us. I hope that that will be taken into account.

I hope that Select Committee will take evidence that examines the long-term prospects for the United Kingdom and Europe, which will benefit from closer links. Those closer links can only be beneficial. Throughout economic history, communications have been the prerequisite for economic development. Outside my home there is a Roman road. The first thing the Romans did was to build roads all over Europe. They were then able to take peace, prosperity and development across Europe. The Spanish crossed the Atlantic. No doubt there was a debate about how that was not needed either, but it led to the development of the new world and to increased prosperity in Europe.

The British built the first canal system, then the railway system, and then they exported the railway to the subcontinent of India, South America and North America, thereby opening untold opportunities. In those respects, air travel—the latest form of mass travel—is still in its infancy, but it is hoped that the effects on air travel of the proposed changes will also be taken into account by the Select Committee. One effect of taking the Bill to a Select Committee and of fully exploring the opportunities for competition that are offered by the tunnel will be to reduce the price of air travel to Europe, for which we shall all be profoundly grateful.

The Channel tunnel is a link of the same sort and it will stand history with all the developments that I have mentioned. It will make mass transit easier and cheaper. There is not much argument about that, because one piece of evidence that the Select Committee will hear forcefully is that fares will fall. The only argument is by how much. The suggestion is at least 10 per cent. and, according to Phillips and Drew, as much as 40 per cent. That must be a good thing.

The tunnel will reduce the cost of transporting freight. I hope that evidence will be taken on what beneficial environmental effect that will have on the areas of Kent that are so clogged up with lorries at present. There are 1·5 million lorries a year carried on cross-Channel ferries. Whatever else the Channel tunnel will do, whatever else the rail link will do, it will relieve some of that pressure on the villages of Kent, and I have to say that I hope that colleagues who serve on the Committee will take every opportunity to put that fact not only to the Select Committee but to constituents, who are bound to benefit from it. It is the most exciting development in my view in the last 50 years, and I hope that it will come about.

I hope that one of the members of the Select Committee will be a representative of this side of the House from somewhere in the midlands or the north, which will benefit

considerably from the construction. Earlier this evening we heard an excellent speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King), who pointed out how much his constituents and the people of Birmingham will benefit from the development. He will know that Metro Cammell is joining British Rail Engineering Limited, which has works in the vicinity of my constituency—and many of my constituents actually work there—in a consortium with a number of other companies, and that for the first time a number of companies that produce rolling stock for the railways are getting together, instead of competing, and are to produce a proper bid. I therefore recommend to the Committee of Selection that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield, who currently is pulling faces at me, should be considered for this Select Committee. It seems to me that he will be able to make an excellent case on behalf not only of his constituents but of mine also.

I draw to my hon. Friend's attention the sort of figures that the Channel Tunnel Group was putting about at the time that it was making the bid. It was suggesting at that time that the north and west midlands and the south-east would be likely to benefit to the tune of about £24 million from providing reinforcing steel, that the east midlands would be involved to the tune of £52 million in castiron tunnel linings, and that the midlands in general, which we both represent, would be involved to the tune of another £100 million for precast tunnel linings. He will also find, if he looks, that ventilation and cooling equipment, which is very important in the midlands, will benefit by some £24 million, and that railway services will benefit by £180 million for special rolling stock for shuttle vehicles, £36 million vor electric locomotives and some £60 million for special passenger rolling stock and dual voltage locomotives. On top of that, British Rail has also announced that a substantial amount of money will have to be spent on upgrading rail and station facilities, and of course much of that work will be signalling and electronic equipment, which will also be made in our constituency, so I commend that to my hon. Friend.

Colleagues and inhabitants of the south-east are very lucky, for in the long run the tunnel can only bring more prosperity to that part of the world. They say that they do not want the tunnel. I think that that is partly because they would be the first to admit that they do not need it—that part of Britain is prosperous enough. I am not being sarcastic when I say that I feel sorry for them, and I am sure that my hon. Friends and colleagues from the midlands and the north will agree. I wish that the south-east could be relieved of the unwelcome burden of this unnecessary additional prosperity. I wish that it were all happening in the midlands and the north, where unemployment is so much higher. It was the good Lord who decided where the nearest crossing point was to be, and I think that we should all take advantage of that and make the very best of it.

I commend the Select Committee idea to the House, and I wish well to all those hon. Members who are to serve on it.

1.38 am

Mr. Robin Maxwell-Hyslop (Tiverton): I wish to address myself briefly to the subject of the best method of appointing the Committee, to which I have given some thought.

There were by precedent three possibilities. One was a Joint Committee of both Houses, and I think the Government were right to reject that. The second was a mixed Committee appointed partly by the usual huddle between the Whips' Offices, politely known as the usual channels, and partly by the Committee of Selection. The third option, the one that the Government rightly are recommending to the House, is that the entire membership of the Select Committee should be chosen by the Committee of Selection. I should like to explain briefly why, in my view, that is the right decision for the House to take.

The function of the Select Committee will have a judicial rather than a purely political content. It will be to hear the petitions of those of good locus standi, as it is called technically; that is, those who will be disturbed in their ownership of property by the measures to construct the tunnel, including the roads and railway lines leading to it, because that will involve a massive amount of compulsory purchase. It will be a tedious function for those on the Committee. They will need to appreciate the function that they are carrying out and not regard it as another opportunity to repeat Second Reading debates and pre-conceived positions for or against the tunnel.

My fear is that had the Committee been composed partly by nomination through the usual channels, even if those nominated had been wholly suitable for the task—I have no reason to suppose that they would not be—they would not have been seen to be so by those whose interests are affected. Although the Committee of Selection is not wholly impervious to influence from the Whips' Offices—it would be unreal for any of us to pretend that it is—it stands at one remove from those influences.

Moreover, it is not just a matter, as is sometimes the case, of a Committee of the House reflecting the balance of parties on the Floor of the House. The Committee of Selection is used to considering cross-party, non-political views as expressed in debate. It does that sometimes in the composition of Standing Committees. On the other hand, what its duty not to do is, if I may put it impolitely, to pack the Select Committee with hacks, of whatever persuasion they might be. That is very important.

The point that I wish to stress is the importance not only of the Committee discharging its duty fully and honourably, but of those representing the interests of the petitioners perceiving it in advance as being well qualified to do so. That is why I believe that the Government have taken the right decision in recommending to the House that the composition of the Committee should be chosen by the Committee of Selection. I hope that the House as a whole will believe that the appropriate body to trust with this invidious task should be the Committee of Selection, without any element of Whips's Office compromise shoved into it.

1.43 am

Mr. Jonathan Aitken (Thanet, South): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) because he has struck one important and serious note about the Select Committee and its method of selection. It is essential for the people of Kent to feel that they can have considerable public confidence in whatever structure is created to hear their grievances and to propose amendments to the Bill.

[Mr. Jonathan Aitken]

If it was thought that a substantial number of placemen had been appointed to the Committee, that would be a great mistake. As my hon. Friend said, in a way it will be a judicial committee. I think it was Bacon who once criticised 15th century judges, saying that they were lions but lions under the throne. It would be a great pity to see a Committee of lions but lions under the Whips' Office. This must be an independent-minded Committee.

Mr. Cash: During a previous intervention I pointed out that it is in accordance with normal precedent for membership of a hybrid Bill Committee to be nominated not only by the Committee of Selection but by the House. That is precisely what the amendment proposes.

With the greatest respect to my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who said that it should be done by the Committee of Selection alone, it would perhaps be better to have a mixture of selection because that would be in accordance with precedent on hybrid Bills as described by the "Manual of Procedure in the Public Business 1984", which states:

"The object of sending a Bill to a select committee is usually to provide for the taking of evidence. In accordance with this principle the practice is to send a hybrid to a select committee nominated partly by the House and partly by the Committee of Selection."

The very point about the need to ensure a degree of impartiality and that membership of the Committee should not be dominated by the Whips is not only met by ensuring that a proportion of the Committee should be selected by the Committee of Selection, but enhanced by nomination by the House as a whole.

Mr. Aitken: I am interested in what my hon. Friend says. I cannot enter the mists of past precedent, because, quite frankly, I do not have a clue as to how a Committee can be selected by the whole House. I have some confidence in the impartiality of the Committee of Selection. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton is, on balance, right to say that that is the best solution available.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: It is generous of my hon. Friend to give way again. I wish that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) had made his intervention during my short speech, not that of my hon. Friend.

There is no precedent for a Bill of this sort. It is unprecedented in its magnitude. I think that we would deceive and mislead ourselves if we appealed to precedent rather than addressed ourselves to the reality of this unique position.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend makes another valid point. We are in uncharted waters with the Bill and the procedure on which we are embarking.

There are two issues that the motion leads us to discuss — whether the Bill should be committed to a Select Committee, and, if so, what should be the numbers on that Committee. I have always argued that it would have been wiser to have this subject analysed first by a public inquiry. I would have preferred a shortened form as I am sensitive to the argument that some public inquiries can continue almost ad infinitum.

The Government may have miscalculated if they thought that by going through the hybrid Bill procedure they would end up with a shorter procedure than under a shortened public inquiry. There is no doubt that in the uncharted waters in which we have been swimming for some months, a great deal of anger and resentment have been created as a result of what one might call the rush job or breakneck-speed approach of the Government.

Because of that, people in Kent and elsewhere are angry. There is no doubt that they will petition in unexpected and unprecedented numbers for amendments to the Bill. From the Thanet towns represented by myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale), it appears that there will be something in excess of 500 petitions — none of them orchestrated, all of them sincere and all with a great deal of genuine grievances that they want redressed. If that is to be the scale of the petitioning from one community alone, it will be a marathon of a Select Committee, and special qualities will be required of those who serve on it.

The time has passed when one could continue the argument whether the Bill should be referred to a Select Committee. Wiser voices would have chosen a public inquiry, but, as that has not happened, we must move on from the argument whether it should be referred to a Select Committee. It will be, and we should accept that. However, when we consider the number of members who should be on the Select Committee, we enter difficult and unprecedented territory.

We should consider the task that the Committee will have to perform. The matter is being taken desperately seriously by the petitioners. They have rights which they feel have been trampled on so far and they wish to have a fair, just and open hearing. Attempts to shorten the proceedings of their petitioning have already been resented. I hope that the hearing of the petitions will be scrupulously fair. I am sure they will be.

Let us consider the task that the Committee faces. First, there is the possibility of enormous numbers of petitioners. There could easily be 1,000 or 2,000 petitioners all perfectly serious, covering many subjects. These will be distinct from the 30 or 40 petitions which will come from major groups like the district councils and the ferry companies. The Committee's work load will be tremendous and the time spent on the Committee will be enormous.

The geographical spread of the work of the Committee will also be considerable. There seems to be a notion that the Committee will only have to sit here in Westminster. Not a bit of it. The Government have already said that the Committee should sit in other parts of the country. There is also a slight misconception that those parts of the country will be confined to Kent. Those who have considered the issue carefully know that there is great unease up and down the country about the effects of the Bill, especially in the ports. There is a report from the well known stockbrokers Phillips and Drew which states — and I make no comment on the assertion — that 40,000 jobs could be lost, not just in the immediate Channel ports but in ports as far afield as Hull, Immingham, Felixstowe and around the coast to ports like Plymouth and Portsmouth. Some of the small ports, such as Shoreham, might be wiped out completely. It is probable that a Select Committee, doing its job properly and hearing petitions, would have to go to those places and work in many locations around the country.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The county council that covers the port that I represent, Immingham, and most of the public authorities

in that area are, I suspect, intending to be petitioners. My hon. Friend is right to draw the attention of the House to the fact that petitioners will come not only from the area that he represents but from many east coast ports as well.

Mr. Aitken: I am grateful for that corroboration from my hon. Friend.

There is an enormous volume of work for the Committee and quite a geographic spread around the country. It is possible that the Select Committee will have to hear evidence from France, and perhaps go to France. Much of the Second Reading debate tonight was taken up with an argument about what the French were doing in the Nord-Pas de Calais region and the cornucopia of grants, incentives and special new motorways which are designed to ensure that France rather than Britain will be the magnet for industrial development not just from France but from England as well.

Mr. David Mitchell: I listened to my hon. Friend earlier, but I am still perplexed and would appreciate it if he can clarify the matter. Does he advocate infrastructure expenditure paid for by the Government, because he has extolled the virtues of that in northern France? Does he want to see the same thing here? Or is he extolling the virtues of this Government's approach, where these matters are left to the private sector? Does he believe that we should encourage the new French Government along those lines? It is difficult for him to sustain the argument that he is attracted by the actions of the French and wants us to do the same here.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not want to inhibit the debate overmuch, but the Minister is really seeking to extend it a long way beyond the limits of the motion before the House.

Mr. Aitken: I shall heed your warning, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and simply say that I decided not to respond when my hon. Friend replied to the previous debate, because I thought that, rather than seeking genuine elucidation of my views, he was seeking to make no more than a keen debating point. As he has now made that keen debating point for the second time this evening, perhaps I may briefly respond to it.

I am not extolling the virtues of what the French are doing. What they are doing is contrary to the assurances originally given at Avignon, that this would be a private sector project and would be financed by private money. That was the understanding. Both Governments have since decided to cheat on those assurances, the British Government to the tune of about £1 billion of public expenditure shoved in to benefit the private consortium, and the French, at a conservative estimate, to the tune of something like 50 billion French francs worth of public expenditure to support this private development.

I do not admire what the French are doing, but, as they are doing it, it is as well that the Select Committee should recognise that a serious challenge to British interests arises out of it. The dilemma for the British Government is whether to match that kind of expenditure or whether to say that that simply is not on and that we shall not proceed with the Channel tunnel at all if the French try to pull such a fast one. I hope that answers my hon. Friend's point.

What the French are doing could be germane to the kind of petitions that will come in for amendments to the Bill. I am sure that there will be amendments saying that the Bill should not proceed unless a network of grants and incentives is provided for east Kent comparable to what is going on 20 miles away on the other side of the Channel.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend perhaps knows more about the issues than any other hon. Member. How many petitions or petitioners does he envisage will come forward? Does he suppose that the Select Committee will be capable of dealing with what I anticipate will be a flood of petitions? What happens if it is not?

Mr. Aitken: The phrase "a flood of petitions" is particularly apposite because, as I said at the beginning of my speech, we are in uncharted waters, and we may well be in uncharted flood waters. There is no doubt that we shall see petitioning on an unprecedented scale. I think I am right in saying—my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton will correct me if I am wrong—that never before has a Select Committee on a hybrid Bill seen more than 40 or 50 petitions. The signs so far from Kent are that from the Thanet towns alone there will be more than 500 petitions, and there could easily be three or four times that number from the rest of Kent. We do not know what kind of petitioning numbers will come in from other parts of the country. It is no exaggeration to say that there could be literally thousands of petitions.

The fault, if it is a fault, for that situation lies with the Government who have changed the ground rules for a project of this kind by saying that they will not have a public inquiry, such as we had on Sizewell, Stansted, and so on, but instead will try to get away with the hybrid Bill procedure. The response to that has been that if they are going to try to do that, the public will exercise their rights to the full and petition. That is why we have an unprecedented situation.

Mr. Lawrence: I have a great deal of sympathy for the people of Kent, as befits the Member of Parliament for Burton to whose area from Kent comes a lot of the produce that we turn into beer. But my hon. Friend began by saying that he was in favour of committing this matter to a Select Committee. It sounds very much as though the sheer volume of the petitions, the geographical spread of the visits and the total demand upon hon. Members will make it impossible for it to be committed to a Select Committee.

Mr. Aitken: It is like the story of the Irishman—I would not have started from here. If we were beginning all over again, even if I were a Minister—which is extremely unlikely—I would strongly advise, within the Department of Transport, that the right way to go is not to try to test the hybrid Bill procedure to destruction but to have what the late Anthony Crosland thought of—some form of shortened public inquiry. That would defuse much of the local feeling. We could then go on to what I think would be a fairly shortened and conventional hybrid Bill procedure.

Mr. Cash: Does my hon. Friend accept that it is slightly misleading to give the impression that there was an option between the hybrid Bill procedure and a public inquiry? In fact, it is essential, according to the procedures of the House, that a Bill of this kind be referred to a hybrid Bill Committee.

Mr. Aitken: There is no doubt that at some stage the Bill had to be referred to the hybrid Bill procedure. I am arguing, going back to square one, that we would have avoided the present situation of mass petitioning, with

[Mr. Aitken]

passion and anger, if only we had had a demonstrably fair form of public inquiry, such as a shortened inquiry, or some form of local letting off steam process.

I think that I have said enough about the volume of work that the Select Committee will have to do and the geographical areas it will have to cover. In Kent it will not just be a question of sitting down in the towns. There is a network of footpaths used by ramblers and running clubs, one of which I am a member of. Those ramblers and running clubs care deeply about the routes of the footpaths and bridleways which will be removed. I think that the members of the Select Committee may need a bit of stamina to get round some of the routes if they are to do their job properly. They will also have to master a number of subjects — employment and health and safety considerations, road and rail links, environmental links, and so on. It will be a marathon task for the parliamentarians involved. They will need remarkable qualities. There was much jocular suggestion earlier about my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath). I doubt whether even he has the patience of Job which will be needed to be a member of the Committee.

Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop: It is not only the Committee which may see snow fall in its summer, but the Court of Referees, which nobody has yet mentioned, which determines locus standi. It may find its summer contains January.

Mr. Aitken: On the matter of the Court of Referees, it is my earnest hope that the Government, being a Government of honour, will stand by the promises they have given to follow the precedent set by the 1973-74 Channel Tunnel Bill. In that Bill the Government gave an assurance that they would not challenge the locus standi of any petitioner. The spokesman for the Liberal party read out the relevant sections tonight. As he was doing so there was an interesting exchange. He read out the passage which said that the Government would not challenge the locus standi of any petitioner whose petition conformed to the basic requirement of relevancy. I said, rather quietly perhaps, that the Government had already conceded that, and the Secretary of State nodded and said they had. I hope *Hansard* picked that up. It is certainly a matter of record between the Secretary of State and myself that confirmation was given. Therefore, I think that there is no doubt that the Court of Referees should not have to do a very arduous job if the Government stick by the precedents and their pledges and do not challenge the locus standi of anybody who is a bona fide resident of Kent with a relevant petition.

I shall turn now to the issue of whether it should be nine or 11 good men and true. I hope that I have said enough to show that the work load will be tremendous and the stamina requirements will be great. I think it is a task that would be best shared by a larger rather than smaller number of hon. Members. I pity those who have to be on the Committee. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) said that I should be on the Committee. I think that I am probably almost the only person who is automatically disqualified. If by any chance I were asked to serve, I would not hesitate to do so, but I fear that my interests would be considered too close.

I am a little worried about the membership of 11. Only a few weeks ago, I was appearing in front of the Select Committee on Standing Orders, on some of the ground that the petitioners will be on, and the Committee, in the face of the complex arguments, divided equally, straight down the middle. The Committee was deadlocked. Mr. Deputy Speaker, quite rightly—I praise rather than criticise him for it—decided not to use his casting vote. However, I would not like to see the Select Committee faced with the same problem. I mention that instance simply to show that 11 members might be too few.

Of the amendments, the one suggesting that 11 is the right number is the correct way to go. I pity those 11 right hon. and hon. Members who are called to serve on the Committee, but that is the right number so that the Bill can proceed to a Select Committee.

2.1 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I shall follow the points raised by my hon. Friends the Members for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken).

I am serving on a private Bill. It would be wrong for me to reveal the discussions in which we are engaged. However, I want to stress the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton about the proposed Select Committee for the Bill. A Select Committee of this kind is there very much in the way that Members are there in a private Bill Committee, in a judicial capacity. This requires them to consider the evidence of the promoters of the Bill, to listen to the cross-examination by those representing the petitoners, and then to listen to the case made by the petitioners, and then to listen to the case made by the petitioners, the evidence that they submit, and how that stands up to cross-examination by the counsel representing the promoters.

It is wholly wrong for many of my hon. Friends to suggest that this hon. Member should serve on the Committee because he is very much in favour of the Bill, or that that hon. Member should do so because he is in favour of the Bill and also come from the midlands, the south-west or wherever. Those who serve on the Select Committee should be hon. Members who have no particular interest in favour of, or against, the Bill. It is because they are to take a judicial decision that I am concerned that as a result of the intense lobbying that is going on, there cannot be an hon. Member who has not already been subjected to a deluge of documents from public relations companies, such as those that I received from the Eurotunnel.

Because this matter has been so much debated, already entrenched positions in favour of or against the Bill may have been taken by many hon. Members—perhaps all 650 of them—and there will be difficulty in finding the necessary independence that is the hallmark of a private Bill.

Mr. Cash: I agree with my hon. Friend 100 per cent. on this point. However, I draw his attention to the declaration that he was required to sign when he took his place on the Committee considering the private Bill, which he would not have been allowed to join had he not been able to sign the declaration, because it precludes him from sitting on a Committee considering a Bill in which he has a direct interest. The same principle has to apply to a

hybrid Bill, because the Committee is looking at the private interests of the matter that is the subject of deliberation.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend is correct. I have served on a number of private Bill Committees and I am beginning to become fairly familiar with the procedure. The private Bill procedure is a good avenue for ensuring that people's rights are protected and examined. One of the crucial reasons why petitioners have so much respect for the private Bill procedure is that they know and have confidence in the fact that hon. Members serving on such Committees have signed a declaration. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) is right to say that that declaration includes a form of words that clearly shows to all concerned, especially to petitioners, that those hon. Members who are adjudicating in such a Committee have no particular interest or concern one way or the other.

It does credit to the Committee of Selection that it has usually been very successful in selecting hon. Members to serve on Committees considering a range of private Bills. Certainly in my case, when I am appointed to consider private Bills, I think I can honestly say that I am totally indifferent to whether a Bill becomes an Act. That is the frame of mind in which those appointed to this Select Committee should consider the Bill.

Mr. Michael Portillo (Enfield, Southgate): I am worried that my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is in some danger of exaggerating when he says that it may be impossible to find any hon. Members who have not taken up a position in relation to the Bill. It is true that hon. Members will be deluged with representations. That is true of many different subjects. I believe, however, that my hon. Friend comes close to insulting the intelligence of hon. Members if he believes that, having sorted through the material that is sent to them, there are not many hon. Members who could preserve their independence of judgment.

There are many hon. Members with constituency interests. We have discussed this aspect during the debate tonight. Leaving that aside, does my hon. Friend not believe, on reflection, that he is in some danger of exaggerating when he suggests that all 650 hon. Members will become so entrenched that they will not exercise independent judgment, as befits the judicial nature of this Select Committee?

Mr. Brown: I am not sure that I can agree with that. Those Conservative Members who have caught your eye, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have invariably mentioned the way in which the Channel tunnel will touch their constituencies. At first, perhaps, one might imagine that the Bill would affect only those in Kent and the south-east corner of England, but it is clear that the implications of the Bill will touch the constituencies of many hon. Members, who are bound to veer in favour of the Bill or against it.

My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie) suggested that my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) might serve on the Committee because he represented the west midlands manufacturing, engineering and motor car industries and Metro Cammell. I submit that that is precisely the sort of thing——

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West) *rose*——

Mr. Brown: May I finish making this important point. My hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South said that my hon. Friend the Member for Northfield should be considered by the Committee of Selection to serve on the Select Committee on the basis that he would be able to reflect on the benefits of the infrastructure and investment that would accrue to the west midlands. Therefore, she suggested, he would be a candidate, on the ground that he would assist the west midlands during consideration of the Bill.

I should think that Labour and Conservative Members who represent Humberside and the ports of Grimsby, Immingham or Hull will have been lobbied by their county council and district councils against supporting the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), representing a steel constituency, will have been lobbied by Euroroute and the promoters of the Bill on the ground that there will be a tremendous British steel content. All hon. Members whose constituencies adjoin mine in the county of Humberside are bound to have been influenced for or against the Bill.

Mr. Bill Walker: Is my hon. Friend suggesting that the only hon. Members who may be capable of serving on the Committee are those from Ulster, the Western Isles and the Orkneys and Shetlands?

Mr. Brown: I note my hon. Friend's point. Basically, he indicates that the Selection Committee will have to look closely at the matter before it makes its nominations and bear in mind the points I have made. I submit that a minority of hon. Members may genuinely fall into the category referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Enfield, Southgate (Mr. Portillo). I imagine that all hon. Members from the county that I have the privilege of representing would ask, "How would my decision as a member of the Select Committee benefit my constituency?" I regret that however much an hon. Member may try to divorce himself from that thought, it is bound to be there when a marginal decision has to be taken.

Mr. Hind: Perhaps my hon. Friend will consider the fact that all hon. Members are incapable of closing their eyes to their constituency interests. As hon. Members, we would have to behave, for example, as Government Ministers are expected to do and consider the national interest first and foremost, in the same way as a member of a national committee would do. Otherwise, nobody would be capable of sitting on the Committee and making a judgment that was not influenced by a lobbying group or constituency.

Mr. Brown: In an ideal world, it is correct that the principle of the House is that all hon. Members represent the nation. I have to concede—I am sure that most of my hon. Friends will agree—that it is very difficult for hon. Members to resist the arguments that come from their constituencies when touching such matters. Of course, in theory, we should submerge our constituency interests to the wider interests of the country. On the other hand, hon. Members represent constituencies. It is perfectly right and proper that, when we represent our constituencies in the Chamber, sometimes we are tolerated when we allow our constituency interests to subsume the national interests. In an ideal world, what my hon. Friend suggests should happen, should happen, but I cannot believe that it is likely to happen.

I must confess that if I were to serve on the Select Committee, while I would do my utmost to divorce myself

[Mr. Brown]

from the representations that might have come to me in the past and try to block out from my mind any constituency interest, occasionally, when a marginal decision was being taken, I would be bound to do that. The way in which I might question a witness or counsel might lead me in one direction because I have at the back of my mind, subconsciously, the feeling that if I can persuade the petitioners that the promoters are right to suggest something there will be a benefit to the steel industry in Scunthorpe.

Mr. Cash: I support the argument that my hon. Friend is advancing and remind him that the matter is regulated by the Standing Orders of the House and is not merely one of opinion. Standing Order 120 deals with the declaration to which I referred earlier and is paraphrased on page 992 of "Erskine May" as follows:

"If a member who has signed this declaration should subsequently discover that he has a direct interest in a bill, or in a company who are petitioners against a bill, he will withdraw from the committee, after stating the fact, and may, if necessary, be discharged by the House (or by the Committee of Selection) from further attendance."

The extremely cogent argument that my hon. Friend is advancing is endorsed in principle and by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Brown: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. "Erskine May" makes the point even better than I can. The quotation that my hon. Friend has read out shows that there will be many hon. Members whose constituencies will be touched either directly or indirectly by the impact of the Bill, and the Standing Orders require hon. Members to give an undertaking, which they have to sign, that they will not be influenced by such an interest.

To revert to the intervention of my hon. Friend the Member for Southgate, I must concede that there are probably some hon. Members who fall into his category. I think, however, that they will be few and in the minority. The Selection Committee will have to work very hard and very carefully to ensure that it finds the few Members who I concede to my hon. Friend may be in that category, but I would say that every hon. Member who has participated in the debate so far will have fallen foul of the Standing Order that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has quoted.

Mr. Portillo: My hon. Friend and I are getting closer together. He is beginning to concede that there are Members without constituency interests. I think he may have been slightly distorted in his vision by the interest that his constituents have and that of the constituents in surrounding constituencies. I put it to him that there are quite a large number of constituencies where there will be no direct interest.

It seems that my hon. Friend is moving quite a long way towards denying any possibility of adjudication. If I followed his principle very far down the road, it would become impossible for any judge to reach independent judgment, because he would have opinions of his own. Hon. Members may have certain opinions, but they will be asked to set them aside when they come to exercise a quasi-judicial function. There will be a smaller number of Members who have a direct constituency interest, and that must, of course, preclude them from sitting on the Select Committee in the first place.

Mr. Brown: That must preclude them because the statement from "Erskine May" that my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford read out states that they will not be able to serve. I shall be unable truthfully to sign the declaration. There is no question of my being on the Select Committee, for the simple reason that I would have a constituency interest, end of story. I am but one of, I would submit, several hundred Members who will be unable to sign the declaration.

Mr. Cash: I shall repeat the passage in "Erskine May" on this issue, which states:

"If a Member who has signed this declaration should subsequently discover that he has a direct interest in a bill, or in a company who are petitioners against a bill, he will withdraw from the committee, after stating the fact, and may, if necessary, be discharged by the House (or by the Committee of Selection) from further attendance."

Mr. Brown: That is correct. Reverting to the exchange between my hon. Friend the Member for Southgate and myself, the fact is that there will be many hon. Members on both sides of the House who will be unable to sign the declaration, however much they might be able to say, "There is a mild constituency interest, but I think that I am honourable enough a Member to block it out when I am serving on the Committee." The hon. Member concerned must sign the declaration, and he must state that there is no constituency interest.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: The problem is compounded by the fact that many right hon. and hon. Members, on both sides, represent various interest groups. Many Opposition Members are sponsored by trade unions, and many Members speak on behalf of trade interests. Some hon. Members are retained by companies. They may be unaware of the investment decisions of the group which they represent, yet these decisions may involve a financial interest in an aspect of this project.

Mr. Brown: I hope, that my suggestion will meet the problem raised by my hon. Friend. Many Members have interests outside the House, and that is to be commended. It is right and proper that hon. Members should bring to bear different experiences.

The Committee of Selection, in addition to eliminating hon. Members who may have a constituency interest, must consider the possibility of an hon. Member having a direct or indirect interest in the Bill because of his association with a company, advertising agency or public relations company. When the Committee of Selection has found nine or 11 hon. Members who pass the original test, it must then study the Register of Members Interests and consider the companies in which the Members may have an interest.

Mr. Neale: I suggest that my hon. Friend is seeking to simplify the matter too much. There is a fundamental difference between the opposed private Bill procedure and the hybrid Bill procedure.

It may be argued that every hon. Member already has displayed a latent interest in the Bill, simply because it has been debated and voted upon, not only this week, but on previous occasions. If we pursue my hon. Friend's argument to its ultimate conclusion, unless we find hon. Members who have manifestly abstained from the previous proceedings they will not be eligible for the Committee.

Under the opposed private Bill procedure someone makes a decision on the Bill, but in this case a decision

is made, not on the Bill, but on the substance and form of the Bill. It is a different matter from the private Bill procedure and will enable many hon. Members to be eligible to attend the Committee.

Mr. Brown: I accept that there is a fundamental difference between a Committee considering a hybrid Bill and a Committee considering an opposed private Bill.

The basic function of both Committees is to adjudicate on the evidence presented by the petitioners and to subject that evidence to cross-examination by the promoters. In that sense the example that I have quoted is similar to the opposed private Bill procedure. I should have thought that it was essential that the Selection Committee applies as far as possible whatever disciplines it applies to opposed private Bills when selecting hon. Members for Committees.

I acknowledge that on my criteria it may be difficult to find nine, let alone 11, hon. Members who fit the bill, but it is imperative that the Selective Committee attempts to do the job. Petitioners who petition in good faith, and as they might do for opposed private Bills, need the same reassurance as petitioners who appear before me on the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill. It is unsatisfactory to say to them, "This is a particularly peculiar Bill and we cannot give the same assurance of the independence and integrity of hon. Members who serve on it as of those on opposed private Bill Committees because it is difficult to find nine hon. Members who meet the criteria." It is crucial that the Selection Committee makes the same attempt as it does with the selection of those who serve on opposed private Bills.

Mr. Cash: This point has been exercising me, because only today I attended the 60th anniversary of British Reinforced Concrete Engineering, which is one of our finest companies and provides a tremendous amount of infrastructure, welded mesh, fencing, and so on, which is likely to be used in the construction of the tunnel. Therefore, I take careful note of what my hon. Friend has said. As my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Fox), who is Chairman of the Selection Committee, is present, it is appropriate to mention that I find myself entirely precluded from any possibility of sitting on this extremely interesting Committee, on the basis of the declaration under Standing Order No. 120, and because of my strong local interest in the matter pertaining to the construction of the tunnel.

Mr. Brown: If I were a petitioner against the Bill, I would certainly feel aggrieved if my hon. Friend were selected before me. It would be improper for my hon. Friend to sit on that Committee, and if I were a petitioner I would not expect to see him on it. Similarly, if I were a petitioner against the Bill, while I would be delighted to see the hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes serving on the Committee, I suspect that the promoters would be worried. We are beginning to see the difficulties that the selection Committee will face. We know of the skill and ability with which my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Fox) and his colleagues carry out their difficult task, but this task will prove to be beyond even their skills.

I return to the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham that, without knowing it, hon. Members may have a financial pecuniary interest in the Bill and may find themselves serving on the Committee. I am not associated with any company which will contract for the tunnel. Many hon. Members are public relations' or advertising agents' consultants. An hon. Member who is connected with, say, the ABC advertising agency may believe that the firm has no connection with the Bill. Having been nominated by the Selection Committee to serve on the Select Committee, he may feel able to sign the declaration to which my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford referred.

That hon. Member, doing work on an irregular basis for that advertising agency, may not be aware of the various clients for whom the agency acts. It is common for hon. Members to be paid a retainer, of perhaps £2,000 or £5,000, by companies with many clients, and hon. Members are required on occasion to give advice. As I say, the hon. Member who does work on an occasional basis for the ABC agency may not know that the firm acts for, say, the Euro Tunnel Group. He may in good faith have signed the declaration and taken his seat on the Select Committee.

It will be essential, therefore, for the Selection Committee to be armed with the constituency details of the Members under consideration and the Register of Members' Interests to ensure that a conflict of interest does not arise. All concerned, petitioners and promotors, have every right to feel that the quasi-judicial role which the hybrid Bill and opposed Bill system involves will be maintained in the Select Committee's deliberations on what will be a unique measure.

I note that my hon. Friend the Minister of State is not in his place. Hon. Members will recall that at the outset he said that he would reply to the debate after listening to all the contributions.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Transport (Mr. Peter Bottomley): The Minister of State was in his place at the beginning of my hon. Friend's speech. The Minister has been in attendance for virtually the whole of this and the previous debate, and we should pay tribute to him for the care with which he has listened to the comments of hon. Members.

Mr. Brown: I do not complain about my hon. Friend's absence. He said, however, that he would listen to all the speeches and then reply and give advice. Perhaps we should adjourn momentarily to enable him to return.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) must either get on with his speech or resume his seat and let someone else speak.

Mr. Lawrence: My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is being most unkind to the Minister, who has been here steadily throughout the evening, as some of us know. The Minister was a little unkind in not giving us a speech at the beginning of this measure explaining why it is necessary to submit it to a special Select Committee.

Mr. Brown: Let me assure my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Burton (Mr. Lawrence) and my hon. Friend the Minister of State that it is absolutely right and necessary, given the length of time that they have to be here, that Ministers should attend to their other duties and perhaps have a cup of coffee. There is nothing wrong in that at all. I hope that I have the assurance of my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State that he will take note of what I say, especially about constituency and financial interests. Will he give me his assurance that

[Mr. Brown]

he will pass on my comments to the Minister before he winds up the debate? The Minister may want to make some comments.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Not only can I give my hon. Friend the assurance that he seeks, but I can tell him that my hon. Friend the Minister of State would have been able to give him the same assurance, because I suspect that my hon. Friend gave a summary of what he proposed to say in his speech, and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will be here in his place and listening. I suspect that the Minister of State will be here before my hon. Friend has finished his speech.

Mr. Brown: That satisfies me completely.

I shall now turn to the matter of the size of the Select Committee. The Secretary of State recommends in the motion that there should be nine members on the Committee. I do not know the significance of that number, but no doubt we shall hear about that when the Minister offers his advice. It is always right for Back Benchers to recognise that in any motion laid before the House in which any Government recommend a number of hon. Members for a Committee, it is probably fewer than is necessary and it is always right to add two and bid up the recommendation.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has been here throughout the debate and is conscious of the large number of petitioners that may present themselves to a Select Committee. In that context, my hon. Friend will bear in mind what our hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) said? My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes has considerable experience of the private Bill procedure. Can he tell us whether a private Bill Committee is able to form Sub-Committees and delegate to those Sub-Committees the right to listen to petitions? It may have occurred to hon. Members that the Select Committee will not be able to hear the petitions of all petitioners.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I ought to draw to the attention of the House the fact that we are discussing not a reference to a private Bill Committee, but a proposal to refer a hybrid Bill to a Select Committee.

Mr. Hogg: I understand that Mr. Deputy Speaker, but by analogy it seems that what a private Bill Committee can do is probably open to the Select Committee to do. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is making a speech and I am seeking guidance from him. Unfortunately, the Minister of State, Department of Transport, was not able to elucidate this point and I am not sure that he will be able to elucidate it when he returns to the House. That is why I am raising the matter with my hon. Friend.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) is required to address the House on matters that are relevant. The point raised by the hon. Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) in his intervention is irrelevant. Mr. Michael Brown.

Mr. Hogg: Further to that point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and, with respect, no.

Hon. Members: Oh.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Gentleman must not challenge my ruling.

Mr. Hogg: I am terribly sorry, Mr. Deputy Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes is arguing that the Committee should consist of 11 members rather than nine. One of the arguments that may be relevant to this issue is the ability of a Select Committee to form Sub-Committees in order to multiply the opportunities for the presentation of petitions. In that context, the more members the better, because one can form more Sub-Committees. Therefore, we need to know whether Sub-Committees can be formed. That was the reason for my seeking information, and I apologise to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for having put my argument so clumsily.

Mr. Brown: I think, that I can help both my hon. Friend and you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have got the drift of my hon. Friend's point.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. I do not need the hon. Gentleman's help. I can manage very well on my own.

Mr. Brown: The assistance that I was offering to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was to say that I could respond to my hon. Friend without being out of order by addressing myself to the main point of this debate, which is on the first paragraph of the motion that stands in the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport. What I now have to say will help you in this sense, that it will be completely in order, because I shall now relate my remarks on this matter to amendment (a), to which I am a signatory.

I began my remarks on this part of my speech by saying that I feel that whenever a Government of any political persuasion choose a number, they will inevitably try to get away with the lowest possible number. It is also inevitable that the Leader of the Opposition, whoever he may be, will take the view that whatever number the Government have thought of should be bidded up by one or two. And, sure enough, an amendment — a very good amendment, to which I am a signatory—has been tabled in the name of the Leader of the Opposition. It is signed by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, the shadow spokesman for Employment and in particular by the shadow spokesmen for Transport.

I said earlier this evening when I intervened during the speech of my hon. Friend the Member for St. Ives (Mr. Harris), because it was suggested that I had signed this amendment for reasons other than support for the amendment, that I do not sign amendments or motions unless I agree with them. That is the only basis upon which I sign. Sometimes that means that I sign motions or amendments that have been tabled by hon. Members who do not belong to my political party. I look first at the amendment and then, and only then, at those who tabled it.

I thought that this was a very sensible amendment. I am anxious to guard against any Government trying to get away with too much governmental authority over petitioners and Back Benchers. It is the duty of the Opposition to represent Back Benchers. They are the legitimate avenue through which Back-Benchers' opinions, the opinions of potentially aggrieved parties, can be reflected. So quite rightly the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Labour party tabled a series of excellent amendments.

You will notice, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I have signed only a certain number of amendments, not all of them. That clearly indicates that there are some amendments which I support and that there are others which I do not support. I strongly support amendment (a). Having regard to what was said by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) about the number of petitioners that inevitably there will be—he referred to hundreds of petitioners—tremendous stamina will obviously be needed by the nine hon. Members.

I suppose that the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition could fairly be asked why he hit on the figure of 11.

Mr. Peter Snape (West Bromwich, East): Before he tabled the amendment my right hon. Friend the Leader of the Opposition consulted us to discover what we thought would be the hon. Gentleman's view of the amendment and whether he could be enticed into signing it.

Mr. Brown: The hon. Gentleman and the Leader of the Opposition must have remembered the occasion two weeks ago when they laid a prayer to annul an order in which I had an interest. The seventh name on that prayer was mine, so they must have been encouraged by the fact that they can sometimes find support from me. I am delighted to hear the hon. Gentleman's news. I only wish that we had heard that information at the beginning of the debate from the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North (Mr. Hughes). I do not know whether the hon. Gentleman was in the Chamber at the time, but the hon. Member for Aberdeen, North intimated that he would not move amendment (a), which distressed me tremendously. The Amendment has been taken seriously by the Opposition. All the amendments tabled by the Opposition are perfectly proper, genuine amendments designed to improve the position and authority of the petitioners. The Opposition, in tabling amendment (a), were doing a signal service to the House and to the petitioners.

Mr. Derek Spencer (Leicester, South): As the House of Lords sits in its judicial capacity with only five judges, does my hon. Friend believe that we should beware of having an overlarge Committee?

Mr. Brown: I agree with my hon. and learned Friend. Only four hon. Members consider private Bills, and my hon. and learned Friend has said that only five judges sit in the House of Lords in its judicial capacity. I do not know whether my hon. and learned Friend was here when my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton spoke, but he said that we were in completely uncharted waters, and at least to that extent we must congratulate the Government on recognising that we are in an unusual position. More hon. Members will be necessary, bearing in mind the work load that they will have to undertake. There are many petitioners to the small opposed Bill that I am considering in committee, and it requires all the effort of four hon. Members to consider such a procedure. That is why the Government have chosen a minimum of nine.

Mr. Portillo: This section of my hon. Friend's speech worries me. Although he said that he signed the amendment for perfectly genuine reasons—I do not doubt that—earlier he waxed lyrical about the grave difficulty, or almost impossibility as he saw it, of finding a group of hon. Members who would be impartial and qualified to sit on the Select Committee. The logic of his position, if he believes that it is so difficult to find hon. Members who can sign the declaration and who have no interest in the matter, should be to go for a smaller number than is proposed by the Government, instead of which he urges us to accept a larger one. That leads to the suspicion that he may be backing this amendment as a wrecking amendment. He may wish to have nothing to do with the whole show. If that is the case, it is a legitimate position for him to adopt, but it would be helpful if he would explain whether that is what he has in mind.

Mr. Brown: This is not a wrecking amendment, as the hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) would be the first to agree. I understand my hon. Friend's point. It is much easier for five hon. Members to reach a consensus than it is for nine or even 11 Members. I support the amendment, although I understand why the Government hit on nine as opposed to the five members mentioned by my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer). This is no wrecking amendment. I would like to think that my hon. Friends, who might need some persuasion when they see the name of the right hon. Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition to the amendment, on seeing my name might read it, realise the value of it and be persuaded by the argument that we are adducing in its favour.

Mr. Bill Walker: In his consideration of the increase in numbers, did my hon. Friend bear in mind the huge number of petitioners, the length of time that the Committee would take and the fact that there is a quorum for the Committee? Given that there is a quorum, it is more likely to be met on a regular basis with a larger number of people upon whom to call.

Mr. Michael Brown: That was obviously one of the problems in the mind of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in tabling the motion. The volume of work will be such that there will not always be nine or 11 Members present all the time. That is why it will be necessary to have a larger number, bearing in mind that the Members will have to go to France and all round the country and hold sessions long into the future because of the volume of petitions. These incredible beings at the end of the day are only human, and they will not always be able to attend. Therefore, it was decided to have a higher figure to take account of the fact that some will be absent.

I observe that the Government imagine that anything up to six may be away at any one time. That may well meet my hon. Friend's point.

As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary correctly indicated, the Minister of State is in his place, refreshed, and will have got the gist of the brief argument that I have been adducing. On that note, therefore, I will say no more, and look forward to his reply.

2.57 am

Mr. Andrew Rowe (Mid-Kent): I believe that the number of members on the Select Committee will need to be kept as small as is reasonable because the length of time for which the Committee will have to sit will be inordinately long. It would be quite improper to remove too many Members from the other business of the House. Therefore, I would be opposed to having too large a number on the Committee.

[Mr. Andrew Rowe]

As I understand it, there is no obligation on the Select Committee to put a term on its deliberations. It is entitled to continue as long as it feels it is necessary to do so to satisfy the petitioners who appear before it.

Mr. Bill Walker: My hon. Friend may not have heard quite clearly my intervention just now. The larger the number available, if a quorum of about three is accepted, the greater the opportunities for people to be absent.

Mr. Rowe: I think that there is considerable merit in allowing the members of the Committee to build up a coherence of understanding with the petitioners. That becomes difficult if large numbers of them are regularly absent. The more one persuades the Committee to meet as a smallish, coherent group, the better the deal the petitioner will receive.

The variety of petitons will be considerable. A large number of people of Kent rightly feel that it is too easily assumed that the creation of the tunnel will bring prosperity automatically to Kent. Earlier the hon. Member for Battersea (Mr. Dubs) said that there was a real possibility that Kent would be an overall loser rather than an overall gainer from the tunnel. We in Kent are as likely to suffer increased unemployment as increased employment. A body of petitioners will wish to make known its views about the various amendments to the Bill that might ameliorate that danger.

For far too long Kent has been the entry door to the United Kingdom for people and firms that have not waited even for a minute to see what the county itself could offer them. Instead, they have hurried on to inferior parts of the country that appear at first sight to offer a commercial advantage when they would have done much better by themselves and the people of Kent if they had stayed in our county.

The number of petitions may be reduced in the Joint Consultative Committee, of which the Minister of State is chairman, promises to continue its work right up to the opening of the tunnel so that the total impact of the new development on the county can be evaluated.

The Select Committee will have an important task to perform in sorting out the difference between petitions that are genuinely based on the tunnel and others. We have heard more than once in the debate the wholly misleading claim, for example, that the building of the missing link of the M20 is somehow tunnel-related. The missing link was the subject of my first parliamentary question as a Member of Parliament. I asked that it be reinstated in the road-building programme. That had nothing to do with the tunnel but with the fact that my consitutents had been clamouring for it for many years. They welcomed enormously the solemn pledge that it will be finished by, I think, 1989. That is reassuring. The fact that its cost is being bandied about by people who disapprove of the tunnel is irrelevant. The Select Committee will have to take careful note of the distinctions between such erroneous claims and others.

Another example is the tremendous need for a third crossing of the River Medway. It would be stretching credibility too far to say that we need it because of the tunnel proposal. We need it for other reasons, and I hope very much that we get it. That is the sort of thing that the Select Committee will have to evaluate.

The county as a whole also needs a great deal of extra road infrastructure so that it can stand a chance of competing with other parts of the United Kingdom that will benefit from the rapid transit of freight through the tunnel to London and further north. If we are to cope with the increased number of vehicles that will come into Kent, we shall require a better road system. Again, I do not think that all of that will be strictly tunnel-related. The Select Committee will need to consider that as well.

The Select Committee will need to be very flexible in its handling of petitions and petitioners. I made that point in the debate two days ago. While a Joint Consultative Committee quite rightly responds to public concern by altering certain aspects of a Bill, it is extremely difficult for petitioners to draft their petitions in detail in a form that meets their anxieties. It should be possible for them to put in a petition and to have it heard in slightly different form if that is the appropriate form at the time when the petition is heard.

I am serving on a private Bill Committee at the moment. I know that it is not a strict parallel—we have been told that by the Chair tonight—but there is no doubt that our petitioners have been ill-advised in some respects to pitch their objections in too precise and narrow a form. It has meant that some of the anxieties that they reasonably want to express cannot be expressed because they are not strictly covered in their petition. It would be quite inappropriate for a Select Committee, dealing with a matter of such tremendous concern, to narrow its interpretation of what is properly dealt with in a petitioner's petition to something that it too strictly defined.

Another group of petitioners that will come before the Select Committee comes from the agriculture industry. There is a clear sign that the compulsory purchase procedures associated with the Bill are likely to be oppressive to a number of farmers in Kent. Compulsory purchase procedures have been designed for the benefit of a private consortium. The rules suggest that the price offered has to be the open market value that would apply if the Channel tunnel were not being built and if the land were being sold in the normal way. The land will not be sold in the normal way. It is to be sold because of the tunnel. A number of petitioners will put in their petitions in the hope of obtaining a rather more equitable solution to the problem. Perhaps I should remind the House that the author of "Alice in Wonderland" was for 20 years a second permanent secretary at the Treasury. We can understand a great deal about Treasury procedure if we bear that piece of information in mind.

My point about the need for the Select Committee to be as flexible as possible in its handling of petitioners is exemplified by the danger that good agricultural land will be lost not simply because of the compulsory purchase of land needed for particular parts of the construction, but because the amount of trespass and interference with farming that appears these days to be the inevitable concomitant of residential or warehousing development will affect farms that will not be affected directly through compulsory purchase. Again, the Select Committee will need to take a sympathetic view of petitioners who wish to bring those matters to its attention.

Similarly—this is a further example of the elasticity of mind required of those who serve on the Committee—there will be a considerable body of petitioners concerned with such matters as plant health. The creation

of the tunnel will, I suspect, almost certainly mean a considerable increase in the volume of agricultural produce entering this country. If the inspection procedures at the tunnel entrance are not satisfactory to ensure that that produce is not diseased, we may find that our record of good plant hygiene is threatened.

Another factor which concerns many of my constituents, and, I am sure, the constituents of many hon. Members is the danger of rabies. A group of petitions to be presented to the Select Committee will deal with the real anxiety that people feel about the possibility that the tunnel will make it easier for rabies to spread to this country.

I believe that it would be a mistake to enlarge the Committee too much, partly because it would then be difficult to secure a coherent view of the various petitions as they came in and partly because the Committee would have to sit for some time to give a fair hearing to petitioners, especially, dare I say, petitioners from Kent, who feel strongly that on this matter it is absolutely essential that their petitions receive a full and proper hearing.

Sir John Farr: I have been listening to my hon. Friend with great interest. He mentioned rabies, which is a very important issue. As he said, that danger has existed at the Channel ports for a number of years. How will the Select Committee comprise of people who can correctly interpret the skilled information which will be provided by witnesses during the Committee proceedings? It will require a certain amount of study on the part of several hon. Members on both sides of the House to be able to absorb the facts properly and to put two and two together to reach the right answer about the rabies threat. Does my hon. Friend agree that the task of selecting the Committee members should be performed by the wizard of Oz? It will be very difficult to find the right people.

Mr. Rowe: I can think of no hon. Member more like the wizard of Oz than the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. To that extent, I have some hope that that job will be performed satisfactorily. I am bound to say that lack of expertise has seldom been a reason for hon. Members failing to perform a duty. I hope that the Select Committee will call witnesses who will be able to inform the Committee precisely about the dangers and, perhaps more importantly, the nature of the precautions to obviate those dangers about which the House will need to know before it gives the Bill its Third Reading.

These matters are of fundamental importance. The possibility of rabies entering this country has existed ever since ships began to carry rats. However, that danger is more real with the creation of a fixed link. Therefore, it is essential that the Select Committee should call the right witnesses and report to the House on the best way to ensure that scourge stays away from our shores. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) for raising that matter.

I conclude by re-emphasising the fact that the Select Committee should be free to spend as long as necessary to hear all the petitioners. It is important to the people of Kent that their petitions be heard in extenso, so that they are not only given the opportunity to air their anxieties and to suggest improvements to the Bill—and I believe that there is great scope for improving the Bill—but that they are seen to have been heard. There has been considerable anxiety about the amount of time given to lodge petitions being too short. Let us at least ensure that when petitions are lodged they are treated flexibly and heard in extenso.

3.15 am

Mr. Bill Walker (Tayside, North): My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) has put clearly the situation as he sees it affecting his constituency. I find myself in a rather dangerous and delicate position. As hon. Members are aware, I represent a Scottish constituency. I have been struggling all evening to try to find reasons why I should support or oppose the Bill. I can honestly say that I have had a fairly detached view of it. The Channel tunnel seemed a long way from my constituency and from my constituents' interests.

From what I have heard this evening, I am in a dangerous position because I am beginning to think that there are so few like me in the House that we may well find ourselves on the Committee. That I look forward to with horror. So I must find some way between now and then of advising the Chairman of the Committee of Selection that some of my business interests will, I hope, mean that I can debar myself from selection.

Anyone who has listened to the many speeches that have been made this evening will realise that this Select Committee will be unique. As was said earlier, it will be moving into uncharted waters. There is no doubt that the people who will be affected by the Channel tunnel, the petitioners, will expect the House and the Committee, however it is composed, to give serious deliberation to their comments, remarks and views so that, whatever the outcome, they may feel that they have been dealt with honourably, fairly and justly. That is important.

It is all very well for hon. Members to jump on a particular bandwagon and make speeches about the advantages, imagined or real, that will affect them. The members of the Committee will have to be of a calibre and a type who are not debarred and there will be great difficulty in finding them. They will be called upon to act in this semi-judicial capacity in order to pass judgment on matters that are vital to the beautiful county of Kent.

I may at last have found an interest; thank goodness. My wife's family came from Kent. I hope that that debars me. I say that because when my wife's parents were alive I can remember spending many happy holidays in the beautiful county of Kent. My wife's first reaction to the Channel tunnel was to say, "Oh dear, what will they do to Kent?" It would be sad if, whatever happens as a result of the Committee being set up, the Committee did not take into consideration people's real and genuine fears.

If we are to believe, as I do, the comments made earlier by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), there will be not 100 or 200 petitioners, but thousands. That being so, the Committee will be sitting for a long time. The task that it will perform in this hybrid Bill will be one in which from day to day they will be unsure of exactly what they are doing. It is not difficult when going over ground already covered by other Committees, but if one is entering into an area of this magnitude, which will be new to everyone involved, there is no question but that we shall require a Committee which produces the right balance from within the House as well as people who are not disqualified. How can we achieve a balance that will

[Mr. Bill Walker]

produce a good Committee? Would we get it from a Committee of nine or from a Committee of 11, as amendment (a) suggests?

I have intervened once or twice during the debate. They were not frivolous interventions, although at times they might appear to anybody who was not interested in the proceedings to be something other than intentional attempts to get information and probe deeper. I have always believed that the more people who look at a problem, the more likely it is to get a balanced view. That is why we have juries of 12 in courts of law. Of course, when we have been required to set up courts, such as in Ulster, where problems have arisen and we have not had a jury of 12 there has been criticism that one cannot really expect to get a fair hearing. The petitioners must feel that they have had a fair hearing and must leave the Committee believing that they have been given a judgment that is honest and true.

I believe that, once the number of Members exceeds a certain point, we can have problems. Equally, when there is too small a number we have problems. The Government will argue that, in their judgment, nine is the right balance, especially when one considers their view that the quorum of the Committee should be three. I think that nine is not a good number. I believe that it would be better to have 12 and the nearest we have to that is 11.

You may well ask me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why I did not table an amendment if I am interested in this matter. I hope that I have already answered that. I have been so far away and so detached from the problem that until tonight I had hardly given it a thought.

Therefore, I believe that 11 is a better number than nine. I believe that it would be better for the petitioners because they would have a greater opportunity of getting a fair hearing. It could be argued that with 11 rather than nine it would be more difficult to reach agreement. However, are we concerned with agreement or justice? I should have thought than in a semi-judicial situation we were primarily concerned with justice because of the wide range of matters about which the Committee will be required to hear from the petitioners.

One of those matters, mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent, is the value of land. There is no doubt that the value of land will go bananas, and it will be adversely affected in some cases. It will depend whether one wants to put up a construction which will benefit from the Channel tunnel or whether the land suffers from planning blight. Either of those cases is at the extreme end of the situation. No doubt, one will be delighted to sell land to those who will pay well over the odds for it, but equally there will be those who suffer from planning blight who will see the value of their property being adversely affected.

We are talking about the rights of individuals and groups. It is the duty of the House to protect their rights. That is absolutely essential. We can do that only if we produce a Committee that will be seen by the petitioners to be fair, just and honest.

Of course, many other matters will be looked at by the Committee such as trade, agriculture and health because the petitioners, in their different ways, will want to see whether they will be affected adversely or otherwise.

Sir John Farr: My hon. Friend is touching on an interesting point. In amendment (b) the Opposition, supported by others, have tabled an interesting suggestion which would take the membership of the Committee out of the hands of the Chairman of the Committee of Selection. A number of amendments in the name of the Leader of the Opposition have been selected by the Chair. Is it not a matter of great concern to the House that the Opposition are not moving the amendments? In my time in the House of Commons, whenever I have supported even one amendment, perhaps to the Finance Bill, I have been there with my Friends to move it. Here, vital amendments have been selected by the Chair, but, showing great discourtesy to the House, the Opposition are not present to move them. That is most culpable.

Mr. Walker: I am concerned that the amendments that have been selected have not been moved by those who tabled them. It does nothing for the standing of the House in the eyes of the public. There is no question but that politicians suffer substantially from the adverse publicity that frequently descends upon us because some politicians behave in a manner that the media judge not to be in accordance with the high standards that we preach.

Mr. Cash: Would my hon. Friend care to note the names of the right hon. Members who have put their names to the amendments? They include the Leader of the Opposition, the deputy Leader of the Opposition, the shadow Leader of the House, and a number of other persons who hold senior positions. Is this not an abuse of the procedure of the House?

Mr. Walker: I cannot say that I am happy about the situation, but, in the phrase frequently used in the House, one can say that they do not care. Quite why they would go to the trouble of tabling amendments and then judging that it would not be wise to be here to move them, let alone speak to them, is a question for them to answer outside the Chamber. The cynicism with which the public views politicians will not be helped by the fact that such situations arise.

The Opposition say that they care about jobs and the effect that unemployment has on their position in the polls, to which they appear to give credence. The public will look at the Committee and see the way in which it is constructed, and will realise that one amendment suggested an increase in the number of Committee members from nine to 11, and one dealt with how the members of the Committee would be nominated. When they find that the amendments have not been moved, they will realise that the Opposition did not table them for any reason to do with the way that business is conducted, or the way that the Committee will deal with the matter.

Mr. Stott: This motion has been debated for four hours.

Mr. Walker: The hon. Gentleman is twittering on about four hours, but he will know that I have not been on my feet for more than 10 minutes, which is a small contribution. I do not apologise for treading on corns if I am. I am a Scot, who is far away from Kent, and I am not all that concerned about whether we build a Channel tunnel. I am here because of my concern that the people of Kent and elsewhere who will be affected substantially by the proposals are satisfied that at least the House took seriously how the members of the Committee were to be

chosen and appointed and how it was to function. The latter would also depend on the numbers. I am deeply concerned that Opposition Members are not here to speak to amendment (b), which is concerned with how the Committee members are to be chosen.

Sir John Farr: With respect to my hon. Friend, he is missing the point that I was making. It is not the fact of having tabled an amendment and not being here to move it. That is a discourtesy, but it happens every day. Two days ago at Question Time three hon. Members were not present when their questions were called.

It is a grave discourtesy, not simply to table the amendments and not be here, but to have them selected and not be here. The selection of an amendment by the Chair is a rare red letter day for a Back Bencher, but to have a handful selected by the Chair and not care sufficiently to be here to move them is a grave discourtesy to the House.

Mr. Stott: I have been here for four and a half hours. I have been here all the time.

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend has spelt out clearly what he and the rest of us feel about what we judge to be discourtesy to the Chair. Opposition Members have not been here, although their amendments were selected. *[Interruption.]* Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will gather from the sedentary interventions from Opposition Members that we have trodden on a corn. Indeed, we have brought them back to life. Correction, Mr. Deputy Speaker: we have brought one back to life. The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is not as alive as one would wish, but that is not surprising because he is with the Liberal party. They are never quite sure where they stand in any given situation. For most of the time they sleep when it matters. They agree with one thing and they agree with the other. Sleeping seems to be a satisfactory way of arriving at this middle-of-the-road situation. Of course, there is a danger, because those who sleep in the middle of the road may get run over.

Mr. Eric Forth: Perhaps my hon. Friend would agree that a sleeping position is perfectly safe and probably would not upset anyone.

Mr. Walker: I am sure that that is so. I expect that the attempt is made regularly by those who wish to leave everyone happy by not giving offence to anyone. It is a difficult position to achieve, and sometimes it leaves them in what might be described as a sad situation.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): For the past 10 minutes my hon Friend has given the House some reasons to consider in wondering whether we want to support the motion. Hon. Members have informed the House of the difficulties that the Select Committee will have.

I am seriously concerned about whether we should go ahead with this procedure, but I should like to know the consequences of my vote because I would not like to see the Bill lost. Could my hon. Friend tell the House what would happen if the House declined to support the motion and did not agree to set up a Select Committee? I should not like the Bill to be lost, but I am concerned about the disadvantages emphasised by many hon. Members who have spoken.

Mr. Walker: I would not attempt to answer that question because you would probably rule me out of, order Mr. Deputy-Speaker. Should by chance the vote go against the Government on the motion it would leave them in a less comfortable position than our Liberal friend across the Chamber.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend the Member for Tayside, North (Mr. Walker) reflect on the fact that he is imitating Charles James Fox? A similar event occurred in 1780 or thereabouts. Charles James Fox said to Lord North, who was apparently asleep on the Bench, that he was making an important speech and the old Prime Minister was not listening. The old Prime Minister, unlike the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes), woke up and said, "I wish to God I weren't."

Mr. Walker: My hon. Friend writes books of funny stories, and Members who have read them will know that one of the titles is something like "Hit me there again." I have the feeling that If I keep on talking someone will say "Hit me there again."

Amendment (b) is important. I would prefer — this may surprise some of my colleagues — to leave the nomination of members to the Committee of Selection. I think that, on the whole, the Committee conducts itself in a manner with which we can be satisfied. Choosing Committee members is difficult. On balance, the Committee has chosen right more than it has chosen wrong. On two occasions which I can think of the Government have been embarrassed when Committee members have been chosen. On those occasions the Government probably felt that the Selection Committee had not served them well. We must ask whether the Committee serves the House well. That is what matters. Administrations come and go, but the House remains. The procedures and conventions of the House are more important than the transient nature of any Administration, of whatever party.

I believe that the House would be well advised not to accept amendment (b). I should like to see amendment (a) accepted and amendment (b) rejected. I believe that the Selection Committee will be able to find nine members, or preferably 11, and I am confident that it will find members who cannot be debarred. My right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath) would be an excellent choice as Chairman of the Committee. I am not being frivolous in saying that.

Many right hon. Members who have recent experience in government would also benefit from the trials and tribulations of the Committee. I would like to think that, if we were to enter uncharted waters, those at the helm were experienced in matters off the House, and that they would be pathfinders in a way that would make Back Benchers happy and comfortable. I do not put that forward in a frivolous way, although I find some humour in the thought of what it may do to those individuals who suddenly find themselves undertaking such a task. It is an important job. We must put forward people of substance and standing who are recognised and accepted both inside and outside Parliament as individuals who have shown, by their actions in political life, that they have independent minds and are prepared to take action that sometimes makes them unpopular with their colleagues.

3.37 am

The Minister of State, Department of Transport (Mr. David Mitchell): My hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg), who opened the debate, has posed

[Mr. David Mitchell]

me a problem. One of the themes of his speech was that the views of the Front Bench on matters appertaining to the Committee and its membership should be ignored. Therefore, it was slightly difficult for me to consider my response to the debate. My hon. Friend suggested that many individuals' rights would be touched on, and he questioned whether all those whose rights would be affected would be able to petition. That important fact must be considered.

The House is not familiar with the procedures involved with a hybrid Bill, as hybrid Bills do not come forward often. Certainly, a hybrid Bill involving a project on such a scale as this has not previously come forward. In many ways, we are dealing with a unique occurrence. Therefore, there has been controversy about whether it would have been better to have a local planning inquiry instead of a hybrid Bill. I do not propose to take up that issue at this stage. What is important is that people in Kent whose rights as private individuals are to be affected should have the procedures of the House in respect of a hybrid Bill properly explained to them.

My Department, at my instigation, has produced a pamphlet entitled "The Channel Tunnel: How to make your voice heard". About 20,000 copies have been printed, circulated and made available throughout Kent, especially in council offices, public libraries and other public buildings of that sort. It has provided an opportunity for ordinary folk to acquire an understanding of the way in which the hybrid Bill procedure works and how, if they wish to petition, they should go about it.

The pamphlet has an introduction which provides an explanation of Parliament and the Bill. It then describes who will sit on the Select Committee, who can petition, what the individual can petition about, what is a petition, when the petition has to be in by, how a petition is delivered, how the Select Committee meets, what happens in the Select Committee and how much it costs to petition. There is then a step-by-step guide for those who want to petition and a further guide to the processes of the House and of the other place through which a hybrid Bill has to go. Finally, it has on the back a specimen draft of John Smith coming forward with the terms that he might set out in his petition.

It is not for me to teach my grandmother how to suck eggs, but it may be that there are some hon. Members who are not especially familiar with these procedures and who may even find the pamphlet, which has been produced as a layman's guide for the people of Kent, quite helpful. In assembling the information for it, I found that there was an enormous amount that I did not know. I commend the pamphlet to hon. Members——

Mr. Cash *rose*——

Mr. Mitchell: I give way to my hon. Friend, with whom in the past I have been involved in the preparation of a private Member's Bill, which means that we have battled together.

Mr. Cash: Everything that my hon. Friend has said, and everything that I have heard about the Government's conduct in this matter—I speak as someone who was a parliamentary agent for a long time — is quite remarkable and a great tribute to the fairness with which the Government have sought to deal with petitioners. Were it not for the late hour at which we are sitting, that is something that could be explained in more detail. It is a remarkable tribute to the Government that they have taken the steps that my hon. Friend has outlined, and he deserves personal congratulation for it.

Mr. Mitchell: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his generous words. It is not that we are seeking to stoke up the opposition, despite the hope of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) that that might be so. We are trying to ensure that people in Kent are not disadvantaged by not knowing what their rights and opportunities are. It is a genuine attempt to seek to help.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) expressed concern about British Rail's line capacity in his area and the position of commuters. This led him to make a plea that someone who understands commuters' problems should serve on the Select Committee. Those who will make the selection will no doubt read and note his suggestion. British Rail's capacity is not constrained in the way in which he seemed to fear, however. The position is that the boat trains which now operate, especially from Victoria, will cease to run as soon as the Channel tunnel is open. This will mean extra capacity on the lines through the south-eastern network, without the problems which would prevent the operation of commuter services for my hon. Friend's constituents or for others going further down into Kent.

The hon. Member for West Bromwich, East (Mr. Snape) is busy conversing on the Opposition Front Bench. I do not know whether he wishes me to give way so that we can all hear his comments. I know that he is a profound supporter of British Rail, and I do not wish to prevent him from intervening. The hon. Gentleman was not talking loudly enough for me to hear, and I am not sure whether he intended that I should.

My hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks raised the question of the effect on jobs in Kent. He questioned whether an hon. Member representing Kent could serve on the Committee. It is not for me to form a judgment on that. It would not be right, in any way, for any Member whose constituency is in that part of Kent that will be effected by the Bill to be involved in the Committee. That would be inappropriate.

In the next seven years we will face not job losses but job shortages. There will be a shortage of people for the available jobs in this part of Kent. The House has not addressed itself to that matter and it is profoundly different from those discussed by most hon. Members. They have discussed the effect, seven years from now, on jobs in Dover.

I am the chairman of the joint consultative committee in Kent, and we have started to consider the problem—the availability of labour. We have asked the promoters to let us have some idea of the various skills that will be required and the numbers of people with those required skills. Thus, we will obtain a pattern of the labour required. We have asked the Department of Employment and the Manpower Services Commission to give us some idea of the number of people available in Kent who have the necessary skills to match the requirements of the developers.

Mr. Gale: A few moments ago my hon. Friend appeared to announce something that will be news to some of us. He said that the moment the tunnel opens, the boat

train from Victoria will be cancelled. If that is correct, it is another demonstration of the job losses that will occur at the Channel ports. It confirms the grave fears of some of us from east Kent about the effect on the Channel ports.

Mr. Mitchell: It is one of the factors that have always been recognised and taken into account in British Rail's expectations. There is no point in running a train to meet a boat if it takes two hours longer to do that than it would to travel through the tunnel. My hon. Friend cannot be serious if he assumes that one can run empty trains down to the boats and full trains through the tunnel. No one will wish to go by train and take 2½ hours longer to complete the journey.

Mr. Gale: My hon. Friend is implying, not that nobody will want to travel by train and then by boat, but that nobody other than those in cars will want to go by boat. That is what most of us from east Kent have argued.

Mr. Mitchell: I am not in any way suggesting that British Rail will cut Dover or Folkestone from the railway network. There will not be sufficient traffic to warrant, as at present, sending trains direct to particular scheduled boat services. That is understandable, and has been understood throughout our discussions. If it comes as a surprise to my hon. Friend, I am prepared to consider that shock to his system.

Mr. Gale: It is no surprise, but it is confirmation of what we have been saying, which is that the Minister now recognises the devastating effect that the tunnel will have on the Channel ferries. That is on record as of now.

Mr. Mitchell: If my hon. Friend considers the matter carefully when he reads *Hansard* tomorrow, he will find that what I said is not particularly surprising.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend clarify a reference that he made to the time difference between a boat and the proposed tunnel crossing? Will he confirm that the record for a ferry crossing is about 57 minutes and that the new generation of ferries being developed will provide a faster, more efficient service? What is the real time difference in transit between a ferry and the proposed rail link? My hon. Friend may inadvertently have given the House the wrong impression.

Mr. Mitchell: I am not an expert on the precise timing of the ferry services. I understand that hovercraft take about three quarters of an hour, and that going by ship is considerably longer. Only the speed of hovercraft is remotely similar to that of travel through the proposed tunnel.

Mr. Rowe: My hon. Friend pointed out that the joint consultative committee has begun to consider the employment needs for the next seven years. He will be aware that Kent county council feels strongly that the joint consultative committee should remain in being until the tunnel opens because of the need to take account of planning. Does my hon. Friend intend to keep the committee in being in its present form, or in some modified form, until the tunnel opens?

Mr. Mitchell: It is for the members of the committee who are elected representatives of that part of Kent to conclude whether the committee's work needs to continue. I do not envisage continuing for as long as "The Mousetrap" has remained a regular show in the West End, but during the formative period I expect that we shall continue to have regular meetings, and then less frequent meetings to review progress and to ensure that the project is proceeding along the lines anticipated.

It may help the House if I indicate the range of subjects which the joint consultative committee is discussing at its meetings. The agenda of the last meeting covered matters arising from the previous meeting, the impact study that is being undertaken, the construction——

Mr. Aitken: I am thrilled to hear the Minister disclose details from the Dispatch Box about the committee's work. The committee, which the Minister cracks up to be a great event in terms of public information and consultation, is seen by the people of Kent as a secret committee from which the public and press are banned and to which Members of Parliament are not allowed to go. I accept that there is a circulation list for the minutes, but that is not equivalent to the free and open consultation and public communication that would reassure the people of Kent. I hope that the Minister will change the committee's ground rules.

Mr. Mitchell: It is for the members of the committee to decide whether to conduct their proceedings in the full glare of publicity or to act as a businesslike group, taking decisions and then fully explaining in the minutes that are circulated those decisions and why they have been reached. My hon. Friend implies that there is great secrecy about this committee. Once the minutes are sent to his council, it is not long before they reach him and other parties in the area, including the newspapers.

Sir John Farr: The Minister said that it was for the committee to decide how to proceed and whether to make its activities public. Would that include deciding, say, to allow the meetings to be open to the public, with the media, including radio and TV present, so that the public are kept fully informed of what is happening in what will prove to be an important PR exercise?

Mr. Mitchell: The purpose of this committee is not a PR exercise. It is to identify and seek solutions to problems in Kent. The Committee's next meeting, on 16 June, will be in public and will receive presentations from a series of groups in Kent whose members feel affected by the project, and we shall take account of the effect of having the press present at that meeting. I have no doubt that if the committee feels that it wants to change its way of working, it will do so.

Mr. Simon Hughes *rose*——

Hon. Members: The hon. Gentleman has woken up.

Mr. Hughes: I have not been asleep. I have been keeping a watching brief. Will the committee complete its work in time to be of use to the petitioners? When dealing with the previous Channel Tunnel Bill, the Kent impact study was completed several months before the matter went to the Select Committee. Will the committee produce the results of its economic and social studies—by, say, the production of an interim report—this month or by the beginning of July so that the benefits of its work, so far in secret, are made available to petitioners, rather than being produced several months after the closing date for petitioners to make their concerns known to the Select Committee?

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman was asleep when I explained that the proceedings of the

[Mr. Mitchell]

committee were not secret and that its minutes were sent to local authorities and the press. Indeed, I sought to spare the hon. Gentleman any embarrassment when he was snoring. I did not want to give way to him on the assumption that he wished to intervene. The hon. Gentleman asked when the committee would complete its work — *[Interruption.]* It is difficult to address the House when two Opposition Members are carrying on a conversation. If they want me to give way, I shall happily do so. If they do not, perhaps they will allow me to complete what I have to say.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) asked whether the committee would complete its work by the summer. Earlier, my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) asked whether the committee would continue to 1993. I told my hon. Friend that it was not the intention that the committee should complete its work hurriedly, that the work would go on, with the intensity of meetings determined by what the members of the committee felt was suitable as matters proceeded. Obviously, at the present formative stage, a great deal of work is being done and a great many studies are under way. Later on there will be more monitoring of the effect of the arrangements that have been agreed by the committee.

The impact study is being conducted in two parts. In the first part, we anticipate that a report will be before the committee at its next meeting. I hope that it will be approved then, but that is up to the members of the committee. *[Interruption.]* If Opposition Members cannot restrain themselves, is there any way in which I can either give way to them or get them to shut up, Mr. Deputy Speaker? The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey has raised a serious point and I am trying to give him a serious answer. There will be two stages in the impact study. The first one in the summer will be considered at the next meeting of the committee, and the next one will require consultants to be brought in and will take a considerably longer time to achieve its results. The fuller report will look at the long-term implications of the tunnel on Kent. The short-term one will be more concerned with the effects of construction and things of that sort, for which a great deal of information is already available.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I should like to ask a supplementary question about the interim report. If that report is agreed by the committee this month, will the Minister assure us that he and his offcials will raise no objection to its being released so that the material can be made available to petitioners in time for them to make use of it during the period of petition?

Mr. Mitchell: That is a perfectly reasonable suggestion, and I shall put it to the committee. I chair the committee. I do not dictate to it.

Mr. Franks: A few minutes ago my hon. Friend said that the committee had two options. If I remember his words, the options were that the committee could either conduct its business in the full glare of publicity, or, it could conduct its business in a businesslike way. Am I to understand from that that the two are mutually exclusive?

Mr. Mitchell: I think that my hon. Friend has had experience in his own business life of meetings that are more effective if they are conducted in private than if they are conducted in public. Most companies have boards, and my hon. Friend may sit on some company boards. It might generally, be felt that a board would not as effectively conduct its business in public as it would in private. Minutes of board meetings may well be circulated afterwards. The same thing is true of trade unions. Trade union meetings are not held in public, although what is agreed at meetings may well be circulated afterwards.

Sir John Farr: The motion says that the Committee will have the power to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom. Is my hon. Friend able to confirm reports that those places will include some of the ports? If the Committee's aim is to have more than one meeting in Dover, would it be possible for its proceedings to be heard on local radio?

Mr. Mitchell: I was referring to the joint consultative committee in Kent. My hon. Friend has asked me a question about where the Select Committee will hold its meetings. That is entirely a matter for the Select Committee. If members will decide where such meetings are to be held. If the Committee considered that it was appropriate to hold meetings in Kent—and I should not be at all surprised if it did—that would be a matter for it, not for the Government. We shall do nothing to prevent such meetings or to discourage the Committee from holding meetings.

Sir John Farr: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. It is an important point, which I know has been raised before. He is saying, therefore, that there would be nothing to prevent the Select Committee, if its members thought fit, from going to Dover to hold a meeting, or a series of meetings, and that they could ask the local television and radio stations to transmit the proceedings live?

Mr. Mitchell: I do not think that I dare to trespass into the area of whether the Select Committee would have the power to invite local television into its proceedings, any more than television could be invited to transmit the activities of this House without the House having formed its judgment on the matter.

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): I am pleased to hear the Minister say that, because one part of the committal motion with which we shall deal later deals specifically with the powers of the Select Committee.

Mr. Aitken: To return to the point that was raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Mr. Franks) and my hon. Friend the Minister of State's reply to him, the Minister used the analogy of the boardroom and said that more business like meetings could take place in private. May I suggest to my hon. Friend that he is making an error of judgment when he equates the proceedings of what is popularly known as the Mitchell committee with the proceedings of the board room, because once again he is identifying the interests of the Eurotunnel consortium with the interests of the Government. The interests of the Eurotunnel consortium and the interests of the public are two different things.

The best course that the Mitchell committee can adopt to redeem its reputation as an excessively secretive set-up —which is how it is perceived in Kent, whether my hon. Friend likes to admit it or not—is at least to say that part of the committee's proceedings should be held in

private and part in public, instead of continuing with the present closed shop attitude that the press, the public, Members of Parliament and others should be completely excluded, apart from having access to what are now turning out to be, effectively, doctored minutes. In terms of public presentation, that is unacceptable.

Mr. Mitchell: I have to take issue with my hon. Friend's reference to "doctored minutes". That is not the way in which the committee will proceed. Certainly it is not the way in which the elected representatives in my hon. Friends local authority or in the other local authorities in Kent would allow matters to proceed. I hope that after consideration my hon. Friend will withdraw that remark.

Mr. Cash: I am a little mystified by the recent exchange. I hope that I did not hear my hon. Friend the Minister say that these proceedings will be held in private, because it is axiomatic with regad to private Bill matters that the proceedings should be held in public. I should be very surprised to hear anything to the contrary.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is under a misapprehension. Two separate matters are being discussed. The first is the question of a joint consultative committee, which has been meeting in Kent. It consists of representatives of local authorities in Kent, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Transport, the promoters and British Rail. We have been discussing whether that committee should meet in public or in private. It is entirely for the Select Committee to make its own arrangements about its proceedings.

Mr. Franks: May I take my hon. Friend back to his answer to my earlier question, when he drew a parallel between the possibility of the committee sitting in private and boards of private or public companies or trade union branches meeting in private? There is fundamental difference between the two. A board meeting, or a meeting of a trade union or similar organisation, is essentially a meeting of a private organisation, which is perfectly entitled to meet in private. The committee is considering public business and, therefore, should meet in public.

Mr. Mitchell: Of course that is true of the Select Committee. I am not discussing that. We are talking about what the representatives of local authorities in Kent decide is the most effective way in which to conduct their proceedings.

Mr. Franks: Local authorities are public authorities. They represent the public. Therefore, those meetings should be held in public.

Mr. Mitchell: That is a matter for the elected representatives in that area to decide. I have not sought to dictate to them.

Mr. Simon Hughes: As a result of the local elections in May, the Liberal party became the minority administration in Maidstone, which was the first change from a completely Conservative-controlled set of local authorities. In presentation terms the problem was greater when all the councils were controlled by the same party. Is there now more than one-party representation on the committee? That at least might make it more likely for information to come into the public domain.

Mr. Mitchell: There are no party representatives as such on the committee. It consists of the leaders or chairmen of councils, together with the chief executives. I have no detailed knowledge of their politics, and it is not my area of responsibility. It is for the district councils to decide whom they choose to represent them. There are two representatives from each council — one an elected representative, normally the leader or chairman, and the other his chief executive. At official level, the chief executives act as a working group between the meetings of the committee. That is a reasonable and effective way in which to conduct business.

Mr. Franks: I am sorry to pursue this point, but I remind the Minister that, last Session, Parliament passed the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985. Meetings that directly affect local authorities should be held in public.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend has a special interest in the matter, and I note what he says. I have no doubt that members of the committee will note it, too. It is not for me to dictate to them how we should conduct our proceedings. Nevertheless, I shall keep in mind the points that my hon. Friend made.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend will recall that I asked whether a Member of Parliament could attend the committee's meetings, and he said that that would be unacceptable. Was that a decision of the committee and, if so, was it recorded? If not, is it a clear policy that local Members of Parliament are excluded from the committee? What is the history of the decision to exclude Members of Parliament from the committee?

Mr. Mitchell: If my recollection serves me right, my hon. Friend asked me whether I believed that he would be an appropriate person to attend the committee as an additional observer. I do not remember the exact circumstances. I did not put it to the committee. He asked me for an opinion, and I gave him one.

The committee is made up of representatives from the local authorities and from the Kent county council. My hon. Friend is not the elected representative of his local authority. If he is so elected, of course he will be entitled to attend, and, it would be right and proper that he should do so.

Mr. Aitken: Can Members of Parliament go to the committee or not?

Mr. Mitchell: The Committee has been made up from the county council, district council, Department of the Environment, British Rail and the promoters, and my hon. Friend does not fall into any of those categories. What we have sought to do is to get elected local representatives and, in this context, they are the district councils there represented. That has been well accepted in Kent as a reasonable way of proceeding.

Mr. Aitken: By whom? Who has accepted it?

Mr. Mitchell: By the councils concerned.

Mr. Aitken: My hon. Friend is running into very heavy weather here. This simply is not right. I should like to know this not on behalf of myself but on behalf of any Kent Member of Parliament who wishes to attend the consultative committee. The understanding at present is that they are not welcome at the committee. What is the precise position? If it is unclear, as it appears to be, may we please have it put to the committee in a simple request? If a Member of Parliament wishes to attend any meeting

[Mr. Aitken]

of the committee, is he to be excluded, which appears to be the present position, or is he to be welcomed as an observer and contributor to the discussions?

Mr. Mitchell: No such request has been made to the committee. It is, therefore, impossible for me to give an answer to my hon. Friend now in the form in which he asks for it. My hon. Friend will know that every Member representing a Kent constituency has had access to me at any time that he has wished to discuss matters. I have gone out of my way to issue invitations and enable Members who represent Kent to ensure that any items that they want to be put on the agenda are put on. My hon. Friend is, if I may say so, being a little unfair.

I was trying to explain to the House the sort of things that the committee has been considering. I was asked about the impact study, the construction employment, who will be employed, what skills are required and whether those skills are available. At the next meeting the Department of Employment will have a report from the Manpower Services Commission on what skills are available to fill the requirements of the developers in terms of construction employment. My hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) and for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), who are deeply concerned about unemployment, will be interested to know that we are seeking to discover whether in their constituencies there are people with the required skills who would wish to take up the employment opportunities.

As to environmentally sensitive issues a range of these was discussed at the last meeting—electricity supplies, whether the cable should be overhead or underground, the Dollands Moor site and things of that kind.

With regard to spoil disposal, we had 65 different propositions on where the spoil might be dumped. There is a problem with the spoil because some has salt on it, and we do not know the extent of that. This puts a limit on where one can dump the spoil. If it has salt in it, it will turn the water table briny, which will not be acceptable to the local water authorities or residents.

There is a paper from British Rail about the train tunnels on the route between Folkestone and Dover. We discussed the arrangements for the public presentation of the different local groups, about which I spoke earlier, road infrastructure and compensation arrangements. I give that list to the House so that hon. Members may have an idea of the range of work that the local committee is doing. I hope it will be felt that that is a useful way of proceeding.

I was dealing with the point raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks. He wondered whether it would be right for people to serve on the committee who represented other areas in which employment might be provided. We estimate that £700 million worth of orders for industry will be placed by the Channel Tunnel Group away from the construction. In addition, £200 million worth of orders will be provided by British Rail. That will mean a substantial amount of work and jobs.

The hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds) is not here; at the moment his place is occupied by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Mr. Atkins). The hon. Member for Warley, East is well known for appearing on the stage in different guises; I am not sure whether he is putting on a new act for us now. He suggested that few jobs would be created away from Kent. He is entirely wrong. A substantial number of jobs will be created elsewhere in the manufacture of the shuttle trains to go through the tunnel and the British Rail rolling stock.

Mr. Robert Atkins (South Ribble): On behalf of the hon. Member for Warley, East (Mr. Faulds), may I thank the Minister for that most interesting information?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Member for Warley, East claimed that there would be a jobs benefit only during construction. As I said to the deputy Member for Warley, East, that is entirely wrong. There will be additional jobs during construction, but once the tunnel is open it will have a profound impact on industry in the north, in the midlands, in Scotland, in the north-east and on Merseyside. Manufacturers in those parts of the country will be able to get their goods into the markets of Europe more cheaply, more efficiently, more quickly and more reliably. Therefore, they will be able to compete more successfully. Successful competition is the key to employment in those areas.

The hon. Member for Warley, East also expressed concern about rabies and referred to pets being asleep on trains. The danger with rabies arises not from people bring pets over on ferries or trains but from people bringing pets over on small boats to our marinas and letting them off on shore. That is a more widespread problem.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The Minister is dealing in detail with points that were raised during the Second Reading debate. I hope that he will not make more than a passing reference to a debate that we have already disposed of.

Mr. Mitchell: I assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am dealing not with matters raised on Second Reading but with matters that were raised during this debate. I have a separate set of notes on the points that hon. Members have raised.

The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey sought to make a case for a larger Committee to ensure that those serving on it adequately represented all groups in the House. My understanding is that the normal number serving on such a Committee would be eight, but the proposition on the Order Paper is for nine, which is to take account of the point that he has raised. I hope that he thinks that satisfactory. The House likes to move by precedent, and the advantage of that is that people have some indication of where they stand.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I think that the Minister will accept the point made by the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) that both in procedure and in the nature of the Bill there is no precedent because of the importance commercially and from other aspects of the prosposition in the Bill. There is, therefore, a demand from both sides of the House that it is not only the precedent that is considered but the importance of the task before us.

Mr. Mitchell: I do not dispute that, but I think that in terms of the task it is better to have a smaller rather than a larger Committee.

My hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Sir J. Farr) has sat throughout today's debates with great patience, and he caught the eye of Mr. Deputy Speaker earlier this morning. He wanted to know why we did not choose a road-rail mixed tunnel as was originally proposed

by the Sea Containers Group. He suggested that members of the Committee should have the expertise to call for papers and to consider that question.

The original format proposed by the Sea Containers Group — Jim Sherwood's company — had a touch of genius about it: one tunnel each way to carry both drive through vehicles and the railway line. There were many advantages to that—there would be only two tunnels to bore with a small narrow service tunnel between instead of four tunnels. The investment would have been more financially rewarding. In addition, the soil dispersal problem would have been considerably less. However, when we examined the proposal in the railway safety inspectorate we could not accept it as a safe way to proceed. I could detain the House by going into the precise details of why the inspectorate did not judge it to be safe, but I think that at this hour the House would not wish me to do so.

Sir John Farr: Do my hon. Friend's advisers feel that it will ever be possible, if we go ahead with the planned tunnel, for a road link to be attached to or run in tandem with it?

Mr. Mitchell: We did not consider it safe to have a railway running through the same tunnel as road vehicles, with a wide space beside the train and nothing to stop it spreading sideways if there was a derailment. I cannot speak for what might be done in future, but it was the fact that the rail track would have run level with the road that created the dangers that the inspectorate found unacceptable.

My hon. Friend also asked about defence expertise, shipping, ferries and the reinforcement of NATO. It would obviously be much cheaper to mothball some vessels than not to proceed with the tunnel if we are concerned simply with the question of military reinforcements for NATO. He also asked about sabotage. I am not at all sure that there are in the House potential members of the Select Committee who would have knowledge and expertise about sabotage.

Mr. Lawrence: I am not volunteering to be available, but on this question of availability, can my hon. Friend the Minister tell the House whether the Special Standing Committee is expected to sit right through the summer recess?

Mr. Mitchell: That is a matter for the Select Committee to decide. There is, I understand, nothing to prevent the Committee from sitting during the recess if it wishes. However, the Committee members might not choose to sit in the recess. That would be a matter for the Committee members.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: What will happen if the Select Committee reports to the House that it is unable to complete in a reasonable time its business of listening to the petitions? What effect would that have on the progress of the substantive Bill?

Mr. Mitchell: I am not in a position to answer my hon. Friend's point, as we do not know how many petitions there will be or how the Committee will wish to proceed with its handling of the petitions. We do not know whether the petitions will be grouped together. I am sorry to tell my hon. Friend that this matter will unfold in due course.

Mr. Simon Hughes: Can the Minister revise the estimate of time that he believes that the Select Committee will need to consider the petitions? He will be aware that in the report of the Standing Orders Committee an appendix was produced which laid out the possible timetable. This set out a six-week period for the Select Committee proceedings. It was estimated to finish on 24 July. Can the Minister now confirm that it is more likely that the Select Committee, whatever timetable it agrees, will take much longer than six weeks? Is he aware that his Department's advice means that it is inevitable that the Committee will need to continue its work at the end of the summer recess and will not be able to complete it before then?

Mr. Mitchell: The hon. Gentleman may be correct in suggesting that the Committee may not conclude its deliberations before the summer recess. I would not be in the least bit surprised by that. However, that is a matter for the Committee, and until the number and groups of petitions are known it is not possible to give a realistic answer to the hon. Gentleman. I would not like to mislead the hon. Gentleman.

The House has had a substantial debate on this matter. Hon. Members have raised many points, but the hour is late and I think that we should make progress. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Derbyshire, South (Mrs. Currie), who is stalwartly fighting for her constituents who work at British Rail Engineering Ltd. which has two major works in Derby, that the scale of potential orders is substantial. I shall not detain the House by spelling out the extent of the orders.

I was glad to find myself in agreement with my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South on at least one occasion. He suggested that there was a possibility that he would be precluded from sitting on the Select Committee because he might be considered to be an interested party. I think that he and I find ourselves in full agreement on that.

Mr. Aitken: I do not wish to make a Sherman-style declaration "If nominated, I will not serve", or whatever that declaration was. However, should by any chance the call come, I am more than willing—I may be the only hon. Member who is willing—loyally to do my duty on behalf of the House.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent made a number of very important points. I hope that he will forgive me if I write to him about them as I am anxious to speed up the proceedings.

The Government see no reason or justification for increasing the number of members of the Select Committee from nine to 11. The usual number for a hybrid Bill Committee is eight or nine. For the 1974 Channel Tunnel Bill the Select Committee was eight. The Government oppose any needless increase in the numbers involved in the proceedings of the Select Committee. Therefore, I suggest that the House would be wise to accept the motion as it stands on the Order Paper and to reject the amendments. Accordingly, I invite the House to do so.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the House of the procedure. We are dealing first with amendment (a). Does any hon. Member wish formally to move amendment (a)?

Amendment (a) proposed, in line 2, leave out 'nine' and insert 'eleven'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 9, Noes 176.

Division No. 208] **[4.35 am**

AYES

Aitken, Jonathan
Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Farr, Sir John
Gale, Roger
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Skinner, Dennis
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wallace, James

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Michael Brown and
Mr. Douglas Hogg.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Arnold, Tom
Ashby, David
Atkins, Robert *(South Ribble)*
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Bendall, Vivian
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Bonsor, Sir Nicholas
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, A. *(Brighton K'to'n)*
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Boyson, Dr Rhodes
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bright, Graham
Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Brooke, Hon Peter
Bruinvels, Peter
Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon A.
Bulmer, Esmond
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Carlisle, Kenneth *(Lincoln)*
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Crouch, David
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dorrell, Stephen
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Eggar, Tim
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hamilton, Neil *(Tatton)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Holt, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hubbard-Miles, Peter
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jenkin, Rt Hon Patrick
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lamont, Norman
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lee, John *(Pendle)*
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Luce, Rt Hon Richard
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
Macfarlane, Neil
MacKay, Andrew *(Berkshire)*
McLoughlin, Patrick
Major, John
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Maples, John
Marlow, Antony
Mates, Michael
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Mellor, David
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Onslow, Cranley
Osborn, Sir John
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Patten, Christopher *(Bath)*
Patten, J. *(Oxf W & Abgdn)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Robinson, Mark *(N'port W)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Scott, Nicholas
Shaw, Sir Michael *(Scarb')*
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Smith, Tim *(Beaconsfield)*
Soames, Hon Nicholas
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stevens, Lewis *(Nuneaton)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Sumberg, David
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thompson, Donald *(Calder V)*
Thompson, Patrick *(N'ich N)*
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Waddington, David
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Whitney, Raymond
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Malcolm Thornton and
Mr. Kenneth Hind.

Question accordingly negatived.

Main Question put:-

The House proceeded to a Division—

MR. PETER LLOYD *and* MR. MAUDE *were appointed Tellers for the Ayes but no Member being willing to act as Teller for the Noes,* MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER *declared that the Ayes had it.*

Main Question agreed to.

4.48 am

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move,

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 17th June, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in any Petition against the Bill or in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to debate amendments (c), (d), (e) and (f).

Mr. Mitchell: The House has already decided that the Select Committee should comprise nine members rather than 11, and it has also decided that all Committee members should be nominated by the Committee of Selection. The purpose of lines four to 12 of the motion is to refer to the Select Committee thus established two kinds of petition.

The first kind of petition is dealt with in paragraph (a). They are petitions against the Bill. Any petition against the Bill is referred to the Committee, provided that it is presented by the 17 June in the Private Bill Office in the usual way. This date is eight weeks and four days after 18 April, the date on which notices were issued in national and local papers.

For the Channel Tunnel Bill 1973 the interval was exactly eight weeks, including Christmas. The average interval for hybrid Bills in the past 30 years has been six weeks. For private Bills, Standing Orders lay down a standard interval of eight weeks; from 4 December to 30 January, which also includes Christmas. Therefore, I am sure the House will realise that the Government have given slightly more time than is necessary under the normal procedure.

The second kind of petition, which is dealt with in paragraph (b), is a petition complaining against alteration of the Bill or indeed of any of the matters that have arisen during the progress of the Bill before the Committee. This sort of petition is subject to no closing date.

The final line refers to petitions in which petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their counsel or their agents, and it refers also to the provisions in lines 17 to 18 in the next paragraph, which has not yet been discussed.

That is all that I have to say at this stage. I shall be happy to listen to the debate and to advise the House on some of the amendments at a later stage.

Mr. Franks: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. May I raise a point of order of which I have given you prior notice, namely, the possible breach of privilege and contempt of the House by the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell).

Before the commencement of the debate on the committal motion, the hon. Member for Walsall, North (Mr. Winnick) made the point in a point of order that my hon. Friend the Member for Lancashire, West (Mr. Hind) was allegedly seeking to organise a filibuster, and as a consequence the hon. Member for Linlithgow would miss the opportunity to speak to the motion in his name at 9.30 am. I believe that if the hon. Member for Walsall, North had stayed to listen to the debate it would have been crystal clear to him that it has been a genuine debate.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. What is the hon. Member's point of order?

Mr. Franks: The point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, relates to my understanding that the hon. Member for Linlithgow—I declare that I have the second motion for debate tomorrow—has booked a room in the House for 9.30 am. If what I am told is correct, he intends to make to the media the speech that he could and would have made to the House of Commons. If that is the case, it must surely be a contempt of the House that a speech that should be made to the House, and could possibly still be made, will be made to the media rather than to hon. Members.

I would ask you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether inquiries could be made of the hon. Member to ascertain whether what I have been reliably informed of is correct, and, if it is correct, whether the question of contempt could be considered.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: It seems clear from what the hon. Member has said that he is referring to a private meeting in the House, which has nothing to do with the Chair.

Mr. Franks: Further to that point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Should these proceedings terminate in time for the hon. Member for Linlithgow to make a speech at 9.30 am——

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Order. The hon. Member has raised this matter before and he has already had an answer from the Chair. We cannot deal now with hypothetical questions. We really must get on with the business before us. Did the Minister give way to the hon. Member? I am not quite sure.

Mr. Mitchell: I had finished what I was saying when the point of order was raised.

4.55 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: I seek leave to move amendment (c).

Mr. Deputy Speaker: I remind the hon. Member and the House—I know that the procedure is not familiar to the House—that he does not move the amendment at this stage. It is perfectly in order for him to speak to the amendment or to any other amendments which have been selected.

Mr. Hughes: I apologise, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since the instruction was given six or so hours ago, I had forgotten the specific procedure.

I wish to speak to the four amendments, especially the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. and hon. Friends and others and myself. The four amendments relating to the time for petitioning are in descending order. The House will be aware that, the Second Reading having been granted by the House today in parliamentary terms but yesterday in chronological terms—5 June—the date that stands on the Order Paper for the end of the period for petitioners to present their petitions is 17 June—a period of 12 days. That is the Government's proposal. It is commonly understood that that is an insufficient period given the number of interested people who wish to present petitions and who can formally do so only in the 12 days that are set down.

My right hon. and hon. Friends and myself tabled an amendment proposing that the period for petitioning should be eight weeks from 5 June and should therefore end on 31 July. There are other options by way of amendment on the Order Paper. There is an amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition and others that the date for petitioning should be extended to 17 July. There is an amendment in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and others that the time for petitioning should be extended until 27 June. There is a subsidiary amendment, also in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks and others, which would permit, in certain circumstances, petitions to be presented after 27 June. That amendment, which has to be taken with the previous amendment, relates to different sorts of petitions.

The House has been presented with a range of options which put eight weeks as the maximum period for petitioning, and that is the position which my right hon. and hon. Friends have taken. If all the amendments failed, petitioners would have only 12 days in which to make their case. The Minister said in his reply that he would look favourably on the option presented by way of amendment by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks and others which appeared, if I recollect correctly, to find general favour, among those Kentish Members who spoke, as a better option than the present deadline of 17 June. I make it clear that any extension is better than none. However, I make a serious case to the Minister in favour of the option of the last available date—31 July. He undertook to listen carefully to the reasons for that, and no doubt he will do so now.

As has generally been accepted—often the House looks for guidance on procedural matters to the hon. Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop), who made points on the subject earlier—there is no precedent for the Bill and its procedures which is ideal and which can be sited precisely and exactly. There are precedents that

[Mr. Hughes]

are relevant, but because this is a hybrid Bill as opposed to a private Bill, although more private than public, as was said on Wednesday night, we cannot look specifically to the procedure for private Bills. You will be aware, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that, had it been a private Bill, presentation would have had to take place by 27 November. It was the Government's option that they decided to introduce the Bill to the House only some seven months after that, on 17 April. They had to seek permission of the House, by way of the Standing Orders Committee, to have dispensation from the normal timetable.

The House will remember that that Committee announced in its report in May that it could make no recommendation to the House. That led to the matter coming back to the House this week, when the House agreed after an important and strongly argued debate that the Standing Orders should be dispensed with and that there should be the possibility of a shorter period being provided given the late introduction of the Bill by the Government.

That means that there has already been a breach of the normal procedures. I am not saying that that is without precedent because it is clear that such a precedent exists, but the procedures that are laid down have not been followed and there has already been a shortening of the procedures that would have been expected.

Mr. David Mitchell: Is the hon. Gentleman saying that anyone will have less time than he would have under the normal procedure?

Mr. Hughes: I shall deal with that by taking matters chronologically.

Mr. Gale: As the hon. Gentleman will have gathered from the fact that I signed an amendment not dissimilar from the one which stands in his name and that of his colleagues, I have a great deal of sympathy with what he is saying. The hon. Gentleman has referred to the motion that was carried on Tuesday night and has said that at present petitioners will have 12 days in which to lodge their petitions. I think that he will recall that I raised that issue on Tuesday evening, when my hon. Friend the Minister of State offered to clarify the position in writing. On Tuesday we carried the following:

"That in the event of the Bill being read a second time, the earliest date which, in any motion for the committal of the Bill to a Select Committee, may be specified as the date by which a Petition against the Bill must be presented in order to stand referred to the Committee shall be 17th June."

That is the earliest date. The motion before us reads:

"*(a)* any petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 17th June".

As I said on Tuesday, that is not 12 days; it is only one day.

Mr. Hughes: I remember the intervention that the hon. Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) made on Tuesday. He has a valid argument because the two motions do not say the same thing. The motion that was carried said that 17 June shall be the last date and the motion before us, if unamended, provides that the first date would be the last date. That is clearly ludicrous. I think that the hon. Gentleman will agree that, Second Reading having been given to the Bill on 5 June, petitioners are alerted to the fact that they have 12 days to 17 June, but, if the motion is agreed to and not amended, petitioners will be alerted to the fact that 12 days is the maximum period available to them. This means that technically there is only one day for the lodging of petitions. That would present difficulties procedurally, let alone substantive difficulties, for those who had to get their tackle in order.

It was probably for that reason more than others that the Minister accepted implicity and not explicity — as I recollect, he did not refer explicity to the question asked by the hon. Member for Thanet, North—that he would look favourably on a amendment which would open the period, but such an amendment would open it by only another 10 days. That is unsatisfactory given precedent and unsatisfactory given the important and substantial number of people who wish to present petitions, but who are not yet clear about the procedural rules for so doing.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman may have been asleep when the Minister was giving an accurate description of what has been going on over the past few months in communicating with potential petitioners. It ought to be on record, now that the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) is awake and with us again, that the Government have taken considerable steps to make sure that people are fully aware of their rights. They ought to be congratulated rather than subject to the carping criticism which is beginning to emerge.

The hon. Gentleman has referred to the application of precedent, but he has got it slightly wrong. As I understand it, this is a hybrid Bill to which the private Bill Standing Orders apply, but in other respects it is a public Bill. When one is dealing with the principle and precedent, one has to study the Bill to see whether private Bill Standing Orders apply and if they do—it is not a matter of choice or applying precedents—one must have a dispensation on from the Standing Orders Committee.

Mr. Hughes: The first part of that long intervention does not merit comment. The hon. Gentleman's second point repeats what I have said before, that the procedural matters, although grounded in the procedure for private Bills, are subject to the Orders of the House. That is the subject of this debate.

The relevant considerations of this matter go back to the report of the Transport Committee on 2 December 1985 — the first relevant document. In paragraph 27 the Committee said:

"Unless the House has given any indication or instruction to the contrary, the second reading of a hybrid bill is considered to remove from the promoters the onus of proving the expediency of the bill. . . . At the beginning of the proceedings on the Channel Tunnel Bill 1974, Counsel for the Secretary of State for the Environment stated that the Secretary of State was 'most anxious that the Petitioners should have all reasonable opportunity to put forward the points which concern them, providing that such points can properly be taken in proceedings of this nature. That being so, the Secretary of State has decided . . . to take no formal objections to the *locus* of any of the Petitioners.'"

The Committee recommended that

"this precedent be followed, that the fullest possible latitude again be allowed to petitioners and that all those whose petitions conform to the basic requirement of relevancy be allowed to be heard."

That recommendation was taken up by the Secretary of State for Transport in the Adjournment debate on 9 December 1985, when the matter first came substantively before the House. It would be useful to quote, selectively, the Secretary of State's views on what should happen:

"There will be a hybrid Bill, which will give the promoters all the necessary powers. . . .

Although the decision has to be taken by Parliament, we want maximum local consultation. The location of the portal of any link is dictated by geography. So the matters to be considered and consulted upon locally are principally, but not exclusively, first, the precise effects of the link on those immediately affected, on their properties and amenities, secondly, the effect on the local economy in terms of jobs gained and lost, in construction and upon opening, and, more importantly, the employment likely to be gained by this mammoth transport development—perhaps the biggest communications artery in Europe. . . . Thirdly, there is the effect on the natural environment. . . Fourthly, there are the communications needs of the area as a result of the link . . . and, fifthly, the effect any structure that would be built in the channel would have on the safety of shipping and the freedom of navigation."

Those were the matters perceived by the Secretary of State as being relevant. On the procedural points the Secretary of State said:

"There will be further consultations and opportunities for comment on a firm proposal. . . .

The hybrid Bill procedure contains every opportunity for those affected to be heard, including the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) with his psychological problem."

That is not specifically relevant. The Secretary of State continued:

"The procedure is well known to the House. It is comparable to the private Bill procedure, which has always been used for building railways and similarly requires no public inquiry. It was used when similar proposals were produced in 1974. The Select Committee recommended that we should follow the precedent of the 1974 Channel Tunnel Bill. . . . Subject to the rulings of the Select Committee, I would expect that those eligible would include individuals whose private interests are affected—those representing local trades, businesses and other local interests which may be adversely affected, those representing amenity, ecology, educational and recreational interests who believe that their interests are adversely affected to a material degree, and local authorities in any affected areas."—[*Official Report*, 9 December 1985; Vol. 88, c. *643-45*.]

The Secretary of State undertook to allow the time that precedent provided under the previous Channel Tunnel Bill, and made his view known that there were groups whose interests were affected which should have a chance of making their views clear.

The third relevant document——

Mr. Neale: This is a filibuster.

Mr. Hughes: No, it is not a filibuster. It is a matter of great importance and the hon. Member for Cornwall, North (Mr. Neale) will be aware that, just as tin mining is vital to his constituents and county, so the most important matter to the people of Kent is that they should have their views heard. It is important that the Secretary of State's undertakings are honoured.

The Secretary of State made a speech to the Franco British Society on 14 May an extract from which reads:

"I must ask our French friends to understand that we face a different situation to that in France, and to be a little patient while the legislation goes through Parliament. Against the background I have outlined, I am sure they can see that the process of debate must be allowed to consider and examine these things. There are of course the environmental, ecological and employment difficulties about the Tunnel—we all know and respect them. But underneath them there are these most intangible, if less logical, emotional difficulties present. The process of persuading people that their fears are groundless is nowhere more suitably exercised than in Parliament, with all its complex legislative processes. I have no doubt the Bill will emerge onto the Statute Book in the end. We must not be impatient at its slow progress.

I firmly believe that it is necessary to allow the doubters and the objectors the full panoply of Parliamentary opportunities, and to respond to their objections, whether they be personal, political or emotional with reasoned answers. Nor must we be seen to be stampeding the Bill through Parliament."

Given that the Government decided not to have a public inquiry and that they had to seek dispensation from the House regarding the Standing Orders, the impression is given that matters will proceed in a stampeding manner unless people are given a proper opportunity to put their case. The Secretary of State has made it clear that it is important for people to have a chance to put their view within the procedures that Parliament provides. Those procedures involve petitioning a Select Committee.

Clearly the Government think that that procedure should be used. As the Minister said on Tuesday, the Department of Transport has produced and circulated in Kent a leaflet which gives people guidance about their rights as petitioners, and which they can fill in. I understand that several of those leaflets have been returned to the Table Office but that the Table Office has not clarified whether the leaflet on which people make clear their request to petition has yet been accepted as a valid method of registering a desire to petition. Will the Minister clarify whether those who returned the forms are accepted to be valid petitioners, because they as yet do not know and the Table Office has not as yet given any ruling?

Mr. Aitken: If by chance the Private Bill Office said, "No, we do not accept petitions that have followed precisely the words used in the leaflet issued by the Department of Transport", that would provoke in Kent a row of earthquake proportions. It would be thought that the Government were rejecting what they had themselves put forward as the perfect format for petitioning. There must be an element of common sense and flexibility in this matter, and I hope that the Minister will give the assurance that any petitioner who has followed the guidlines in the leaflet will have his petition accepted.

Mr. Hughes: The hon. Member will be aware that the leaflet came from the Government, whereas its acceptance is a matter for Parliament. We need a clear indication now that the relevant parliamentary officers will accept all the forms—those now in and those yet to be received—as being valid registration requests for petitions. It is important for the people concerned to know that the leaflet guidance provides an appropriate means for them to lodge requests to have their views heard.

Mr. David Mitchell: It may save unnecessary debate if I say that we cleared the leaflets with the Clerks of the House before the text went to the printer. I should be most surprised if there were any circumstance in which they were not satisfid with petitions returned in the form that went to the printer.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for that comment. I was told yesterday that there had been no official confirmation from the Officers of the House that they would be acceptable.

Mr. Mitchell: I cannot speak for the officials of the House, but I have given the background and one can have reasonable confidence about the position from that.

Mr. Hughes: I am grateful for that assurance.

The argument is whether the petitioners should have eight weeks or less time. We have for consideration two dates. They have not been plucked out of the air. They are based on precedent or on arguments that have been put forward. Those two dates appear in the amendments tabled

[Mr. Hughes]

by my right hon. Friend the Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) and by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Cash: The hon. Gentleman will know from his research that in comparable circumstances with a private Bill the measure would be deposited on 27 November and the closing date for petitions to be deposited would be 30 January in the ensuring year, which is eight weeks.

This measure was ordered to be printed on 17 April, was available in the Vote Office on 18 April and the date in the motion by which petitions must be deposited is 17 June. That is nearly nine weeks, which is longer than would have been available were it a private Bill.

Mr. Hughes: I will seek to deal with that point and with the other points because they are important.

It has been accepted that this is a most exceptional, if not unique, Bill. Given what the Secretary of State said about granting the maximum latitude to petitioners, that militates in favour of the maximum period. As the hon. Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) has said, it is quite correct that the period from the date of the printing of the Bill and its First Reading to the date proposed by the Government is eight weeks. None the less, an argument was advanced, as the hon. Member for Stafford will recall, in the Select Committee on Standing Orders by the only two petitioners at that time, the Dover Harbour Board and Sealink UK Ltd., that the period for depositing petitions should be eight weeks from the Second Reading of the Bill.

It could be argued and the Government's original position was that eight weeks from the First Reading and publication of the Bill was sufficient. My argument was advanced not as a matter of procedure but because I am aware of the enormous number of people and organisations who wish to present their cases and to ensure that, procedurally, they do it properly. They also wish to make sure that once Second Reading is granted they present their cases in due time and that there are no hiccups. Those people want the maximum opportunity in accordance with the latitude that the Secretary of State said he would give.

If one is procedurally and precisely following the only precedent that is nearly appropriate, which is the one of 1973-74, then the House will be aware that the Channel Tunnel Bill was introduced and given its Second Reading on 5 December 1973 and petitions against the Bill were ordered to be deposited by 15 January 1974—almost six weeks. That period is almost exactly in accord with the amendment proposed by the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues. We argue that a longer period is important and necessary for a combination of the two reasons: first, that this is a more important and more complicated Bill; and, secondly, because in 1973 documents like the Kent impact study had been produced some eight months beforehand and had been available for petitioners to digest.

As the hon. Member for Stafford and other hon. Members will be aware, one of the complaints this time is that the environmental impact statement has not yet been produced and is unlikely to be produced except in an interim form. I raised that matter with the Secretary of State. That statement will be the result of what is called the Mitchell committee's deliberations if the committee agrees to produce it some time later this month. Therefore, the normal access to information that would be expected, particularly for a Bill of this importance and complexity, and that was granted in 1973-74 has not been granted on this occasion.

As the hon. Member for Stafford and other hon. Members will know, complaints have been made that, for example, the Council for the Protection of Rural England and others wanted to have access to copies of maps in order to make points in petitions. Those maps were only made available on 15 or 16 May, and there are several reasons why information has either not been available at all, which makes life more difficult for petitioners, or has been made available belatedly. On the substantial matters of environmental and economic and local importance, given now that it is clear that there is likely to be a large number of petitioners, it is important that the spirit of the Secretary of State's remarks is carried through by the decision of the House that the maximum period be granted.

My final point is one which might be made against an argument that 29 July is the right date. It could be argued that the setting of that date is an attempt to kill the Bill. That is not the case, for the following reasons. By its very nature, this Bill will carry over into the next Session of Parliament. It was always expected that it would take two Sessions. That being the case, it is not imperative—indeed, it has never been envisaged—that the procedure in this House, let alone in the other place, should be completed before the end of this Session of Parliament.

The normal precedent is that when the Select Committee procedure has been decided upon there is a period for negotiations between the promoters of the Bill and the other interested parties before the petitioners put their case to the Select Committee. Therefore, it would be possible and appropriate for the summer recess to be used for the negotiations. That would considerably shorten the time taken in the Select Committee and the time taken by the Select Committee.

As the Minister of State said in response to a question about an hour and a half ago, it is now highly likely that the original Government plan for the timetable, of six weeks in Select Committee, is far from realistic and that unless there is a period for both sides to reconcile the matters that can be reconciled, the Select Committee proceedings, even if the Select Committee meets for a considerable period, will take much longer than six weeks.

In certain circumstances, the Select Committee could meet during the summer recess. I am aware that in order to do so the end date for petitions would have had to pass, that the motion of the Select Committee on Selection as to the composition of the Select Committee would have had to take place, and that the Select Committee would have had to meet before the recess to decide on its procedure. I am not arguing that that is likely to be achieved between 29 July and the summer recess, because in all probability the House will rise at about that date. However, it is certainly a procedurally sound precedent to allow time between the end of the period for petitions and the start of the hearings before the Select Committee. That would shorten the proceedings while giving time for the people of Kent and the interested bodies in Kent and beyond not only to make their case but to deal with the promoters on the issues raised by their petitions and by the Bill. It would still permit time for the matter to be dealt with by the Select Committee in the autumn, for the matter then to proceed in the normal way to Standing Committee

and to the other place, and for the Bill to complete all its stages during the next Session of Parliament, as was always envisaged.

The proceedings may be completed a month or two later than the Government hope, but I believe that that would be not a loss but a gain. It would allow the people of Kent, who in their thousands clearly feel that they are not being listened to and that the Government are moving too quickly, to have an opportunity properly to put their case.

I hope that the House will act on the request that was made to the Select Committee on Standing Orders in May: that eight weeks should be granted from Second Reading to the petitioners whose petition was then established. In accepting that request, I hope that the House will reject the other, lesser amendments and will recognise the importance of the Bill. I hope too, that the Government will back away from appearing to wish to steamroller the Bill through Parliament in the face of the objectors and the valid concerns of thousands of people and that they will accept that, having obtained their Second Reading a few hours ago, they can afford to allow the people of Kent and beyond to put their anxieties properly before the Committee set up by the House. As the Secretary of State said, the period that would provide maximum latitude is eight weeks, as advocated in the amendment of my right hon. and hon. Friends and myself.

5.28 am

Mr. Leon Brittan (Richmond, Yorks): I hope that I shall be forgiven if I do not take up the argument of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). The reason for not doing so is not out of discourtesy to him but because the approach that I invite the House to bring to bear, as set out in amendments (e) and (f), is based upon a different set of considerations from those which seem to motivate the hon. Gentleman.

I am concerned not so much with the question of precedent—who said what, and when, or who did what on the last occasion — but with the fundamental and simple question of fairness to which I referred on raising these issues when we debated them last Tuesday. My only concern is for a fair opportunity to be given to the people who wish to object to the whole or part of the Government's proposals and for a fair opportunity to be given to Parliament to consider those objections.

If that is the principle that one brings to bear, to which conclusion should one come? Some of the more extravagant criticisms of the Government have exploded in the faces of those who made them. The reality is that the Bill has been available publicly for some time, and for those interested groups and organised, corporate bodies which have a legitimate, vested interest in the outcome of the matter, there is no problem with the Government's timetable. None the less, as I said on Tuesday, it seems clear that for the private individual, who may not be aware of the precise distinctions between what one can do when the Bill is published, when the general scheme is formulated and after Second Reading, some further latitude is desirable ever and above that provided in the motion which stands in the Government's name.

With those considerations in mind, I embarked on discussions, primarily with my hon. and learned Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry—the hon. and learned Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard)—who has been assiduous in ensuring that the interests of his constituents are put before the House and within Government. As a result of discussions as to what was necessary and proper for the people of Kent, my view is reflected in the amendment that stands in my name and inititally in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and several other hon. Members.

It is a balance. Of course, no one suggests that if a week or a slightly longer period were added to that reflected in my amendment, the scheme would come to an end. Of course not. None the less, it is reasonable that the matter should be proceeded with at reasonable speed, and the extra time provided for the presentation of petitions should be no more than is necessary. I cannot pretend to be an expert on the state of public opinion in Kent or on the readiness of individuals in Kent to present their petitions, but I cannot help reflecting on the current tifnetables that are offered.

When my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South joined me in putting forward the dates that appear in amendments (e) and (f), which emerged from discussions with my hon. and learned Friend the Under-Secretary of State, we discovered quickly that the amendments attracted considerable support in the House. It is notable that a large proportion of the names appended to the amendments are the Members of Parliament who represent Kentish constituencies, such as my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone (Sir J. Wells), my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) as well as others. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that that shows some consensus as to what is necessary and acceptable.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has picked up another interesting point. When one examines the names of those who subscribed to the amendment, one sees an unusual number of lawyers. Perhaps that also shows the concern of many hon. Members who must deal with legal problems. Inevitably, when one deals with matters of this complexity, it takes a long time for some constituents to ascertain what their legal rights are, how to proceed and, especially, bring them before the House.

Mr. Brittan: I am sure that is the case.

I remain of the view that the timetable envisaged in amendments (e) and (f) is right and would be generally acceptable. I welcome the fact that, although on Tuesday we were not debating it directly, it was the centre of discussion. My hon. Friend the Minister of State, in answering the debate, spoke extremely sympathetically abou it—so sympathetically, I think, that the House and country understood what he said to mean, that the Government regarded the amended timetable as acceptable. I hope that in reaching that conclusion I was not assuming too much and that that will be ratified and confirmed when he replies to the debate.

Again, I commend the amendments to the House.

5.35 am

Mr. Michael Stern (Bristol, North-West): I do not claim to be an expert on procedure, and I come to this aspect of the debate—the question of timing—with a relatively fresh outlook.

Discussed in terms of purely Kentish interests, it may well be that there has been a great deal of publicity on the effects of the Bill and, therefore, that for most people,

[Mr. Michael Stern]

although not all, the opportunity to develop the idea of petitioning against the Bill or for the Bill and submitting that petition in time has probably been given. However, the Bill has a much wider context, and I think it is extremely unlikely with regard to small groups of individuals particularly outside the area immediately affected by the construction of the tunnel, that the opportunity has yet been given to the extent promised by the Government in the course of the discussions on the Bill.

For many people like myself who are unfamiliar with the procedure on a private Bill or a hybrid Bill, there may well have been a temptation to defer thinking about whether to petition until the relevant procedure was laid down by Parliament, as is being done now. There are the difficulties that will then be faced by, say, a group of workers in the port of Avonmouth in my constituency who have a genuine interest in the implications of the Bill but who nevertheless have never before had to face a private Bill procedure. They may, therefore, later today—by which I mean in normal rather than parliamentary terms—well get together and say, "we shall go along to see our MP tonight and discuss with him how best we can put forward a petition".

Let us look at the problem that they face under the procedure outlined. They have 11 days in which to decide whether to petition, what the basis of their petition is to be and, if it is to be heard, whether they wish to be heard themselves or to appoint an agent to appear on their behalf. If they decide that they wish to appoint an agent, they have to decide whom they wish to appoint, and who appoints him. They have to prepare the petition and agree among themselves what should appear in it.

Let us remember that they do not have the exhaustive office facilities that are available to hon. Members.

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has been reciting the difficulties that stand in the way of his constituents. He must not forget that the petition has to be in the proper form. I anticipate that many people who wish to make a petition will have difficulty in obtaining the proper form in which to make it. As I understand the motion and the amendments, if the petition is not in the proper form the petitioners will not be able to present their arguments.

Mr. Stern: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point. Someone unfamiliar with the procedure may not have known before this debate that such a proper form existed.

To complete my description of the difficulties to be handled in the 11-day period, may I point out that if the petitioners do not have office facilities they will have to find some place in which the documents can be typed and copied? The petition will have to be submitted by the stated date. Of the 11-day period specified, two days are Sundays. If I may be forgiven a slight element of sour grapes, we have made sure in the House recently that none of the procedures that I have mentioned may be carried out on two of the days in the 11-day period.

The Bill will affect the whole country and not just Kent. We should be concerned about making available to all the people their rights as citizens to make representations on this important measure, although I accept that the procedures as normally laid down have been carried out and that there has been a slight extension of the time normally given. The normal procedures are designed for Bills about which there is adequate publicity to enable people to make their representations.

There is a widening realisation of the implications of the Bill. I can assure the Minister that six months ago the Channel tunnel was not being discussed in the pubs and clubs of Avonmouth; now it is. That discussion is broadening all the time. My hon. Friends from outside the area know how their postbag has been developing on the issue. They are now getting letters from people who did not realise until recently the extent to which they would be affected.

Because of the growing number of people who feel, rightly or wrongly, that they may be affected by the Bill, to give 11 days, of which two are dead days, for them to read reports about the procedure to be followed and then to go through that procedure may seem reasonable according to precedent, but in my view it cannot be considered reasonable.

5.43 am

Mr. Aitken: I take as my text for these brief remarks the last words of my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern). I agree that the test of the matter and of this group of amendments is what is reasonable. We can go up hill and down dale on the subject of precedents. I speak with experience when I say that, because I went up hill and down dale in front of the Standing Orders Committee last month, and I went up hill and down dale two nights ago in the House. At the end of it all, I suspect that neither I, the House nor the Standing Orders Committee could make head or tail of the precedents.

The common sense judgment was put very well by my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House when he spoke in the debate on 3 June. He said:

> "Valuable though precedent is as a guide in this unfamiliar area, the House, I am sure, would not wish to proceed except on the basis of fair arrangements for those who might wish to oppose the Bill's effects on them. The Government believe that those whose interests may be affected by the Bill should have an opportunity to marshall their arguments effectively, as they would have if affected by a private Bill."—[*Official Report*, 3 June 1986; Vol. 98, c. 837.]

I think that we can all say "Hear, hear" to that.

Two precise amendments have been tabled. Amendment (c) in the name of the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) and other Liberal Members would provide an eight-week period for petitions from the date of Second Reading. The hon. Gentleman has one eminent and learned supporter of his view, Mr. Joe Durkin, the parliamentary agent for the petitioners, who argued exactly that point in front of the Standing Orders Committee.

The second precedent is that set by the previous Channel Tunnel Bill, the detail of which I discussed at some length in our debate on Tuesday, and which provides for six weeks from the date of Second Reading.

The third proposal is that of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) for a period of three weeks and two days from the date of Second Reading. Impressed as I was by the arguments put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend, I feel that I must pay a tribute elsewhere. One might say that the voice might be the voice of Richmond, but the hands were the hands of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry. He has

had a very difficult task to fulfil. These days he is often referred to in the House by the adjective "assiduous". It sounds almost like something from a book on trees—an assiduous or deciduous tree. He certainly is assiduous, but as his parliamentary neighbour I know that the people of Folkestone are fortunate to have such a first-class Member of Parliament. He has fought for them behind the scenes just as effectively, if not more so, than those of us who have the privilege of the freedom of the Back Benches to fight our battles up front.

My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks and I are on the same side. We are trying to obtain a fair and sensible deal for our constituents. I should have preferred the amendment put forward by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey for an eight-week period, or that we should follow the Anthony Crosland Bill precedent for a six-week period. However, we have a three-week period, which makes some sense in terms of straight fair play.

If we had stuck to the Government's proposal for a 12-day period, we would have been in great danger of being unfair to our constituents. I know that there are all sorts of arguments showing that a 12-day period is in line with what has been done before. However, nothing in the Bill has ever been done before because we have never had a Bill quite like it. We are into new territory. Indeed, constant new developments make a sensible petitioning period absolutely essential.

My hon. Friend the Minister may not have realised quite what a hostage to fortune he delivered at about 4 am. this morning, when he announced that the boat trains from Victoria to the Channel ports would cease from the date that the tunnel opens. That ministerial statement will cause consternation, if not uproar, in the Channel ports. I am sure that remark will be the subject of many clauses in many petitions. That is the last thing that the people of Kent want to see British Rail ordered to do by a Minister.

Mr. David Mitchell: I must protest. My hon. Friend has completely misunderstood the position if he believes in any way that I have powers to instruct British Rail what services to run or that I would dream of doing that, especially in such a sensitive matter. I understand that British Rail does not consider that it would be commercially worth its while running boat trains in addition to the other trains to Dover, especially when it can run trains directly through the tunnel. That is a commercial matter for British Rail to decide.

Mr. Aitken: The so-called commercial matters lack all sensitivity and political common sense. That announcement will cause the people of Kent to express their feelings on the matter through the petitioning process. It only goes to show that there is a need for a fair and adequate petitioning process on a subject as new and as newsworthy as the cancellation of boat trains. At least there is now a reasonable period in which to petition.

I do not want to labour the point unduly. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe, aided by his capable amanuensis, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks, did a good job, and I am pleased to support them on that point.

These amendments make sense. They will make for fair play. Although they do not go as far as some hon. Members would have wanted to go—and I certainly wanted more—on the principle that half a loaf is better than no bread and that three weeks is still not as good as six weeks, at least it is half of what we wanted. I am happy that the Government seem inclined to accept the amendment, and I will support it.

5.51 am

Mr. Cash: All hon. Members have great sympathy for the people of Kent having regard to the proposals in the Bill. I believe that that has been clearly revealed in the debates. Perhaps the voting figures have suggested otherwise. However, there is considerable sympathy for the people whose lives could be disrupted by the Bill's proposals, however important those proposals may be.

I support the Bill not simply because I believe that great benefits will be derived from it. Indeed, in my constituency British Reinforced Concrete has every possibility of gaining a considerable slice of the contracts, which will be good for the job prospects of my constituents. However, I appreciate that there are difficulties and I associate myself with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) about my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard).

I would like to commence my remarks on these amendments by considering what would happen if a petition was presented after time. This is the crunch point because, if someone found that he was to be adversely affected and did not have an adequate opportunity to get his act together and presented a petition after the due date had passed, certain consequences would follow.

It would be useful to put on the record what those consequences would be. As I think that some people might care to read the report of the proceedings who otherwise might find that they would have to seek help elsewhere, it may be helpful if I give the page references from "Erskine May" which deal with these matters. Page 948 of the 20th edition of "Erskine May" states

> "If a petition be presented after the time limit, the only mode by which the petitioners can obtain a hearing is by presenting a petition, praying that the standing orders be dispensed with in their case, and that they may be heard by the committee. The petition will stand referred to the Standing Orders Committee; and if the petitioners are able to show"—

and this is the important point—

> "any special circumstances which entitle them to indulgence and, particularly, that they have not been guilty of laches,"—

that means undue delay—

> "the standing orders may be dispensed with."

Various precedents are given to support that proposition which are set out in a footnote which I shall not worry the House with. A number of occasions are specified, one of which was in 1905, where these matters have been dealt with.

The important point is that, even if somebody were to go over the time limit, there is the power in the hands of the Standing Orders Committee to dispense with the Standing Orders in question. By "Standing Orders" we are talking about the Standing Orders relating to private Bills, in relation to which petitions have to be deposited, and, of course, that is the crucial question on this point.

I thought that it would be useful also to refer to what is really at stake in a matter of this kind——

Mr. Douglas Hogg: My hon. Friend has helpfully told the House that there is a power to dispense with the time limits, but I take it that that is a discretionary power which is not subject to very clear definitional tests. If that is right,

[Mr. Douglas Hogg]

he will agree that the individual petitioner who is out of time might be very reluctant to make an application to the relevant Standing Committee for dispensation, and, in any event, he might find it necessary to instruct counsel.

Mr. Cash: I have great sympathy with what my hon. Friend is saying and I have great sympathy with the proposals set out in the amendment to jog the time forward by a number of weeks.

I said earlier when I intervened in the speech made by the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) that the Bill was published on, I think, 17 April and that therefore it would have been available in the Vote Office on 18 April and that the date specified in the Government's motion of 18 June would give something over eight weeks.

Notwithstanding that point, the fact is that a crucial question arises from the Standing Orders on private Bills. I was advising shiprepairers on the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Industries Act 1977. A relevant point arose in the House of Lords on the Standing Orders and we were able to show that the Government agent had not put the requirement under Standing Orders that people should be shown to be able to object to the proposals in the hybrid Bill. The fact that that was not there was highly relevant. The Government agents argued it out and the shiprepairers got out of nationalisation.

The point that I want to make here is that, under the private Bill Standing Orders, they are all linked to dates which go back to 27 November and then 4 December, and, I think, 10 December after that. Stipulations are given as to when the advertisements must appear in the *London Gazette* and the local newspapers.

We must be realistic, because those people simply do not have access to the sort of facilities that we have in the House. Some people do not even have the foggiest idea about any Bill, let alone a hybrid Bill, which is a mystery to all of us because those things are extremely arcane and mysterious. But Standing Orders specify that the notices have to be published precisely in order to ensure that persons who live in a locality shall have adequate notice not only of the contents of the Bill but of their right to object to it. In that advertisement — this can all be checked—it gives the address of the parliamentary agent concerned, in this case the Government agent, and the address of the Private Bill Office in the House of Commons. They are then recommended to take appropriate action.

Mr. Wolfson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for emphasising the fact that, in many cases, we are dealing with private individuals who, as my hon. Friend said, do not have access to the facilities we have here. I think that it is important to give the maximum time to those petitioners, or would-be petitioners. Following each stage of debate in the House, there is an opportunity for publicity in the local newspapers and further discussion on television or radio which alerts people to action that they might not otherwise have become aware of, despite the advertisements; hence the need for more time.

Mr. Cash: I understand what my hon. Friend has said. People simply do not know. Our procedures should be all about providing fairness for people in those circumstances. I think that it was Maine who said that justice is to be found in the interstices of procedure, and we should bear that in mind. After all, the whole procedure on private Bills and the right to petition, which I hope I shall explain shortly, will give some indication as to what is involved for the private individual. The right to petition is an important inherent constitutional right which is given to people in our democracy.

Mr. Aitken: Before we get into the interstices of procedure, I wonder whether, because he is such an expert in this area, I can ask my hon. Friend's advice about one aspect of the interstices of the newspaper advertisements placed by the Department of Transport. My hon. Friend has been rightly stressing the importance of placing the correct advertisements in local newspapers. In an exchange between myself and my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) in the early hours of Wednesday morning I said that I was interested in an advertisement which had been placed in the "Canterbury Times" on April 28. My hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury shouted back that there was no such newspaper.

I was slightly thrown by that simply because I had taken the name of the "Canterbury Times" from the written parliamentary answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State. The answer said, in listing all the advertisements that had been placed in local newspapers, that an advertisement about how to petition had been placed in the "Canterbury Times" on 28 April. Faced with the information that no such paper existed, I checked the matter and have found that no such paper exists.

Therefore we are faced with the case of the disappearing newspaper or the phantom advertisement. That may be the subject of a searching inquiry, bringing in the Ombudsman and others, into the interstices of the Department of Transport. I think that we should be told more about this matter. I simply want my hon. Friend's guidance on the significance of the phantom advertisement or the missing newspaper because, clearly, a dereliction of duty occurred and we would like to know what advertisement appeared in what newspaper and what is the significance of the omission.

Mr. Cash: Now that the right hon. Member for Mole Valley (Mr. Baker) has been transferred from the Department of the Environment to the Department of Education and Science, perhaps we will not have the chance to ask him that question because the Department of the Environment primarily has responsibility for matters relating to the conduct of local government Bills where so many of these things crop up.

The mystery to which my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South refers is the kind of matter that G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown should address. That is the sort of person who would be able to track down such a paper. There is a substantive and crucial point here. If notices are not put in local newspapers, people do not know what is going on. Under Standing Orders, they are required to place petitions not as a matter of choice but as a matter of requirement of the House, a practice hallowed for over a century. If the advertisements are not placed, local people do not know what is going on.

Sir John Farr: Perhaps I can help my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South over his inquiries about the

"Canterbury Times". It could be that the Department in question could have sent the advertisement to the "Canterbury Times" in Auckland, New Zealand.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful for that Antipodean note. We shall have a certain amount of difficulty in paying the air fares of those who feel that they should be petitioning against the Channel tunnel because of fear that it might suddenly emerge in New Zealand. However, this is an important point that should be taken on board.

The examiners have examined the Bill to see whether there has been compliance with Standing Orders, and, as I understand it, it has been agreed that they have been. That means that it is a fait accompli, and the end of the subject. There is substantial case law, with which I shall not weary the House, in the case of Pickin v British Railways Board in the House of Lords. It stipulates that once the examiners have completed their procedures, that is it for present purposes.

The question whether the petitioners know has to be weighed against the extremely detailed information that the Department of Transport has made available. It would be unfair, in relying on the Standing Orders in "Erskine May", to overlook the fact that the Department has made available to people, and deserves congratulation for so doing, an immense amount of information. I have some doubt as to whether we could use the argument that people did not know what was going on.

When we are considering whether there is a case, in fairness, we have to look at it at two levels. One is the general public awareness, and the other is the right of the person to present a petition and to be heard on it before the Committee. However we look at the broad picture of public awareness — and we should be grateful to the Government for making the information available — the reality is that this is a procedural question. When the matter comes, if it does, before the Select Committee on Standing Orders, or before the Committee considering the Bill, it will not be reasonable for the Government to argue that, as so much material had been made available, nobody need worry any more. The consequence of a person not having complied with the Standing Order or not having got his petition in on time is likely to be fatal to his right to be heard. We should take that important point seriously.

If I were to suggest which of the various options presented to us by the amendments we should go for, I would go for the one in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks, (Mr. Brittan). That provides that bit more in the way of time and fairness for the petitioners, and balances the postion fairly well.

Mr. Hughes: I do not believe that the hon. Gentleman intended to mislead the House, However, my understanding of the Standing Orders Committee report is that the examiners of petitions for private Bills reported, in the case of this Bill, that:

"Standing Orders . . . are applicable . . . and have not been complied with in respect of the time prescribed."

I stress that it says

"have not been complied with in respect of the time prescribed."

It was obviously for that reason that the matters went to the Standing Orders Committee and then came to the House.

I hope that the hon. Gentleman will accept that if the campaign groups and those who are interested, and the representative bodies in Kent and beyond, say that the time prescribed is not sufficient, that is a good test of whether the time should be extended. They are arguing, as I understand it, for eight weeks from Second Reading, and not for the lesser period that was proposed by the right hon. and learned Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan).

Mr. Cash: I have sympathy with the general arguments that have been expressed in the House on these matters. With regard to non-compliance with Standing Orders, the hon. Gentleman will find that there could not be anything otherwise. I have not been involved with this issue to any great extent until this evening, but my surmise is that it simply means non-compliance with those Standing Orders that could not be complied with because the private Bill Standing Order refers to 27 November. One cannot comply with Standing Orders where the Bill has been put on deposit on 27 November and was published only on 18 April. That is strict non-compliance in any event, and it applies to all hybrid Bills.

The point that I was making concerned other questions that might arise in relation to non-compliance. I went on to deal with two levels of concern. One of those is public awareness. The Government have gone further than one might reasonably have expected. They deserve congratulation.

The other question is the strict justice of the matter in relation to the prescription of Standing Orders. If someone did not have the full rights afforded him under the private Bill Standing Orders, he would be severely prejudiced. He would not be heard unless in turn the Committee was prepared to dispense with the Standing Orders by way of special indulgence, subject to the criteria that I mentioned, including the fact that the person concerned had not been involved in undue delay.

Several other points ought to be made. Appearances before the Select Committee are mentioned in amendment (f) in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). The question of appearances may also arise. All that I am about to say is directly relevant to whether people appear on time. If they do not appear on time, they will suffer the consequences of failing to do so and they are liable to be shut out. "Erskine May" says on page 1014:

"If parties have neglected to enter their appearance at the proper time, they will not be entitled to be heard."

It goes on to say:

"In some special cases . . . indulgence has been granted to them."

It quotes a number of instances in the 19th century.

It is not, however, simply a question of whether a petition has been handed in, but whether the person has appeared in accordance with Standing Orders. Complex matters must be complied with. It is important that people should know that they are on the line — that they are liable not to be heard if they fail to comply with the requirements.

That brings me back to the question of complexity, and information and the sorts of procedures with which people must comply in the time that is allotted. I said earlier, when I referred to notices, that by the time the period which is required under, I think, Standing Orders 4 and 11, dealing with Private Bills, is added on, we will be well into December — taking it forward from 27 November — within which period the various local advertisements in the *London Gazette* and, in the case of Northern Ireland, the *Belfast Gazette*—although that would not apply in this case —must be complied with.

[Mr. Cash]

When one subtracts that period—in other words, the period in which strictly required information is made available to the public—from 30 January and compares it with the period between 18 April and 17 June, one begins to observe a distortion which is against the interests of individual petitioners. That causes me some concern. That is why I agree with the amendment put forward by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks.

Against that background, it is important to bear in mind what it is that people who could be affected would be expected to know about, assuming that they got the notice in the newspapers in the proper manner. I have referred to the importance of the right to petition. Perhaps it would be helpful if I quoted from page 858 of "Erskine May". It states:

"The right of petitioning the Crown and Parliament for redress of grievances is acknowledged as a fundamental principle of the constitution"—

we cannot get anything clearer than that

"It has been uninterruptedly exercised from very early times and has had a profound effect in determining the main forms of parliamentary procedure."

The requirement which is imposed under the Standing Orders on petitioners in terms of their right to be heard is set out on page 949 of "Erskine May". It describes the locus standi of petitioners against private Bills. That is an arcane and difficult subject. I do not believe that those who want to petition would be able to get their act together in the relatively short time that is provided at the moment —that, is, up to 17 June.

There are complex questions involving individuals, remoteness, injurious affection, and a stack of extraordinary expressions which go way back to the 19th century but which none the less have a direct bearing on the individual rights of people. We must have regard to the relatively late hour — it is not as late as some hon. Members may wish—when we consider that individuals should have every opportunity not only to be heard but to have the maximum time that the Government are prepared to give.

I hope that the Minister, in his reply, will allow a little more time for those petitioners. It is not a long time. I think that it is only 10 days. When one considers the fact that the Government — according to the informal papers which the Government have supplied—is taking the Bill through to December 1986 and the following Session, I would not have thought that 10 days was a lot to ask. Surely 10 days is not such a great deal to ask of the Government at this stage.

I happen to be much in favour of the principle behind the Bill and the proposals in it, but I think that we as a Parliament have a duty to ensure that people are seen to be treated fairly. For the sake of 10 days—that is all that it boils down to—it would be reasonable for the Government to make a concession. As a member of the party which is in government, I believe that the Government would gain a great deal of credit by so doing. They would be seen not to be intransigent and inflexible. Instead, they would be recognised as being reasonable and fair. This is something that we must seek to do.

I have referred to the Standing Orders which prescribe the right of persons to be heard and perhaps it would be useful, if not a little lengthy, to go into them, they having a direct bearing upon the time that is made available to petitioners for the important reasons that I have already given. If the petitioners do not have sufficient time, they will be shut out, or they may fail to get their petition in in time. If they fail to get in their appearance, they will be shut out with the most dire consequences for themselves. How invidious it would be for some persons to have put in individual locus standi objections and petitioners and for others to find that they could not get in. What an unfairness that would be.

Petitioning against a Bill can cut the other way. There is another procedure, to which I have not referred, on which those who are present might care to reflect. The 20th edition of "Erskine May" is a mighty volume and it informs us that there is a procedure that is known as petitions against alterations, which provides an opportunity for those who do not want a Bill to be altered to deposit a petition.

There are some theological arguments on whether a petition against alterations can be deposited in respect of hybrid Bills. The balance of opinion, however, is that petitions against alterations may be deposited against them. Such petitioners may, too, have need of the time that is available. We do not know how they would react if they were to be provided with such an opportunity.

I am confining myself as best I can to the Standing Orders that relate to private business, which is germane as we are considering procedural issues. There is a range of criteria laid down in Standing Orders with which persons are required to comply, otherwise they may be shut out of the right to be heard. Standing Order No. 92 states:

"It shall be competent to the Court of Referees, if they think fit, to admit petitioners to be heard upon their petitions against a private bill, on the ground of competition."

This matter arose during the passage of the railway Bills — my great grandfather was chairman of the London-Brighton railway back in 1832. I believe that the Standing Orders that relate to competition were much used in those days when everyone was competing with one another. I have not yet heard of a potential rival or competitor to the Channel tunnel, but one never knows. Indeed alternative routes may be offered which could compete with the Channel Tunnel Bill.

Individuals may be affected by the provisions under Standing Order No. 93 and members of companies are also affected by them. The Standing Order reads:

"Where a bill is promoted by an incorporated company, society, association or partnership, members thereof shall not be entitled to be heard before the committee against the bill, unless their interests as affected thereby are distinct from the general interests of the company, society, association or partnership."

It allows a locus standi to associations. An association can petition against a Bill alleging that its trade — most important to those genuinely aggrieved by the proposals in a bill—business or interests

"will be injuriously affected by the provisions contained therein."

It allows discretion to the Court of Referees to admit the petitioners to be heard on these allegations.

Standing Order No. 95—this should be read carefully because one does not want to be caught out—states:

"Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing paragraph, where any society, association or other body sufficiently representing amenity, educational, travel or recreational interests, petition against a bill, alleging that the interests they represent will be adversely affected to a material extent by the provisions contained in the bill,"

the Court of Referees has the discretion to admit those petitioners to be heard.

Within the time scale prescribed it would be possible for persons who fell within the provisions of Standing Order No. 95 to discover that they were shut out if they had not made their case in the proper prescribed form in which petitions must be deposited.

There is the locus standi for local authorites and inhabitants. Local authorities have locus standi in relation to other Standing Orders.

Mr. Michael Brown: My hon. Friend made an important point about the rights of petitioners to petition against an additional petition. I followed what my hon. Friend said on that matter and indeed that proposition is before a private Bill Committee of which I am a member. To demonstrate to the House how such petitions can occur, I have before me—for obvious reasons I shall not refer to any detail except the title—the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill additional provision, which is a set of amendments brought forward by the promoters; and I also have before me the petition against the additional provision. Therefore, I confirm what my hon. Friend has said, and that procedure is in use in a private Bill Committee at this time.

Mr. Cash: I am grateful to my hon. Friend, as he has provided me with another provision, the one relating to additional provision. I was referring to petitions against alterations. If that has not confused everyone, I do not know what will.

These matters are complex and arcane, but they are important. What I say is of great importance to the individual petitioners. Contrary to the assertions of the Opposition and some newspapers that this is a filibuster, I hope that our proceedings will give some useful advice to petitioners about their rights. Through these proceedings we are providing them with information which will be of considerable benefit to them. I challenge any hon. Member whose house was about to be bulldozed, sterilised or afflected by nuclear waste—

Mr. Douglas Hogg: Does my hon. Friend understand that hon. Members who represent constituencies which may be affected by nuclear waste see a parallel here? We are here to ensure that the people of Kent get a fair deal partly to make the point that the people of Lincolnshire should get a fair deal, should the Government be so ill advised as to suggest that Fulbeck should see low-level waste. We shall not put up with that.

Mr. Cash: I am sure that you would not like me to be diverted down the nuclear path, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Regarding my earlier remark about the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey, who was asleep at the time, I now realise that I am in the position of the Fox-North coalition of the late 18th century in this unholy alliance of the nuclear and Channel tunnel defeaters, while I support the Bill's proposals.

Although I am in favour of the proposals in the Bill, I am absolutely in favour of people having every right given to them in our Standing Orders, within our parliamentary democracy and within this Parliament to enable them to petition within a reasonable time so as not to feel unfairly shut out. The real question is one of fairness. We must ensure that those people are given the information that they deserve.

I have slightly lost track of the time, so I am not certain how long I have to go.

Mr. Simon Hughes: As the hon. Gentleman has far exceeded the time that I took to open the debate, he will perhaps allow me to remind him that he has spoken for more than 40 minutes. If—and I deny this entirely—I seemed to drop off earlier, on reflection I would rather have done so more recently as, although these procedural matters may be of some importance, they are not the most gripping contribution for the other hon. Members present.

Mr. Cash: I take the hon. Gentleman's point, but when he sees the remark that I made when he was asleep he will see the poignancy and irony in the remark that he has just made.

During the debate serious matters have been canvassed. Although it is now 6.33 am, we are having a serious discussion about matters directly relevant to potential petitioners in Kent, and I hope that all opportunities will be open to them to enable them to be fairly heard so that they will not feel harshly treated, although they may not like the proposals in the Bill. If their petitions are in the proper form, as prescribed by the Standing Orders, they will be heard. They will discover that they get a fair hearing from this House, and they will have the opportunity to seek amendments—I have a suspicion that amendments will be made—to improve the Bill.

6.35 am

Mr. Douglas Hogg: I support the claim that we should enlarge the time within which petitions may be deposited. I agree with the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) about precedent. Precedent is totally irrelevant in this case, partly because we should be dealing with justice—while what was done in the past may be a guide to justice, it is not necessarily a sure guide—and partly because what we are discussing is so extensive in its scope that nothing that has happened in the past is of the slightest help to what we should do today.

The measure now before us will be of enormous consequence to the people of Kent and throughout the United Kingdom. To talk about having a few days in which to lodge a petition is nonsense. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) talked about the date on which the Bill was first published. Though an interesting date to consider, it is not a helpful date from which to start.

We should start from the date of Second Reading. It is possible, even in this Parliament, that a measure will not achieve a Second Reading, and no sensible man should invest in a petition, backed by counsel, solicitors and the rest, until the Bill has achieved its Second Reading, which in this case was only a few hours ago.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend will agree that, the Bill having received its Second Reading only a few hours ago, it would be cutting it fine even to agree to the date in the amendment standing in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan). In fairness, we must consider the date on which the advertisements first appeared, because that was notice to the public locally through the *London Gazette*. That combined with the date of 18 April, enables us to argue with justification that 27 June would be a considerable improvement on the 17 June, as specified in the motion.

Mr. Hogg: My hon. Friend is differentiating between the solicitor and the barrister. In these matters the barrister takes a broad brush approach. We start from the fact that only a few hours ago the Bill got its Second Reading. If

[Mr. Hogg]

I were a petitioner somewhere in Kent I should not instruct somebody like me to draft a petition unless and until the measure got its Second Reading. It would be a waste of money to do otherwise.

The time from which the horses start to run is the time when the Bill receives its Second Reading. In the committal motion we are considering a few days. That short a period is unwise because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford pointed out, this matter affects people's rights. Moreover, if those people get it wrong, they will not have a chance to make their case. We are talking about matters which can be affected by small errors.

It is strange that we should be talking about a few days. People have to see the advertisement to know that they have a right to petition. They have then to see their lawyers, raise money, draft the petition in the prescribed form, lodge it. if any of those things goes wrong, the petitioner is shut out. All that argues for plenty of time. In one place it is suggested that the date should be 17 June, while in another that it should be the 27 June or 31 July. Those dates are nonsense. People should have months in which to lodge petitions. A few days seems absurd. I rather agree with the remark of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South about half a loaf.

If the best that we can persuade the Goernment to accept is 27 June, I will go along with that date because I am in favour of an extension of time. The basic proposition that we should make in the debate is that people's rights should be protected. When we come to that proposition, precedent matters not at all. We need to be realistic and we need to try to meet the justice of individual cases. I hope that we will be as generous as possible about the time by which petitions must be lodged.

6.42 am

Mr. Gale: I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham (Mr. Hogg) for his robust advocacy on behalf of the people of north-east Kent. My potato growers do not want the tunnel any more than his Lincolnshire potato growers want nuclear waste. I hope that it will be possible for Kent Members to return some of the compliment that he has paid to us tonight.

The people of north-east Kent will regard this long debate not as a filibuster, but as a genuine defence of their legitimate rights. Apart from a natural break which my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) is taking at the moment, he and my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkstone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) have been in the Chamber non-stop for 15 hours on behalf of the people of Kent.

My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) confused the House sufficiently with quotations from "Erskine May" to demonstrate the great complexity of the issue. It is unreasonable to suppose that the ordinary person, who certainly wishes to make known his or her protest against the Bill, should have even the remotest grasp of these complex proceedings.

Mr. Cash: I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the points I made were intended not to confuse but to illustrate the fact that confusion once confounded can become confoundedly difficult to unravel.

Mr. Gale: I take that point entirely. When I was a radio journalist we used to use a device called vox pop. We took a microphone into the street and asked people for instant impressions on a variety of subjects. Heaven knows that enough people in this place would come running to a microphone if one were offered. If one were to do that outside the Chamber and ask, say, 10 hon. Members who voted for the procedural motion on Tuesday or, indeed, for Second Reading yesterday, to stand in front of a microphone and describe in some detail the hybrid Bill procedure, if those hon. Members had not been in the Chamber for most of the night—as many hon. Members have not—one would probably get 10 different views on the hybrid Bill procedure. If hon. Members have a less than adequate grasp of the procedures that we are debating, how can the ordinary people of north-east Kent be expected to have a finer grasp?

On Tuesday night we heard from my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House that sufficient extra time would be given to those of our constituents who wished to present petitions. I raised earlier the point that as the motion carried on Tuesday and the one before the House now stand, there is technically one day on which petitions may be lodged. That in itself is quite unreasonable.

I am pleased to see my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in his place again. It is not only the petitioners who may wish to have further time. My right hon. Friend has been kind enough to say that he will reconsider, after the representations that have been made, the future of the Thanet Way. Given a little extra time, my right hon. Friend maybe able to make some suggestions to the House, in particular to me and to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, which will enable us to advise our petitioners during the 10 days for which we are asking. Although I have not consulted him, I think that I can fairly add the name of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkstone and Hythe, who wishes to advise his constituents about the requisite procedures that they will need to follow in order to lodge their petitions and complaints against the Bill.

On behalf of the three Members of Parliament with north Kent constituencies and on behalf, I believe, of many other hon. Members, too, I express the hope that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport and my hon. Friend the Minister of State will look kindly upon the amendment that has been tabled by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan) and concede the 10 days for which we are asking.

6.47 am

Mr. Michael Brown: The House will see that I am a signatory to amendment (d) which provides for a slightly longer period than has been so reasonably requested by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale). We are anxious to further the request of those of my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies.

During the debate the attendants were kind enough to unlock Committee Room 6 so that I could obtain the petitions that are being considered by the opposed private Bill Committee, of which I am a member. I have no intention of referring to the contents of the petitions. It is for the Committee to deliberate only when it has heard all the evidence on behalf of the promoters and the petitioners.

The Committee is considering a relatively small Bill, the London Docklands Railway (City Extension) Bill, but

each petition that has been received is a very complicated document. As my hon. Friend the Member for Grantham, (Mr. Hogg) said, each petition has had to be prepared either by individuals or by solicitors and counsel representing individuals. A petition is a very complicated document. A private individual who is not versed in this procedure will need to take advice from a solicitor and to instruct counsel in order to prepare the petition.

I intend to read from a petition, leaving out any reference to its substance, in order to give the House some idea of the complicated wording with which a petitioner has to become familiar. It is the petition of the trustees of an organisation that could easily be a heritage organisation in Kent. The petition could read:

"A Bill is now pending in your honourable House entitled a Bill to empower the construction of the Channel Tunnel, to acquire lands, to confer powers upon"—

whatever authority it might be—

"and for other purposes. Your petitioners are injurously affected by the Bill in the manner and object to it for the reasons hereinafter stated."

Then the average petition that any petitioner for any such Bill might introduce goes through each clause. You can see from the pages that I am turning over, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that it is a detailed document.

Although to hon. Members this is still 5 June, to the outside world it is Friday, 6 June. Tomorrow, in the outside world's eyes, is Saturday—not a working day, and the same is true on Sunday. That takes us to 9 June, so there are about six working days between the time of the rising of the House later today and the time when petitions must be deposited in time for consideration by the Select Committee. The petitioners are likely to be individuals or groups of individuals, including residents' associations. Such people are not experienced or well versed in the complicated procedures of hybrid Bills and the especially peculiar procedures that are being considered for this Bill.

Mr. Forth: I am fascinated by the direction of my hon. Friend's arguments. Does he believe that a standard time should be allowed for all such petitions, or that the time allowable should be proportional to the complexity of the case or to the number of people involved? The House would like to know whether he will head in one direction or the other so that we may bring our thoughts to bear on the matter.

Mr. Brown: My point, which is reflected in the amendment, is simply that every petitioner, be he ever so high or ever so low, should have the longest possible time that the House is prepared to give him to instruct solicitors or counsel to prepare the documents. The argument has been adduced by other hon. Members. We wish to ensure that any petitioner who may be injuriously affected if the Bill reaches the statute book in its present form should have the right to object and prepare his case with as long an interval as possible between Second Reading of the Bill and the cut-off date by which petitions must be deposited with parliamentary agents or with the Public Bill Office.

The House is being asked to consider a vital set of amendments. I strongly support the speeches that have been made this morning because I and my constituents have a great understanding of what it means to have something imposed on them which will adversely affect the value of their properties. My constituents are aggrieved by the way in which the machinery of government has interfered with their rights, and they are upset by the speed and undue haste with which a matter relating to my constituency has been pursued during the past few months.

From the letters and petitions that I have received on that issue, I can imagine only too well the many representations that will have been made to hon. Members representing Kent constituencies. It is reasonable to assume that every constituent of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North who has written to him is a potential petitioner against the Bill. As my hon. Friend is saddled with the burden of having to write back saying that the main course of redress available is via the petition process, it will be necessary to come to terms with this complicated procedure. I do not think that eight days will provide adequate time in which to be able to formulate the petitions that will be required to be presented.

There is also a problem of bureaucracy in the Public Bill Office. If in the next eight days it were possible for every petitioner and group of petitioners to construct their petitions satisfactorily by 17 June and deposit them, correctly checked, in the Public Bill Office, heaven knows what kind of bureaucratic problems there would be in that office. The pile of papers that I am holding is a sample of all the petitions for a relatively small private Bill, which I am in the process of considering.

We heard figures mentioned earlier of several hundred petitioners—possibly thousands—that are likely to be deposited. I wonder whether the Public Bill Office has the resources to cope with the onslaught that is going to occur within the next few days. There will be a problem of bureaucracy that we shall have to face. I cannot believe that there has ever been an occassion in the past when the appropriate Public Bill Office organisation and staff have catered for the large number of petitions that are expected and are likely to be received.

Mr. Cash: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that when the matter gets to the Select Committee, the question of having transcripts available will become a very important issue? Transcripts will be available for the Government and, indeed, for those parties that can afford them, because the costs of transcripts are borne by the parties concerned. If people do not gear themselves up to having those transcripts available, they will be in serious trouble as the proceedings go forward. Will my hon. Friend consider passing on a message that transcripts should be made available at reasonable, if not nil, cost to the parties concerned for the reason that I have already given, namely, that this is essential?

Mr. Brown: I hope that my hon. Friends on the Treasury Bench have heard what my hon. Friend has said. There is no doubt that every one of these petitions will be the subject of examination and cross-examination, and obviously transcript facilities may well be inadequate.

The fundamental point of this series of amendments is to make sure that the maximum possible time is available to those who wish to petition against something that is going to injure them. As a Member of Parliament whose constituents know what it is to have a decision taken that adversely affects them and the value of their properties, I can appreciate fully the way in which those constituents of my hon. Friend will want to use every avenue open to them. The only avenue that is effectively open to them is the right to petition, which must carry with it the right to have adequate time to prepare the petition.

[Mr. Brown]

I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will be able to give us some helpful words that might persuade us to withdraw the amendment.

6.59 am

Mr. David Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) raised a question about the disappearing "Canterbury Times". While I can understand that at this hour he is not taking a great interest in its disappearance, I can tell him that the information was given in good faith. I shall look into the question that arises.

If it is of interest to hon. Members, our notes indicate that the Canterbury newspaper concerned was a member of the Kent Messenger group. However, I should like to make it clear that there is no question of our statutory duty not having been discharged. The parliamentary question referred to was one of a batch, all from the same hon. Member, about my department's leaflet. The newspapers listed in that reply were those in which the leaflet was advertised. I apologise if there was a misunderstanding as to the name of the newspaper. I shall send to my hon. Friend a list of the newspapers in which we advertised.

My hon. friend raised several matters all relating to the period from Second Reading, as did the hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes). I believe that what is important is not the date of the Second Reading but when the advertisement is placed inviting people to petition. In this case that was done on 18 April.

Mr. Forth: Does my hon. Friend agree that if any considerable expenditure of resources were required by the individual in order to submit a properly presented petition, the individual might regard it as prudent to wait to see whether the House gave the Bill a Second Reading before proceeding to commit those resources? Does he agree that to expect a petitioner to embark on that exercise, which could be very costly, at the earlier date in advance of the Second Reading might be regarded as imprudent? Therefore, that would invalidate a large part of the argument that my hon. Friend is making.

Mr. Mitchell: I disagree with my hon. Friend because in the leaflet that we distributed we gave a simple illustration of how an ordinary individual could prepare a petition at no cost. That applies to the people who, in the view of my hon. Friend, might incur unnecessary expenditure. Groups of people have come together to brief legal advisers and the like; they are not private individuals but people with considerable resources at their disposal. In several cases substantial sums have been collected in the campaign against the Channel tunnel. Those groups have already done much of the work and are simply waiting for the right time at which to put in the documents. While I am not insensitive to the point that my hon. Friend has made, I do not think that it need cause us great concern.

Mr. Aitken: Before my hon. Friend dismisses the date of the Second Reading as being unimportant, may I suggest to him that an ordinary member of the public might have got confused—indeed, many hon. Members were confused—by the complicated nature of the dispute about whether the Bill had violated Standing Orders, what the Committee would say and so on? Therefore, it is reasonable to say in this instance at least, whatever precedents there may have been, in the light of all the mystery and suspense created by the ruling, or non-ruling as it turned out to be, of the Standing Orders Committee, that the starting gun really fired on or about the date of Second Reading.

Mr. Mitchell: If my hon. Friend takes that view, I can only point out to him that a private Bill has only 10 days from Second Reading to closing. We published the advertisement on 18 April.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, North-West (Mr. Stern) said that people may not have understood the procedure. I hope that I have been able to reassure him by the explanation that I have given about the leaflet that we produced. That too went out on 18 April at the same time as the advertisements were placed in national and local newspapers.

Mr. Stern: I take my hon. Friend's point that that procedure has been adopted in those areas most affected by the Bill. My point was that this is a national Bill and there are groups around the country that now realise that they are affected. I have not seen many copies of the leaflet in my constituency, although no doubt in Kent they are on virtually every doorstep. Nevertheless, I am not sure that the leafleting procedure is sufficient, given that my hon. Friend is effectively being asked to target on those groups without knowing who or where they are.

Mr. Mitchell: I understand my hon. Friend's point, but we have advertised in the national newspapers as well as in the local ones. By its very nature, those who are likely to petition against the Bill are those with a personal interest — in the non-normal sense of the word — and such people will be pretty rare in Bristol.

Mr. Bill Walker: In which Scottish newspapers were there advertisements? Since I last participated in the debate I have spoken to my wife, who has relatives in Kent who know nothing about the position.

Mr. Mitchell: There are Scottish regional newspapers, of course, but the national ones in which we advertised reach Scotland.

The House is grateful to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks for the points that he made. The House will also recognise that, although it was the face of Richmond, the hand was that of Folkestone. Whatever face or hand it was, the Government have been persuaded by the argument. Therefore, I am happy to recommend that the House accepts my right hon. and learned Friend's amendment.

Mr. Speed: On behalf of my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard) and myself, I thank my hon. Friend the Minister most warmly. The extra time that will be allowed will be welcomed by many of the small petitioners.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) supported the case. I agree that petitions against alterations in the Bill are in order after the date, which would otherwise be a limiting factor. I bow to his legal knowledge in a number of the arguments he advanced, but I am sure that he would not take it amiss if I said that he was applying a degree of injurious affection to my head at this hour of the morning with some of the legality that he brought to the discussion.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), referred to a six-week period from Second

Reading to closing date in the 1974 Crosland Bill. In fact, that Bill, reintroduced under the Wilson Government, had its Second Reading on 30 April, and the closing date was 7 May, just one week later.

The second paragraph of the motion incorporates a closing date for petitioners. That date was debated at length on Tuesday night. The closing date of 17 June proposed by the Government allows eight weeks and four days from the publication of newspaper notices on 18 April. The intervale for the Channel Tunnel Bill in 1973 was exactly eight weeks. The Government have done rather better with the current Bill.

As I have already said, I am happy to accept the amendment proposed by my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks (Mr. Brittan), supported by my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South. That will allow the extra 10 days for individual petitioners. The Government expect that there will be many individual petitioners, but we are confident that the House authorities can cope. Of course, the Committee of Selection will decide when the Select Committee will hold its first meeting. However, I am confident that there will be a number of group petitions from part authorities, competing ferry companies, local authorities and environmental groups which the Committee can focus upon as soon as it is formed before it needs to consider points from individual petitioners which are liable to be received a little later.

The Government recognise that my right hon. and learned Friend's amendment would not, technically, allow husband and wife teams to petition jointly before 17 June. I do not think that that is a material drawback to his amendment. It is difficult to see where else the line could have been drawn to give the man in the street a little longer to present his petition without giving the same time to major organisations which we have not been convinced need that time.

I am happy to accept the amendment of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Richmond, Yorks. It will allow individual petitioners three weeks from today before they need to submit their petitions. I submit that there is no case for delaying the closing date for petitions beyond that time, and I recommend that the House accept amendments (e) and (f).

Amendment (c) proposed, leave out '17th June' and insert '31st July'.—*[Mr. Simon Hughes.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 2, Noes 146.

Division No. 209] **[7.12 am**

AYES

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Simon Hughes and
Mr. Paddy Ashdown.

Alton, David
Skinner, Dennis

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Best, Keith
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Brooke, Hon Peter
Brown, M. *(Brigg & Cl'thpes)*
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Burt, Alistair
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hamilton, Hon A. *(Epsom)*
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Hind, Kenneth
Hogg, Hon Douglas *(Gr'th'm)*
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Donald Thompson and
Mr. Tim Sainsbury.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment (d) proposed, leave out 'June' and insert 'July'.—*[Mr. Scott.]*

Question put, That the amendment be made:—

The House divided: Ayes 8, Noes 145.

Division No.210] **[7.22 am**

AYES

Alton, David
Ashdown, Paddy
Bennett, A. *(Dent'n & Red'sh)*
Foster, Derek
Hamilton, W. W. *(Fife Central)*
Hughes, Simon *(Southwark)*
Skinner, Dennis
Stott, Roger

Tellers for the Ayes:
Mr. Frank Cook and
Mr. John McWilliam.

NOES

Alexander, Richard
Amess, David
Ashby, David
Atkinson, David *(B'm'th E)*
Baker, Nicholas *(Dorset N)*
Baldry, Tony
Batiste, Spencer
Biffen, Rt Hon John
Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Blackburn, John
Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Boscawen, Hon Robert
Bottomley, Peter
Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Bowden, Gerald *(Dulwich)*
Brandon-Bravo, Martin
Bruinvels, Peter
Bryan, Sir Paul
Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Butterfill, John
Cash, William
Chope, Christopher
Clark, Dr Michael *(Rochford)*
Colvin, Michael
Conway, Derek
Coombs, Simon
Cope, John
Cranborne, Viscount
Currie, Mrs Edwina
Dunn, Robert
Durant, Tony
Fallon, Michael
Favell, Anthony
Fenner, Mrs Peggy
Forsyth, Michael *(Stirling)*
Forth, Eric
Fox, Marcus
Franks, Cecil
Fraser, Peter *(Angus East)*
Freeman, Roger
Galley, Roy
Garel-Jones, Tristan
Glyn, Dr Alan
Gower, Sir Raymond
Greenway, Harry
Gregory, Conal
Ground, Patrick
Hanley, Jeremy
Hargreaves, Kenneth
Harris, David
Hawksley, Warren
Hayes, J.
Hayward, Robert
Heathcoat-Amory, David
Hickmet, Richard
Howard, Michael
Howarth, Gerald *(Cannock)*
Hunt, David *(Wirral W)*
Hunter, Andrew
Jackson, Robert
Jones, Gwilym *(Cardiff N)*
Jones, Robert *(Herts W)*
Jopling, Rt Hon Michael
Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Key, Robert
King, Roger *(B'ham N'field)*
Knight, Greg *(Derby N)*
Knowles, Michael
Lang, Ian
Lawler, Geoffrey
Lawrence, Ivan
Leigh, Edward *(Gainsbor'gh)*
Lennox-Boyd, Hon Mark
Lilley, Peter
Lloyd, Peter *(Fareham)*
Lord, Michael
Lyell, Nicholas
McCurley, Mrs Anna
McLoughlin, Patrick
McQuarrie, Albert
Malins, Humfrey
Malone, Gerald
Marlow, Antony
Mather, Carol
Maude, Hon Francis
Maxwell-Hyslop, Robin
Mayhew, Sir Patrick
Merchant, Piers
Meyer, Sir Anthony
Mills, Iain *(Meriden)*
Mitchell, David *(Hants NW)*
Moore, Rt Hon John
Moynihan, Hon C.
Neale, Gerrard
Nicholls, Patrick
Norris, Steven
Page, Richard *(Herts SW)*
Pattie, Geoffrey
Pawsey, James
Pollock, Alexander
Portillo, Michael
Powell, William *(Corby)*
Powley, John
Rathbone, Tim
Renton, Tim
Rhys Williams, Sir Brandon
Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Roberts, Wyn *(Conwy)*
Roe, Mrs Marion
Rowe, Andrew
Rumbold, Mrs Angela
Ryder, Richard
Sackville, Hon Thomas
Sainsbury, Hon Timothy
Sayeed, Jonathan
Shepherd, Colin *(Hereford)*
Sims, Roger
Speed, Keith
Speller, Tony
Spencer, Derek
Spicer, Jim *(Dorset W)*
Spicer, Michael *(S Worcs)*
Stern, Michael
Stewart, Andrew *(Sherwood)*
Stewart, Ian *(Hertf'dshire N)*
Taylor, John *(Solihull)*
Thomas, Rt Hon Peter
Thornton, Malcolm
Thurnham, Peter
Townsend, Cyril D. *(B'heath)*
Tracey, Richard
Twinn, Dr Ian
Wakeham, Rt Hon John
Walker, Bill *(T'side N)*
Wall, Sir Patrick
Waller, Gary
Wardle, C. *(Bexhill)*
Warren, Kenneth
Watson, John
Watts, John
Wells, Bowen *(Hertford)*
Wolfson, Mark
Wood, Timothy
Yeo, Tim
Young, Sir George *(Acton)*

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr. Archie Hamilton and
Mr. Donald Thompson.

Question accordingly negatived.

Amendment (e) made: after '17th June', insert 'or, in a case where the Petitioner is a single individual, at any time not later than 27th June'.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Amendment (f) made: after first 'Agents' insert—

"That, notwithstanding the practice of the House that appearances on Petitions against an opposed Private Bill be required to be entered at the first meeting of the Committee on the Bill, in the case of any such Petitions as are mentioned in sub-paragraph *(a)* above which are not presented before the first meeting of the Committee, the Committee shall appoint a day after 27th June on which it will require appearances on those Petitions to be entered:.—*[Mr. Douglas Hogg.]*

Main Question, as amended, put and agreed to.

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move,

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Member in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

This paragraph is entirely standard form. It lays down that the standard rules for petitioners apply and it makes clear that they can be heard either by themselves or by their counsel or agents. I believe that this is very important. I made it clear on Second Reading that the Government would not oppose the *locus standi* of any reasonable petitioner.

I have nothing more to add to that. I suggest that the House is likely to wish to accept it at this point.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. David Mitchell: I beg to move,

'That the Committee have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom, and to report from day to day the Minutes of the Evidence taken before it:'

Mr. Speaker: We shall consider at the same time amendment (g), after 'Kingdom', insert

'to send for persons, papers and records.'.

Mr. Mitchell: This paragraph is not standard form. It contains two very important provisions that the Government consider—and I am sure the House will agree—especially apposite to the Bill. My hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton (Mr. Maxwell-Hyslop) has said, with some justification, that the Bill is unique, at least in recent years.

The first provision would allow the Committee to sit when the House was in recess, if it so desired, at the beginning of the recess, before its end, or even in the middle. In 1974, the Select Committee sat for just under six weeks. I hope that this year it will be possible for the Committee to complete its work within a reasonable time. Should the proceedings threaten to run beyond the end of the summer, it will be open to the Committee to make use of the provision and to sit for as long as it desires.

The second provision in the paragraph has been sought over the past year by many hon. Members and groups. It will give the Committee the authority, which otherwise it would not have, to visit, sit and take evidence in Kent or anywhere in the United Kingdom, should it wish to do so. In the 1974 proceedings of the Select Committee, the Committee decided to visit the sites concerned. This provision goes a little further because it allows evidence to be taken in the areas most directly affected, if the Committee so wishes.

I am sure that the House will recognise the need for both provisions. In moving them, I am responding to a considerable number of hon. Members who requested the provisions and sought assurances on that line.

Mr. Marlow: I notice that amendment *(g)*—I hope that my hon. Friend will cover it in a moment—which is in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, would enable the Committee

"to send for persons, papers and records".

The great bulk of the amendments on the Order Paper, which have kept the House sitting all night, are in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, but I have not seen the right hon. Gentleman all night. As the Leader of the Opposition was responsible for keeping us up all night, I wonder whether, if the amendment allows for the Committee

"to send for persons, papers and records,"

the Committee would be entitled to send for the Leader of the Opposition. If so, and if the Committee sent for him, I wonder whether he would attend.

Mr. Speaker: Perhaps it is an appropriate moment for me to say that with amendment (g) we are considering amendments (j) and (aa).

Mr. Mitchell: I have nothing more to add at this point. I should be happy to respond when hon. Members have made any points they wish to raise.

Mr. Michael Brown: The debate is important because, if the motion were passed in its unamended form, we fear that the Select Committee would sit, notwithstanding the fact that the House may have adjourned some time in July. Earlier we considered the tremendous burden that will fall on nine unfortunate hon. Members who are to be selected —now that we have disposed of previous amendments —to serve on the Select Committee.

Mr. Harris: Drafted or press-ganged.

Mr. Brown: My hon. Friend, from a sedentary position, says "Drafted or press-ganged." I think that is an unfair slur on the honourable record of the Committee of Selection chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Shipley (Mr. Fox), who I think on the whole does a magnificent job in trying to ensure that hon. Members are chosen for their skills, abilities, independence, impartiality and interests to deal with any Bill, whether private or public.

Great concern was expressed about the burden—the sheer volume of work — that will fall on nine unfortunate hon. Members. It has been said that many hon. Members will be ruled out — for instance, my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken)— because they have some kind of constituency interest. That will apply to all hon. Members from Kent and any hon. Member who represents a port, as I do. I represent the port of Immingham. My county council is likely to petition against the Bill. Many hon. Members will be ruled out and this unfortunate duty will fall on nine out of a few hon. Members.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend give way?

Mr. Brown: I shall finish this point so that I can prove to you, Mr. Speaker, that I am absolutely within order. I have not been pulled up so far, during my short speeches, for being out of order. I intend to maintain that position until we conclude our debates.

The nine unfortunate Members will be heavily burdened with work from the day that they start. They, more than any other group of Members, will be looking forward to their summer recess, with some justification. The suggestion that they might have power to continue their sittings of the Committee, notwithstanding the fact that the House might have risen for the summer recess, is most unfortunate.

Mr. Forth: Will my hon. Friend add to the list of those who he feels are disqualified for membership of the Select Committee those who represent constituencies that are far inland and remote from the sea, a port or anywhere else that is involved? Will their distance from the project disqualify them on the ground that it reflects a lack of knowledge of the relevant issues as opposed to intimate connection?

Mr. Brown: If I were to respond to my hon. Friend's question, Mr. Speaker, I fear that you would rule me out of order. My hon. Friend has raised a subject that came within our consideration of amendments (a) and (b) and he should have addressed his request to me when I was contributing to the debate on those amendments. We are now concerned with whether it is right for the Select Committee to have power to be able to continue its sittings beyond the adjournment of the House.

I cannot believe that the nine members of the Committee will be volunteers. They will be selected— [HON. MEMBERS: "Press-ganged."] Perhaps that is unfair. They will be selected, probably against their will. However, they will undertake their duties—in the way that we all discharge the duties that are imposed upon us —with a spirit of good will, and they will have a right to adjourn for the summer recess in the same way as every other hon. Member.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend bear in mind that any Members who are put on the Select Committee and who represent large rural constituencies normally use the summer recess to get round their constituencies. If they are unfortunate enough to be selected, they will require their summer recess more than anyone else.

Mr. Brown: That is true. Most hon. Members will probably have family responsibilities, and we shall all be in need of a holiday. If a Member has been considering petitions in the early days of the Committee's sittings, I shall be aware of the burden that he will incur because during the past three weeks I have been a member of the Committee that is considering a private Bill. I know how time-consuming it is for an hon. Member to serve on a Commmittee that is considering a private Bill, and those who are Members of the Select Committee will find that it is akin to a private Bill Committee.

Mr. Rowe *rose*——

Mr. Brown: I hope that my hon. Friend will forgive me for not giving way. I want to make my remarks fairly brief. We are pressed for time and many of my hon. Friends wish to catch your eye, Mr. Speaker.

The unfortunate Members who will have to discharge their duties on the Select Committee will find that there is a backlog of constituency work to catch up with. They will be tied up in a Select Committee from 10.30 am until 1 pm, and in the afternoon from 2.15 to 3.30, probably on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. They will find it difficult to discharge their other parliamentary duties in

[Mr. Brown]

between. By the time the Committee members have been sitting for three or four weeks, at the end of June and into July, they will be among the first to be entitled to look forward to an early summer recess.

7.45 am

Mr. Humfrey Malins (Croydon, North-West): I am glad to have the opportunity to make a short contribution. Throughout the night I have listened, on and off—mostly off—to the contributions made by my hon. Friends. I have been struck by the passion, strength and merits of the arguments forcefully expressed by my hon. Friends who represent Kent constituencies. I cannot remember an occasion when a local issue has been so well argued by hon. Friends who represent areas close to their hearts. I congratulate them most sincerely.

When I have sat in a Committee upstairs, I have sometimes thought how nice it would be if the Committees of the House had the power to adjourn from time to time to various places within the United Kingdom. The Committee on the Channel tunnel would gain much by visiting the south-east of the country. It would be able to listen to people's views on the spot, and get the local flavour. It would be much easier to form impressions by travelling to the areas involved. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Mr. Howard), who has been present for every debate on the Channel tunnel, agrees wholeheartedly with that idea.

Mr. Ashby: Although I appreciate the importance of the Select Committee visiting the site of the proposed Channel tunnel on the south coast, should it not travel across the Channel to the Pas de Calais? It would be able to gauge the feeling there. Perhaps the Pas de Calais is still considered to be part of the United Kingdom and that is the explanation.

Mr. Malins: It would benefit the Committee in many ways to travel over the water to France.

Mr. Forth: Duty free.

Mr. Malins: Yes, indeed.

If the Select Committee Members were to travel around Kent, they would have a better chance to gauge local opinions, but the Committee's travels should not be limited to Kent. When the Channel tunnel comes into operation, it will have an impact further afield. You, Mr. Speaker, have the honour to represent a Croydon seat, as I do, and with the motorway links it is possible to travel from Croydon to the Kent coast in about an hour. Business and other interests in the south London area may have some comments to make on the Channel tunnel.

It is important for the Committee to be able travel to around Britain, especially in Kent, to gauge public feeling. The people of Kent have fine advocates in the House.

Mr. Marlow: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Croydon, North-West (Mr. Malins) raised an important point. We all regret the passing of Queen Mary——

Mr. Speaker: Order. I cannot gauge what Queen Mary has to do with me.

Mr. Marlow: A great deal, Mr. Speaker, because Calais is part of the United Kingdom's possessions, and I believe that nothing has been done to remove it from the suzerainty and control of this House. Can you rule, Mr Speaker, on whether, if the Committee wishes to go to Calais, it will have the same powers there as in the United Kingdom?

Mr. Speaker: If the Committee wants to go to Calais, that will be a matter for the Chairman, not for me.

7.49 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: If I may say so, that is more a matter for the Chairman than for Queen Mary.

My hon. Friend the Member for Isle of Wight (Mr Ross) has always believed that the Select Committee can do its job effectively only if it is given powers to sit in the areas directly affected. For that reason, I support this motion.

There may be an argument for the Committee to cross the Channel and look at the comparative effects on the other side, but it should not be an excuse for a jolly day out in the sun. When the Minister replies, I should be grateful if he would assure us that that will not be precluded by the wording of the motion, which relates only to the United Kingdom. Despite the ingenuity of the hon. Member for Northampton, North (Mr. Marlow), I doubt whether our possession of the Pas de Calais is sufficiently well recognised for it to be included in the motion. If France is to be visited, it should be included in the motion.

The specific reasons and concerns that prompt the request and desire that the Committee should visit Kent have been tabled through instructions or referred to elsewhere. First, there will be effects on the property and amenities of people immediately affected and on the economy in terms of jobs gained and lost. Those matters can be assessed, petitioned against and inquired into most appropriately in the areas immediately affected.

Secondly, there are environmental aspects of considerable importance in areas of outstanding beauty in Kent, about which there is great concern. Thirdly, there are specific matters that have been brought to the Government's attention in letters to the Departments of the Environment and Transport. They include the impact of the terminal at Cheriton, the ever-increasing loss of amenity because of traffic on local roads, spoil disposal, the impact of the new stretch of the M20 and the impact of consequential developments on the countryside in Kent, particularly warehousing, tourism and retail developments.

I know that the Minister is sensitive to those matters. I understand that the Government intend to make an opening statement, presumably when the Select Committee meets at Westminster. It would be helpful if the Minister would consider a more flexible procedure which would allow the Government to be cross-examined towards the beginning of the inquiry about matters relating to the opening statement which are also specific to the places which the Select Committee may decide to visit, rather than not allow petitioners to inquire into those matters. I hope that all those considerations will be included in the spirit and wording of the motion to allow the Committee to move around.

It is clear from the past 12 hours of debate that the Committee's timetable and responsibilities will be wide-reaching. It may be onerous for the hon. Members serving on it, but I am sure that the petitioners will feel that the Committee will be more responsive to its needs if it is seen to go to the people at least as often as the people are asked to go to it.

7.55 am

Mr. Rowe: The hon. Member for Southwark and Bermondsey (Mr. Hughes) has been misled on two points. First, there is no reason to suppose that if the Select Committee goes abroad—for example, to Calais—it will do so on a sunny day. Secondly, the major part of the M20 that is under construction has nothing to do with the tunnel. It is part of the roads programme as originally planned.

While we are rightly concerned for those who will comprise the Select Committee, at the end of the day those who matter most are the petitioners. It is essential that they have every opportunity to present their case, to have it heard and to have the counter arguments presented in a form and within a time which will allow them to comment on and argue against them, if that is appropriate. Other considerations are secondary to that.

In view of the amount of work that the Select Committee will have to do, the House must ensure that its Members have the proper staff back up to ensure that the grouping and sifting of petitions is done quickly. We are well served by the Clerk's Department, but this is a different scale of operation from any other Select Committee activity that we can envisage.

There will be a recurring need for the Government to put their case in response to petitioners. It will be helpful for the Government, as the proposers of the Bill, to make the opening case so that petitioners may know the arguments. After that, Ministers should be available to the Select Committee to respond on particular issues.

Mr. Simon Hughes: It would be helpful also if, once the Government have made the initial statement, an opportunity were provided for questions to be asked of members of the Government so that at an early stage factual matters are clarified, thus avoiding the need for petitioners and others to wait until a later stage for issues to be cleared up.

Mr. Rowe: It will be for the Committee and its Chairman to decide such matters, but what the hon. Gentleman suggests seems sensible. The Government have said time and again that the Select Committee procedure gives at least as good an opportunity to explore matters as does a planning inquiry. I am happy to go along with that, provided we ensure that the Select Committee is given power to travel and is given the resources to enable petitioners to explore all the ramifications of this major proposal.

7.59 am

Mr. Cash: Standing Order No. 136, which is referred to on page 1011 of "Erskine May," has a considerable bearing on amendment (g). Considering that the Opposition tabled that amendment, it is astonishing that Labour Members have simply copped out by not turning up for this debate. I understood that they tabled the amendment in protest, as it were, against what my hon. Friends and I have been doing.

There must be many members of, and others sympathetic to, the Labour party living in Kent. They will be appalled to learn that Opposition Members have copped out by not being present to move the amendment.

Standing Order 136 provides:

"By this order, first made in 1945, it is declared that a committee is not empowered, without express authority from the House, to hear evidence other than that which may be tendered by the parties entitled to be heard."

That would have been substituted by this amendment by enabling the Committee to send for persons, papers and records which would have significantly amplified the powers available to the Select Committee. I am in favour of the Bill.

Mr. Greg Knight: I am listening with interest to what my hon. Friend is saying. My instinct is to support amendment (g). Can my hon. Friend tell me what the position would be if the House were to pass amendment (g) and in due course, when the Committee sent for persons to appear, someone refused to appear? What sanctions will the Committee have? Amendment (g) is useless unless it has some teeth.

Mr. Cash: My hon. Friend raises an interesting point. The proceedings on a hybrid Bill are, in the main, the same as those for a private Bill and do not automatically attract the powers of a Select Committee. As I understand it, whereas a Select Committee would be able to require the attendance of a person, it may not be quite such a simple matter in relation to a private Bill. I defer to the judgment of those wiser than I am in these matters, because I might be wrong on that. By not including this provision, we are left, as would be the case with other private Bills, with the evidence that is presented exclusively by the parties in evidence. That is a point which ought to be made, though I notice that the Opposition are looking somewhat languid at this time of the morning.

I am not entirely clear about what was intended by amendment (j), which says:

"That in the proceedings before the Select Committee the obligations upon the Promoters of the Bill of presentation and proof shall conform to the procedures followed in Private Bills."

I have already said that that is what I would have expected and, as I understand it, that is the state of play. Amendment (aa) reads:

"That it be an Instruction to the Select Committee that it shall hear the evidence of Her Majesty's Government at the start of its proceedings in order to enable the Petitioners to respond thereto."

I have some experience of private Bills and I have seen leading counsel engaging in some tactical manoeuvres which, without going into all the boring detail, preclude the other side from calling evidence. Such tactics are available to strategists at the parliamentary Bar and people would be disturbed if such things happened on this occasion. I sincerely hope that they do not.

As I said in the Select Committee, proceedings are conducted, in the main, in the same manner as those in a Committee on a private Bill. In 1948-49 the Select Committee on Hybrid Bills made some suggestions for improving the situation. Page 592 of "Erskine May" reads:

"unless the House has given any instruction or indication to the contrary, the second reading is considered to remove from the promoters the onus of proving the expediency of the bill. The petitioner, therefore, opens to the committee, calling such evidence as he wishes. The promoters then answer the petitioner's case, and if they call evidence this entitles the petitioner to a right of reply. The procedure is, however, subject to the will of the committee and the requirements imposed by each bill."

It is worth pointing out that the instruction that is proposed in paragraph (aa)

"That it be an Instruction to the Select Committee that it shall hear the evidence of Her Majesty's Government at the start of its proceedings in order to enable the Petitioners to respond thereto"

[Mr. Cash]

is somewhat different from the proposals that I have just described and that are provided for under the existing Standing Orders.

The behaviour of the Opposition in putting down an amendment to the motion and abusing the procedure by not turning up seems to me to be negligence in the extreme. I hope that Labour party supporters in Kent are aware of the fact that some extremely valuable stategic advantages could have been obtained but that the Opposition have just let the whole thing slip. It is not merely negligence; it is downright incompetence.

8.6 am

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): It is a matter of great importance to the people of this country that the Bill should be referred to a Select Committee.

Looking in particular at amendment (bb), my recent experience as a member of the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill leads me to the view that it is very useful if a Select Committee is able to travel round the country. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, North (Mr. Gale) pointed out that there are 500 petitioners against the Bill in Kent alone. Therefore, it would be very useful if the Select Committee had the power to call for evidence and to hear witnesses. My hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash) referred to the dangers of amendment (g), in that it would confer an open-ended power.

If this Select Committee were to be given the same powers as are enjoyed by the Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill, which is appointed every five years, they would be found to be extremely useful. The Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill went to the sites of military activity and found that very useful. In this case, the Select Committee would be able to visit compulsory purchase sites, or sites where transport infrastructure is to be provided for the Channel tunnel, talk to the people who will be affected and, if necessary, take evidence on site.

Wearing briefly my Member of Parliament for Lancashire, West hat, we should like the Committee to look in particular at the rail link between all the regions of the country—I refer particularly to Manchester and Liverpool—and the tunnel. We want to be able to send manufactured goods to Britain's most important market, the European Community, through the tunnel. Petitioners from the north-west region will no doubt ask the Select Committee to ensure that the infrastructure necessary to send containers by rail directly from the north-west through the tunnel is part of the structure plan.

We wish to make submissions to the Committee. We do not wish to be left out in the cold. Many of my constituents are worried about the fact that the major advantages of the tunnel will accrue mostly in the south-east. As it is nearer to the main markets, it will attract industry that will not go to the north-west. All that could be obviated if we had proper links and transport infrastructure connected to the tunnel, which would remove the advantages that the south-east would gain.

If the threat of fewer jobs in the port and ferry services of east Kent is realised, those changes in employment might result in the area seeking to become an assisted area and seeking Government grants. If it did, it would be competing with the north-west, where there is high unemployment and where assisted area status is important.

Mr. Greg Knight: I have listened to my hon. Friend's comments on amendment (g). I am still not entirely satisfied by his remarks or by the remarks of my hon. Friend the Member for Stafford (Mr. Cash). Will he give the House an assurance about the sanctions that the Committee may have in respect of sending for persons? If amendment (g) is passed and the Committee seeks to call a person to appear before it and that person refuses to come, what sanctions will the Committee have? That is a crucial point. It is no good telling the Committee that it has the power to send for persons if those persons can refuse to attend the Committee has no sanction against them.

Mr. Hind: I do not go as far as amendment (g). My hon. Friend is advocating that the Committee should have powers similar to those exercised by Select Committees, which can, within parameters, require anyone to give evidence to them and require papers and records. It is unnecessary in this case to have that much power, because the Committee will not be inquiring into the activities of Departments. This Committee is weighing up the objections by petition and amendment from outside bodies and, therefore, needs the power to require people to give evidence to it, and indeed to require the Department of Transport to give evidence to it. To some extent I agree with the spirit of amendment (g), but it is almost impossible in the circumstances to support it.

The Eurotunnel amendments are important, but I support wholeheartedly the principles of the paragraph and I urge my hon. Friends to do the same.

8.13 am

Mr. Aitken: Even at this late hour, we are doing a useful job by discussing the amendments, and I especially wish to ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State three important questions that arise from them.

We all recognise that it is in the best interests of the House and the country for the Select Committee to do a thorough job of scrutinising the Bill. So far, that job has not been done. The Government have failed lamentably, in the rushed job, to study the Bill line by line, and I shall prove that to my hon. Friend by asking him three questions which he may find difficult to answer because he may not have thought of the three problems. They might be better answered if the Committee had the power to send for persons or papers.

This is not just a hybrid Bill; it is a hybrid project. It is a joint effort between taxpayers' money and private money. I am a little suspicious of the degree to which about £1 billion of public money will be needed to support the infrastructure, as demanded increasingly in speech after speech on Second Reading, to further the commercial interests of Eurotunnel. In this respect, therefore, I think that the taxpayers' interest must be pursued and, if necessary, pursued by the Committee sending for persons and papers when appropriate.

Let me highlight one area on which I touched in the debate on Second Reading. I have reason to believe that there is already a small whiff of scandal emanating from deals that have been done by Eurotunnel in particular with the railways, with Eurotunnel possibly using its monopoly power to get a better price out of the railways than otherwise might have been possible. I say that on the following grounds. Before Eurotunnel was announced as the winner of the competition, all the bidders had

discussions with the railways. They all needed the railways to supply a service to them. Channel Expressway, for example, concluded a deal with the railways, SNCF and BR, to supply the rail service and British Rail and SNCF were to pay an annual subscription of between £56 million and £112 million a year. That was the Channel Expressway figure. A similar deal at very similar prices was done with Eurotunnel.

It would, therefore, be reasonable on a commercial judgment to expect that Eurotunnel's deal would be in the same price range. It is not in the same price range at all, we discover. I have evidence that suggests that the total price that the state railways, both financed by taxpayers' money, are now having to pay £140 million a year in annual subscription for the first year of operation, rising to £200 million. In other words, the railways are having to pay about £100 million more a year under Eurotunnel than they would have had to pay had Channel Expressway or Euroroute won the competition.

I suggest that the principal reason why the railways are having to pay much more is that Eurotunnel now finds itself in the monopoly bargaining position, and was able to extract from the railways a very high price through that monopoly power. The taxpayer is, in effect, giving an extra subsidy to the private business men of Eurotunnel. I think that the only way to reassure ourselves that this price is not excessive is by the Committee having the power to send for persons and papers and to ask them specific questions. When parliamentary questions are tabled on this subject, they are met with the customary wall—that this is a matter of commercial confidentiality. That answer really does not stand up as a serious and justifiable riposte.

Obviously the taxpayer has an interest if his railways are having to pay an annual subscription of £100 million or so a year more than the competitors would have expected from the railways. It is a large subsidy, and it is the taxpayer's money. We want to know on behalf of the taxpayer the precise details of all those contractual arrangements and the justification for them to make sure that an excessive charge is not being levied that will hit the taxpayer. This is a theme to which we will return again and again. If the Committee has the power to send for persons and papers, I suggest that that will facilitate it in its inquiry.

I give another example of how, if there is the power to send for persons and papers, in this case the ratepayer's money could be saved. In clause 12 of the Bill there is an indication, indeed a commitment, that the costs of policing the tunnel will be paid by the promoters. Kent police have done a great deal of work on what they think will be needed. Their estimate in broad terms is that a complete new subdivision of police should be located at the tunnel, to be given manpower at the normal rate for subdivisions of the Kent police—between 150 and 200 officers. That will be expensive because at 1985 prices a police officer costs £20,000 to £25,000 a year. According to the Bill, the cost of those police officers should be paid by the promoters. Whatever the Bill may say, it would be a sanguine man who would say that that price will be paid in full by the promoters.

I say that because there is a contradictory clause in the concession agreement to clause 12. I do not have the exact reference here, but in effect the clause in the concession agreement is a non-discrimination clause. The gist of it is that the promoters should not have to pay more than they would have to pay to cover policing at another Channel port, such as Dover. I hear that there is already argument as to the justified policing level in the view of the Kent police, on the one hand, and of the promoters, on the other, the promoters using the non-discrimination clause in the concession agreement.

This is a most important dispute. It could result in a heavy bill having to be paid by the ratepayers of Kent for the police officers for whom the promoters say they will not pay. The Committee may have to act as a referee. If so, it would be enormously helped by being able to send for persons and papers.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister of State to give an indication of the Government's thinking. I shall be most relieved if he can give a clear and decisive assurance that the cost of the police appointed by the Kent constabulary to look after the tunnel and its surroundings will not fall on the ratepayers of Kent, in which case there would be no need to send for persons and papers.

There is another small point on the policing of the tunnel. There is the possibility of almost emotive controversy about policing because of the juxtaposition of powers in the Bill. The Bill indicates that at frontier controls and customs and immigration the British authorities have the right to be on the French side, and the French police have the right to be on the British side.

An interesting and emotive point arises. Will there be armed French gendarmes standing on British soil? Neither the Kent police nor the Kent people would like to see that. The French authorities, who are entitled to say this, insist on their gendarmes being armed. The very word "gendarme" means an armed policeman. If there is to be a French right to keep a gendarme on British soil, the Committee may need to send for the head of the gendarmerie in Paris and may need to see the instructions and authority given to police officers in France about the circumstances in which they may use arms. That dispute may seem to be far-fetched, but it is potentially an emotional issue in Kent. It would be more easily resolved if the Committee had the power to send for persons and papers.

I have given my hon. Friend three examples of rows and arguments which could occur. The Committee might be assisted in solving those problems if it had the power to send for persons and papers and did not have to make a judgement without them.

The amendment also covers certain arrangements about how and when the Committee should sit. I put down an amendment which was not called; its gist was to try to ensure that Members of Parliament, members of the Committee, petitioners, their witnesses and their learned counsel all got a decent break and that the Committee should not sit until 1 September.

That was not a silly point; it was a point of substance, for two reasons. First, the petitioners genuinely need time to prepare their petitions. Secondly, parliamentary counsel feel that the Bill—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I hope that the hon. Gentleman does not intend to speak to an amendment that has not been called.

Mr. Aitken. I shall take note of your guidance, Mr. Speaker, and conclude by saying that the Committee would be assisted by a decent break. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister will agree that the Committee should take that point seriously.

8.25 am

Mr. John Watson (Skipton and Ripon): I shall be brief, because I wish to make a genuine contribution rether than one the main purpose of which is to pass the time.

A great deal of the debate has been concerned with the protection of minorities. I admire and defend the fortitude of my colleagues from Kent in their representation of the interests of the people of Kent, who they see as a minority. Understandably, my hon. Friends also feel that they are a minority in this House. However, there is another minority interest—those in Kent who are actually in favour of the tunnel.

Far be it from me to put myself forward as a champion of that view, but apart from being a Member of the House I am the chairman of a company in Kent that employs 168 people. I cannot speak for the employees, but I can speak for the management. We think that the tunnel is a good idea. It has been an unusual accident of history and geography that the economic centre of Britain over the past 20 years has not only come to the south-east of Britain, but to the western part of it. If there is a tunnel, there is a fair chance that much of the prosperity that has gone to my hon. Friend the Minister's constituency around Basingstoke might come to the part of Kent where my factory is located. I make my interests clear on that.

What worries me is that most of the elected representatives of Kent, whether Members of this Chamber, members of councils or members of chambers of commerce, share the opinion that the tunnel is a bad idea. Therefore, I fear that the minority opinion in Kent that is in favour of it might go unrepresented.

I find some relief in the setting up of the Committee if it has the power

"to send for persons, papers and records."

If the evidence presented to it does not represent anything from the minority interest in Kent, I hope that it will not only have the power, but the inclination to use it, and will send for such "persons, papers and records" as may be necessary to defend the interests of those in favour of the Bill.

8.28 am

Mr. Peter Bruinvels (Leicester, East): I shall be brief. I especially welcome paragraph 4 which outlines the delegated powers of the Committee. It can meet all over the United Kingdom. I am concerned that, by being given strong powers to interview, take evidence and look at the various ports, a substantial sum of money will be involved. I hope that my hon. Friend can give the House an estimate of the budget for the Committee to undertake that work.

There is no doubt that the Committee will sit outside the hours of sitting of this House, that witnesses will be called from many miles away and that much information will have to be collected. The sort of representation that some local industries may wish to put forward may result in substantial costs for witness fees, for counsel and for meetings in particular places, whether beside Canterbury cathedral, in the midlands or at one of the ports in Liverpool. If my hon. Friend the Minister can satisfy me on that point, I am sure that will reassure all hon. Members that it is worth while to establish such a Select Committee and that its role will result in a proper Channel Tunnel Bill being brought before the House for approval.

8.29 am

Mr. David Mitchell: It may be helpful if I suggest to the House how we might deal with the amendments before I respond to some of the points that have been made. The Government oppose amendment (g). The power

"to send for persons, papers and records"

is given to all House of Commons Departmental Select Committees — for example the Select Committee on Transport — to enable them to conduct inquiries on topics within their subject area. That power has never been given to Select Committees on hybrid Bills, because those Committees are charged only with hearing and deciding upon the cases made by petitioners. The function of this Committee is not to conduct a general investigation but to protect the rights of people affected by the project, which has now been approved in principle by the House on Second Reading.

I would now like to consider some quite extraordinary misconceptions on the part of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken). I am not sure whether my hon. Friend has his tongue in his cheek or whether he has really persuaded himslf of his own case. He alleged that the project is a joint effort of public and private money, and that £1 billion of taxpayers' money was involved. I am sorry to have to tell my hon. Friend that that is arrant nonsense. His make up of that colossal figure is partly the expenditure on roads, which would be undertaken anyway to meet the increasing proportion of people using the Kent roads to get to the ports and across to the continent. It is estimated that by the end of the century twice the present number of people will be travelling though the ports of Dover, Folkestone, Margate and Ramsgate. Would my hon. Friend expect there to be no expenditure on the infrastructure to enable those people to travel that way? Of course not. These projects are already programmed in the longer term projections of expenditure intended by the Department of Transport. My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South is completely wrong to take such huge sums into account.

My hon. Friend then turned his attention to British Rail and said that the expenditure projected with British Rail is taxpayers' money. That, too, is arrant nonsense. The £400 million for British Rail expenditure is money that is fully commercial in its operation. British Rail submitted a project for investment in the necessary equipment to operate the Channel tunnel. I am happy to say that we have a 7 per cent. discount rate which is our requirement, and it is above that figure. Therefore, the return is satisfactory and does not involve taxpayers' contributions.

Mr. Aitken: In a competition for talking arrant nonsense at this hour of the morning, on this topic at least, my hon. Friend the Minister of State would win if that was an example of his work, without my being in the race at all. Who does my hon. Friend think he is fooling by these curious remarks? The truth is that money spent on roads and railways is ultimately funded by the taxpayer. It is public money. It is sheer verbal sophistry to pretend that that money is going to be spent anyway and that it is a complete coincidence that money is being spent on roads in Kent on this scale. It is a bagatelle to suggest that these roads are suddenly to be modernised but that that would have happened anyway. I wonder who in Kent will believe that?

Of course, all public expenditure at some time may be spent on roads in some direction or other. The truth is that

these funds have at the very least been pin-pointed and accelerated. That would not have happened had it not been for the Channel tunnel. No one in the country, with the possible exception of a few in-house officials or Ministers, would believe the story that somehow public money is not involved on a big scale in the project. It clearly is. To suggest otherwise is, to use the Minister's own phrase, "arrant nonsense".

Mr. Mitchell: I do not want to involve myself in too much verbal fisticuffs with my hon. Friend at this hour, but British Rail money is not, as he alleges, coming from the taxpayer. I can tell him exactly where it is coming from. It is coming from the users. It is coming from the people who will pay very high fares to travel on those trains. That money will fully service the capital outlay with a margin over and above.

Mr. Aitken: Does my hon. Friend recall that only about a year ago the House voted £1 billion in extra grants to British Rail? The Minister is performing a conjuring trick in saying that he is not counting that as money which Parliament voted, which ultimately came from the taxpayer, but as money from tickets. British Rail's money is public money.

Mr. Mitchell: I am sorry to disabuse my hon. Friend, but the money to which he is referring was the public services obligation. That money is paid to British Rail for conducting loss-making services which it would not conduct if it were a commercial organisation. This is not a loss-making service. It is a fully commercial and profitable service and it is only on that basis that I have approved the outline capital expenditure that British Rail wishes to undertake.

Mr. Gow: I am trying to follow my hon. Friend. I should be grateful if he would assist some of my hon. Friends who heard him say a moment ago that the cost of the new railway lines and rolling stock will be paid for out of the very high fares that will be paid by passengers. Will not the new lines and new rolling stock have to be provided before those higher fares are paid? Could my hon. Friend, who is one of the disciples of Dr. Johannes Witteveen, explain to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken), to me and to my hon. Friend the Member for Leicester, East (Mr. Bruinvels), who represents a constituency further north than the county of Kent, how we can obtain the fares before we have the railway lines and the rolling stock?

Mr. Mitchell: Yes, I can explain to my hon. Friend. I do not want to enter into a dialogue with him now on the subject of discounted cash flow, but as a former Treasury Minister he will be fully aware of that concept. The Treasury requirements in respect of having no element of subsidy and being fully commercial have been met. I am not sure whether they were met at the time that he was at the Treasury when he benignly nodded approval, just as he is benignly smiling at the moment, but he will be well familiar with the concept. I assure him that not only did it comply with that concept at the minimum level but it was above it. Therefore, he can be fully reassured on that score.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South can blow as hard as he likes, but everybody in Kent knows that Kent has been clamouring for years for the gap in the M20 to be filled, and that is one of the major expenditures. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Mr. Speed) has been campaigning for that. He knows perfectly well that that is in the Department's long-term programme. It will be completed within the time scale in which it would otherwise have been completed and it will fit into the traffic pattern that is required.

Mr. Gow *rose*——

Mr. Gale *rose*——

Mr. Speaker: To which hon. Member is the Minister giving way?

Mr. Mitchell: I give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne.

Mr. Gow: When my hon. Friend said that everyone in Kent had been clamouring for the new road, did he include in that company my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (Mr. Heath)?

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is, as always, very shrewd in assessing any weakness in the argument of those whom in his legal career he has cross-examined in court on many occasions. I have to admit that I was referring to those people in the part of Kent which is affected by the existing road system and who are anxious to see the improvements.

Mr. Gale: There is absolutely no doubt that my hon. Friends the Members for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) and for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) have been clamouring for the Thanet way for years and years. The one road in east Kent which really does matter is the road that is not getting any attention at all.

Mr. Mitchell: I will not debate that point with my hon. Friend now. I shall simple say that the traffic flows on the M20 are somewhat greater than those on the Thanet way.

My hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South also alleged that Eurotunnel has pressurised British Rail into giving a concessionary charge. He almost suggested that something improper had happened. British Rail has done a commercial deal. It is signed and sealed, at a profit for British Rail, and forms the basis for the investment submission. My hon. Friend can be reassured that there is no skulduggery such as he sought to suggest.

Amendments (j) and (aa) have a somewhat similar purpose to amendment (g), but there is no justification, as some hon. Members have proposed, why the rule applicable to private Bills, which the private promotors of the Bill make the case for before the Select committee, should apply to this public Bill. The scope of the Bill is much wider than the project to be undertaken by Eurotunnel because it includes British Rail works and the extension of the A20. Apart from that, the Channel tunnel project is a public project for the benefit of the country as a whole and it is Government policy, now endorsed by the House, that it should proceed.

Government counsel will, with the leave of the Committee, be opening proceedings in the Committee with a general scene-setting statement. It will then be for the Committee to decide how to proceed. The purpose of the opening statement will be to explain the project and the works, not to justify the Bill, which has, in principle, already been given a Second Reading and accepted by the House in an historic vote last night.

Mr. Simon Hughes: I deduce from the Minister's answer to my amendment that he does not preclude the

[Mr. Simon Hughes]

possibility that, after the statement, to which all petitioners will look forward, there may be an opportunity, although it lies with the Committee to decide, for questions appropriate to that statement to be asked before the petitioners put their case to the Committee.

Mr. Mitchell: I would not want the hon. Gentleman in any way to belittle the importance either of the decision made on Second Reading to accept the principle that the tunnel should proceed or of petitions which will be concerned with the interests of people who will be directly affected. I think those sort of criteria will decide what is or is not appropiate for the Select Committee to consider.

Mr. Cash *rose*—

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Kent (Mr. Rowe) raised the question of staffing for the Committee. He is right to draw attention to the fact that there will be a work load involved. It is a matter for the House authorities, not for me.

Several hon. Members stressed the importance of the Committee getting out into Kent and other parts of the country. My experience with the Joint Consultative Committee, which has met in Kent, is that that is the most effective way to get to know what is going on.

My hon. Friend the Member for Skipton and Rippon (Mr. Watson) referred to those who wish to petition in favour of the Bill and those who wish to make their support for the Bill known in Kent because of the jobs that will be created as a result of it. I think that it is worth recording that the Kent Export Association says:

"the Channel tunnel is a major way of stimulating Britain's export potential. It will bring about a major improvement of business potential in the County and give a much needed fillip to the industrial infrastructure of Kent."

There are quite a lot of people in Kent whose voices have not perhaps been heard at this stage, but there are still many people in Kent who are interested in the jobs that the tunnel can bring. Even those who are unemployed in areas of high unemployment, such as the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South, may look with slight jaundice at his opposition to the tunnel when they see the jobs that will be created in the ports over the next two years as the construction proceeds. I hope that he will feel suitably embarrassed when the time comes.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr. Mitchell: I beg to move,

That three be the Quorum of the Committee.

Mr. Speaker: With this, it will be convenient to debate Amendments (h) and (i).

Mr. Mitchell: This sentence merely lays down the quorum of the Committee as being three of its members. This closely follows the conventions. "Erskine May" says that a quorum is usually fixed at three where the Committee consists of 11 members or fewer. Hon. Members will recall from the early hours of this morning that it was decided that the membership of the Committee considering the Bill should be set at nine, which we consider to be the right size. We hope that more than three hon. Members will choose to attend the Committee's proceedings. However, we do not consider that there is a case for departing from the established proportions. I hope that the House will accept that.

8.46 am

Mr. Eric Forth (Mid-Worcestershire): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Minister, who, throughout the long proceedings, has responded to the contributions of hon. Members with unfailing patience, humour and courtesy. I am delighted to be able to put that on record. We all appreciate the way in which he has handled this sometimes difficult and certainly lengthy debate.

We come now to the last paragraph of the motion concerning a not unimportant matter, the quorum of the Committee. At the outset I took refuge in the Oxford dictionary to establish what the word "quorum" meant, so as to establish a frame of reference. The definition is straightforward. It is:

"A fixed number of members of any body . . . whose presence is necessary for the proper or valid transaction of business."

When we come to the precedents available to us in the House, the matter becomes slightly more complex. We have before us several precedents covering a number of different types of Committee, which do slightly different work. For example, "Erskine May" says on page 674:

"The quorum of all standing committees except the Scottish Grand Committee is seventeen or one third of the number of its members, excluding the chairman, whichever is the less".

The quorum of a Select Committee is set out on page 692. It is

"fixed by the House in reference to each particular case, and if no quorum has been fixed, the committee cannot transact business unless all the members are present."

The guidance goes on in some detail, most of which I was going to give to the House, but I shall not do so in view of the late hour. Suffice it to say that considerable flexibility is allowed for the quorum for Select Committees. We should pay attention to this, because my hon. Friend the Minister was right to look to precedents for the Committee. I wanted to use this example to illustrate that it is by no means a foregone conclusion that the quorum of a Committee should necessarily be set at three. The matter becomes yet more important if we move on to consider the provisions for the Committee on Unopposed Bills, for example, where the quorum of the Committee is set at three.

On the other hand, if we consider the hybrid Bill procedure, we get into much more interesting territory. There is provision in some Committees, and some cases before the House have given rise to difficulty, where proceedings cannot be allowed to go on when more than one member is absent. That points us in a completely different direction and leads us to question whether a quorum of three, as provided for in the motion, will be sufficient for a Bill of the complexity that we have come to realise in the past few hours.

We are dealing with matters that are quasi-legislative or quasi-judicial. They are controversial matters. We are certainly dealing with a Bill where much evidence and material will be put before the Commiteee. I wish to put the first part of my argument about the adequacy of a quorum of three upon that basis.

Mr. Lawrence: Perhaps my hon. Friend could help us with one of the problems which are likely to arise and which we have canvassed during the night. It will be difficult for the nine members of the Committee, as we have now agreed, to acquaint themselves with details of the various petitions and to travel around the country, and possibly to France. There will be real difficulty in getting

a quorum of three who will be those best briefed on the particular matters. I would be grateful if my hon. Friend would apply his mind to that problem, as it is bothering all of us.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. and learned Friend. With his typical incisiveness, he has pre-empted a matter with which I wanted to deal. Suffice it to say that this is part of the problem of the quorum of three. I hope that the Minister has an open mind on the matter. Perhaps he would give thought to the extent to which a quorum of three would be able to cover the complexity and breadth and depth of the matters, especially where the Committee may intinerant, with changes in the members available from which to form a quorum. At that time the matter becomes even more crucial and important.

Mr. David Ashby (Leicestershire, North-West): My hon. Friend will know that I had hoped to speak but have not done so because of the lateness of the hour. I am grateful to him for giving way.

My great interest is in the civil liberties aspect of the measure. Has my hon. Friend considered the fact that the quorum is so low that it will create an injustice, as so many petitioners wish to give evidence? The same people will not be hearing the evidence. They will only read it and will not be able to see the people concerned. They will not visit the places that will be affected. The quorum is too low. That affects civil liberties and it will cause injustice.

Mr. Forth: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. The point that we have reached in these proceedings illustrates the fact that the matter requires all the time that can be given to it.

I am indebted to my hon. Friends and to you, Mr. Speaker. I shall not prolong my remarks, although I regret that, because the matter that we are debating is of equal importance with the others.

I shall be interested to hear the Minister's view, as will my hon. Friends who have intervened, on whether a quorum as low as three will be sufficient to carry and sustain the breadth and depth of material that the Select Committee will be required to consider. Will he consider the point that the Committee will meet in different places and that there will therefore be great pressure on the Committee members? Many hon. Members have emphasised that Committee members will have considerable other commitments. They will already be under stress and strain and may have to sacrifice some of the recess.

In view of those factors, as well as the fact that they will have to deal with technical matters and legal complexities, and also matters environmental, all of which will be controversial, it is vital that the quorum of the Committee is set at a level sufficiently high to reflect and deal with their complexity. My plea to my hon. Friend is that he considers the amendment in my name and in the names of other hon. Members to raise the number of the quorum, because five members would be in a better position to handle the matter and to discharge the work of the Committee effectively, rather than place an inordinate strain on what may be only three members forming a quorum of the Committee at any one time. I hope that my hon. Friend will be able to give some words of encouragement to us and to move some little way in helping us in that respect.

8.56 am

Mr. Simon Hughes: I endorse the request made to the Minister of State by the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth). It is clear that there is a great keenness that people with special competence in technical and other areas are represented on the Committee. It is also clear that the Committee will have a large amount of work to do. I think that in the interests of justice and fairness, which is the theme of tonight's efforts to get the procedure as acceptable as possible, it is desirable that the quorum for such a unique, exceptional, wide-ranging and far-reaching Bill, in terms of its local and national impact, should be higher rather than lower. The figure of five would seem to be an acceptable compromise.

The Minister will be aware that people who do not turn up before Select Committees are summoned to do so, and are reported to the House. Select Committees are not committees at which people do not normally attend. We could protect the interests of the Committee, the reputation of the House and the concerns of the petitioners by upping the quorum level to five, if not to six. I ask the Minister to be responsive and positive to the amendment tabled in the names of the hon. Member for Mid-Worcestershire and others.

8.57 am

Mr. David Mitchell: I am sorry to disappoint my hon. Friend the Member for Mid-Worcestershire (Mr. Forth), but I must say to him that the quorum of three members proposed by the Government follows the convention established by "Erskine May". I quote from page 692:

"The quorum of a select committee is fixed by the House in reference to each particular case, and if no quorum has been fixed, the committee cannot transact business unless all the members are present

The quorum is usually fixed at three when the committee consists of eleven members or less"

In this case, the number of members is as low as nine. It is well inside the figure of 11. Three is the normal quorum for a hybrid Bill. Naturally, the Government hope that more than three Members will be present on what undoubtedly will be an important, interesting and historic Committee.

However, in view of the problems experienced earlier in the Session regarding the Felixstowe Dock and Railway Bill, the Government consider that it would be undesirable to establish a quorum larger than the norm. The risk is that having an over-large quorum could stultify the work of the Committee, because it might enable those on the Committee who were not in favour of the tunnel to bring its work to a halt by not attending the Committee. I hope that my hon. Friend will accept that the pattern we are suggesting is the right one.

The Government are firmly opposed to amendments (h) and (i).

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That the Bill be committed to a Select Committee of nine Members to be nominated by the Committee of Selection.

Ordered,

That there shall stand referred to the Select Committee—

(a) any Petition against the Bill presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office at any time not later than 17th June, or, in a case where the Petitioner is a single individual, at any time not later than 27th June, and

(b) any Petition which has been presented by being deposited in the Private Bill Office and in which the

[Mr. David Mitchell]

Petitioners complain of any amendment as proposed in any Petition against the Bill or in the filled-up Bill or of any matter which has arisen during the progress of the Bill before the said Committee,

being a Petition in which the Petitioners pray to be heard by themselves, their Counsel or Agents:

That, notwithstanding the practice of the House that appearances on Petitions against an opposed Private Bill be required to be entered at the first meeting of the Committee on the Bill, in the case of any such Petitions as are mentioned in sub-paragraph *(a)* above which are not presented before the first meeting of the Committee, the Committee shall appoint a day after 27th June on which it will require appearances on those Petitions to be entered.

Ordered,-

That any Petitioner whose Petition stands referred to the Select Committee shall, subject to the Rules and Orders of the House and to the Prayer of his Petition, be entitled to be heard by himself, his Counsel or Agents upon his Petition provided that it is prepared and signed in conformity with the Rules and Orders of the House, and the Members in charge of the Bill shall be entitled to be heard by his Counsel or Agents in favour of the Bill against that Petition.

Ordered,

That the Committee have power to sit notwithstanding any adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place within the United Kingdom, and to report from day to day the Minutes of the Evidence taken before it.

Ordered,

That three be the Quorum of the Committee.

Channel Tunnel [Money]

Queen's Recommendation having been signified—

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Channel Tunnel Bill, it is expedient to authorise—

(1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any sums required to meet expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State—

(a) in making payments for land vested in or acquired by him under that Act;

(b) for the purpose of or in connection with the discharge by the Intergovernmental Commission or the Safety Authority of their functions under the Treaty;

(c) by virtue of provisions of that Act authorising the Secretary of State, in certain circumstances, to maintain the tunnel system if construction stops before it is completed, or (as the case may be) to manage, operate and maintain the tunnel system or such part of it as it is practicable to operate up to the end of the period of three months beginning with the date of the expiry or termination of the Concession;

(d) in making payments for the purpose of restoring any land in pursuance of that Act;

(e) for the purpose of or in connection with the construction of the A20 improvement works;

(f) in making any payments of compensation that fall under any provision of that Act to be made by him; and

(g) in meeting any obligations or exercising any rights to which he is or from time to time becomes subject or entitled in pursuance of the Treaty or the Concession, being obligations or rights arising in connection with the tunnel system;

(2) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any increase attributable to that Act—

(a) in the sums payable out of money so provided under any other enactment; and

(b) in the administrative expenses of any government department;

(3) The payment of any sums into the Consolidated Fund;

and in this Resolution expressions to which a meaning is given for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Channel Tunnel Bill have the same meaning as in that Act. — *[Mr. Peter Lloyd.]*

9 am

Mr. Michael Brown (Brigg and Cleethorpes): I am sorry to detain the House and I shall try not to be too long, especially in view of the horoscope which appears in today's *Daily Mail* for my birthday sign, which I shall read briefly without, I hope, incurring your wrath, Mr. Speaker. It states:

"It is difficult to know where to place your energy today. If you meet unexpected hazards then prepare for delays. Do not try to have an early night."

I shall try to follow precisely the last part of that advice.

There is one slightly worrying aspect of the money resolution to which I should like to draw the attention of my hon. Friend the Minister of State. Subsection (1)*(c)* states;

"by virtue of provisions of that Act authorising the Secretary of State, in certain circumstances, to maintain the tunnel system if construction stops before it is completed, or (as the case may be) to manage, operate and maintain the tunnel system or such part of it as is practicable to operate up to the end of the period of three months beginning with the date of the expiry or termination of the Concession;"

My worry, bearing in mind the assurances that we have received on many occasions from my right hon. and hon. Friends to the effect that the tunnel is to be constructed out of private funds — something which is much to be welcomed — lies with paragraph *(c)*, where it is suggested that, in the event of the private companies being

unable to complete the tunnel, the Government would be given powers under the money resolution to pick up the tab. It has been stressed to us throughout the debate, both inside and outside the House, that the financing of the Channel tunnel will come from private funds.

Those who want to see the Bill enacted, which the Government do, and the tunnel constructed and brought to fruition want to ensure that the companies have sufficient resources to enable them to complete the project without having recourse to public funds. There is an intimation in paragraph *(c)*, however, that the companies may not have the financial resources to do that and may find themselves faced with the prospect of having to stop constructing the tunnel if they are unable to raise sufficient funds over the construction period. In those circumstances, public moneys would have to be directed to the project. I hope that my hon. Friend will take up these issues when he replies.

Mr. Greg Knight (Derby, North): One way round the problem would be for the companies concerned to be obliged to enter into an insurance bond so that if any difficulties arose, moneys—not public moneys—would be available to maintain the tunnel.

Mr. Brown: I feel sure that the companies will try to do precisely that. I should like to know whether the Government have considered the possibility that, notwithstanding any insurance bonds that the companies might take out, there could be the possibility under paragraph *(c)* of a failuere and the Government having the power to pick up the tab.

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. John Moore): I hesitate to intervene, but in so far as my hon. Friend is addressing himself to the money resolution and my hon. Friend the Minister of State is about to respond, he might care to agree with me—I am sure that most hon. Members will — that we have had most extraordinary and outstanding contributions of exceptional courtesy from my hon. Friend the Minister of State throughout this long series of debates and a display of great stamina.

Mr. Brown: I agree with that absolutely. My hon. Friend the Minister of State has responded fairly and with great patience to all of our legitimate concerns. Whatever view we may take on these issues, we are all most grateful to him. This has been an important series of debates, and we end on an important debate. I am delighted to associate myself with the comments of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. I should be grateful if my hon. Friend the Minister would direct his thoughts to the points that I have raised.

Mr. Kenneth Hind (Lancashire, West): With regard to the financing of the Channel tunnel project, it is important to emphasise that it will be built with private money and with no contributions from the state. Our deliberations on the money resolution are limited to the essentials of any Government Department overseeing this type of scheme, the purchase of land and the financing of the safety authority. My hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown) mentioned financing the tunnel to ensure that it is managed, operated and maintained for a period should construction come to a halt.

My hon. Friend also raised the possibility of some form of bond. If because of heavy costs or unforeseen engineering difficulties the whole of the burden of the programme was thrust upon the taxpayer, the one thing which the invitation of funding from the private sector sought to avoid would occur. I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Minister of State are considering that matter and will ensure that the public interest is properly protected.

On behalf of my colleagues, I echo the Secretary of State's comments and I thank the Minister for his unfailing courtesy in his dealings with us throughout the night.

9.7 am

Mr. Mitchell: I can well understand that my hon. Friends are in a state of perplexity about the money resolution, because, after all, we had spent many long hours here saying that there would be no public expenditure involved in the construction of the tunnel. It is understandable if hon. Members wonder why the money resolution is required.

The principal reason for the resolution is that we have included in the project the building of the extension of the M20/A20 from Folkestone halfway to Dover. My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Dover (Mr. Rees), who has participated so much in our debates on the matter, is familiar with the importance of the road. It is the bypass for Capel-le-Ferne and is of crucial importance in view of the amount of traffic which is likely to be generated during construction. Apart from that, as I have mentioned to my hon. Friend the Member for Thanet, South (Mr. Aitken) on many occasions, ferry traffic will continue to increase between now and 1993 when the tunnel opens. For that reason, it is important that the extensions be carried out to enable traffic to get to Dover using the M20 and to Folkestone and its ferry services.

Mr. Hind: Will my hon. Friend consider the question of safeguarding the public interest should the Eurotunnel consortium find itslf in financial difficulties or should the public be faced with an enormous bill for completing and maintaining the tunnel? Will he consider ways of safeguarding the public interest, perhaps through a bond or insurance policy? What does he have in mind?

Mr. Mitchell: I will help my hon. Friend, who has asked about two precise circumstances: what happens if the company fails before construction is complete, or after it is complete. If the project fails during construction—clause 25 deals with this—the Government will be able to maintain the works. That is not as extraordinary as it sounds because that is exactly what we have done with the old 1973 workings.

Mr. Bill Walker: Will my hon. Friend advise the House whether, if the company developing the tunnel is unable to complete the work and the Government must intervene with public money, the Government are in effect nationalising and taking over the tunnel?

Mr. Mitchell: I can reassure my hon. Friend on that score, and it is perfectly understandable that he should take that view. If the project fails and the lenders do not find another concessionaire to complete, it will be mothballed. The equity interest put in by the participating shareholders will be lost. In that case, a receiver would undoubtedly be appointed on behalf of the lenders, and he would seek to find an alternative concessionaire to complete the tunnel.

[Mr. Mitchell]

The premise on which the Government have supported the project is that we are satisfied that the financial requirements laid on the concessionaire will ensure that completion can take place without any risk that it cannot.

The event of the project failing after it is complete is covered by clause 26. The Government will be able to operate it for three months, the concessionaires will not benefit from that, and the Government will take the revenues from road and rail traffic. Moreover—this is important to the point about nationalisation—this power is conditional on clause 27, in that it can be used only if the Secretary of State is satisfied that there is a reasonable prospect of a new concession being negotiated in the near future. If he is not so satisfied, there will be no attempt to continue the operation.

Mr. Albert McQuarrie (Banff and Buchan): It cannot be overstressed that the Government have investigated the financial provisions for the tunnel so thoroughly that there is almost no possibility that the venture will fail. Therefore, any comments on the possibility of failure are purely hypothetical and extremely unlikely.

Mr. Mitchell: My hon. Friend is putting into my mouth somewhat more than I said. It is for the promoters to satisfy the investors that the project is viable and that the investors should put their money into it. The investors include Japanese and other foreign sources, pension funds, City institutions and the like. The Government do not give an imprimatur which gives a Government guarantee, Government audit, or Government certification that the project is viable.

It is for the promoters to persuade the investors, just as any promoter in any other private project would have to persuade investors before the money could be raised for the project to go ahead. We would not have reached this point if we thought that the promoters were unable to persuade the investors of that. The promoters still have to do that and the matter should not be taken for granted.

Mr. David Harris (St. Ives): My hon. Friend has allayed our fears about nationalisation on this side of the Channel, but has he considered the possibility, remote as it might be, that, in the event of failure after completion, the French Government will step in and nationalise the whole enterprise from their end? Has it crossed the mind of my hon. Friend what his reaction would be in that hypothetical situation?

Mr. Mitchell: The company structure and the agreements between us and the French could not allow that situation to arise. The administrative costs of the two Governments would be covered by a single annual payment of 3 million ECUs—about £2 million—shared equally between the United Kingdom and France. In practice, the cost of the inter-Government commission and the safety authority would be variable from year to year. If the project fails and the sites have to be restored, the cost will fall on the Government, but the Government will have a claim on the material of the tunnel system to set against that cost. I hope that that reassures my hon. Friends.

Mr. William Cash (Stafford): Does my hon. Friend agree that this important debate has been conducted on a serious note and that the Opposition have not been here? The press should note that we have been debating this seriously throughout the night and the Opposition have been asleep the whole time.

Mr. Mitchell: Before the debate started last night, there was some talk of a waffle debate to take up time. What has become increasingly apparent throughout the debate is the serious way in which the House has addressed itself to the important and detailed matters of the Channel tunnel project and the arrangements for the Select Committee. The House will feel that, with the passing of the money resolution, which I now recommend to hon. Members, a good night's work has been done for the benefit of the country as a whole.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Ordered,

That Mr. Secretary Moore be discharged from the Committee of Public Accounts and Mr. Norman Lamont be added to the Committee.—*[Mr. Cope.]*

Shipbuilding and Shiprepairing Industries (Southampton)

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—*[Mr. Durant.]*

9.17 am

Mr. Christopher Chope (Southampton, Itchen): I am grateful for the opportunity to raise the problems of the shipbuilding and shiprepair industries in Southampton. These industries currently provide employment for several thousand people, although sadly several thousand jobs have been lost over recent years. They play a vital role in the community. Those who work in these industries in Southampton have served the nation well. I do not wish to set out a long list of achievements, but it is worth remembering how, only about four years ago, all the stops were pulled out by people working in the shiprepair industry in Southampton to prepare the task force for the Falklands.

The successful privatisation last year of Vosper Shiprepairers and Vosper Thornycroft has ensured that the dark days of nationalisation are now in the past. In those days, as fast as Vosper Thornycroft made profits on its warship building, much of it from exports, those profits were creamed off and used to prop up surplus merchant shipbuilding capacity in loss-making yards. Employees in Southampton felt frustrated as their pay was held down by national negotiations. They were victims of drift as British Shipbuilders delayed its difficult decisions and jeopardised the profitable parts of its industry. I despair that the Labour party still believes that the profitable warship yards should be used to sustain the loss-making merchant yards. However, that is what the right hon. and learned Member for Monklands, East (Mr. Smith) said in as recent a debate as that which was held on 21 May last.

The problems of Vosper Thornycroft (UK) Ltd. are the ones to which I should particularly like to refer. I am very pleased that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) is here, because the main works are in his constituency, although it is fair to say that the majority of its employees are my constituents. Since privatisation in November 1985 Vosper Thornycroft has been employing about 1,700 people in Southampton. It is unique among British warship building yards, in that it supports a strong export effort and has consistently obtained about half of its work load from exports. Its exports in the last five years total about £240 million, and its current export work is valued at £90 million. It includes fast strike craft for Kenya and Oman, refits for Indonesia, simulators for Spain and worldwide orders for stabilisers.

Over recent years, however, Vosper Thornycroft's greatest success has been in its development and production of glass reinforced plastic mine counter-measure vessels. About three quarters of the Southampton work force are directly or indirectly engaged on these projects. It has been the lead yard for the Hunter class and has received orders for 11 of the 13 vessels in that class, the last one of which is nearing completion. The productivity achieved has been dramatic. The most recent vessel was built with 55 per cent. of the man hours that the first one required.

In 1982, Vosper Thornycroft was selected to undertake the detailed design of the new GRP single role minehunter, the first of which is now being built. The single role minehunter basic design contract report in 1983 concluded that orders for the next four in the class would be placed in the spring of 1987, to be built sequentially at six month intervals, with two ships per year thereafter. This programme has remained unaltered since then, the expectation being that on the launch of the last of the Hunter class, work on the second of the single role minehunters would start, but rumours are now circulating, which have not been denied, that the Ministry of Defence is thinking of putting back the single role minehunter programme. If that were to happen, it would be catastrophic.

May I spell out to my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State the reasons why that would be shortsighted and pound foolish. I ask him to have particular regard to the relatively small savings that could accrue to the Ministry of Defence and to what would be jeopardised by the deferment. A one-year deferment would save the Government £7 million in the first year and £16 million in the second, but it would result in at least 650 additional redundancies and the break-up of experienced, specialist teams of men. Quite apart from the loss of productive efficiency, the Ministry of Defence would incur additional costs over the protracted period of about £9 million. Equally crucial and relevant is the fact that the single role minehunter has outstanding export potential. I welcome the strong emphasis on export potential as a key part of procurement policy that is contained in the latest defence White Paper. The Belgian navy and the Spanish navy are already interested in the single role minehunter, and there is no doubt that many other countries are also interested in it.

The United Kingdom must not throw away its pre-eminent position. It would be a false economy of the highest order were the single role minehunter programme to be allowed to slip. It is not possible, in my view, to exaggerate the dire consequences for Vosper Thornycroft and its employees were that to happen.

I have taken up a lot of time on the issue of the single role minehunter, because I am far from certain that the Government appreciate how crucial it is. I am sure that my hon. Friend will expect me to refer also to the negotiations over the frigates for Pakistan. I hope that he will be able to emphasise in his reply all the work that the Government have done and are doing to try to secure this contract, which would safeguard existing jobs and generate up to 1,000 more jobs in Southampton. The negotiations with Pakistan seem to have been continuing for years. Indeed, the letter of intent was signed in September 1984.

There is now a strong feeling in Southampton that we would have won a Ministry of Defence frigate order but for the prospects in Pakistan. We do not ask for special favours, merely for fair and open competitive tendering for Ministry of Defence orders. If there is a prospect of losing, or not winning, the Pakistan order because of changes of mind by the Pakistan Government, I urge upon the Government the need to ensure that a frigate-building programme can be maintained in the south of England.

The issue of whether tenders are fairly assessed is crucial. In the United States, unsuccessful tenderers are invited to what is effectively a debriefing to be told the terms of the successful bid and why their bids were not successful. In that way, justice can be seen to be done. Many people in Southampton do not believe that justice was seen to be done when the previous frigate orders were

[Mr. Christopher Chope]

placed, and I should be grateful if my hon. Friend could assure me that the lowest bidder for the next frigate orders will win the contract.

Similar principles apply to shiprepair in Southampton, which is dominated by two firms—Thew Engineering and the newly privatised Vosper Shiprepairers. I expect that both firms will be bidding for the refit of the Royal Yacht Britannia, and I seek an assurance that price and quality will be the sole criteria used for the award of that contract.

During the past few months there has been a sad development in Southampton with the demise of Vosper Hovermarine, which has been in the hands of a receiver and is still the subject of an attempted rescue package, perhaps involving an American company. But that company, which only three years ago employed 500 people, now employs only 20. It operates in the forefront of technology with its surface effect ships. It was almost wholly oriented towards exports and won the Queen's award for export achievement in 1984. It has not received much assistance from the Government. I merely mention that to draw attention to the contrast with the way in which Government money has been forthcoming for other activities in the shipbuilding world.

Sotonians are not given to hyperbole or exaggeration. They are easy-going and even-tempered and make loyal and efficient employees. That is why so many of them have been attracted to work in Wapping. All they ask is that they be treated fairly. Above all, they must not be forgotten. At a time when shipbuilding problems in the north have been the focus of attention, I hope that raising these vital issues concerning Southampton will give the Government a bit of balance in their approach to the issues and help them to realise that Southampton has also suffered from the problems of shiprepair and shipbuilding. It must not be forgotten. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh wishes to speak, so although it is only 9.28am, I shall sit down.

Mr. Nigel Spearing (Newham, South): On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Am I right in thiking that if this debate continues after 9.30 am, all the business set down for Friday, including the debate on the motion of my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), will not take place? An odd 18 minutes or so may prevent Friday's business, which is of interest to House and the public, from being debated.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. It is only a small point, but the first debate on referring the Channel Tunnel Bill to a Select Committee began just after 10 pm and continued until about 4.30 am. That is a long time to discuss whether there should be nine or 11 hon. Members on the Select Committee. For the first time, as far as I can recall, a Government Whip did not move the closure on a Government measure. If a Government Whip had been prepared to move the closure, it would undoubtedly have been accepted by the Chair. That means that the filibuster — to use a loose term — or the long debate was organised not just by Tory Back Benchers but by the Government.

Several Hon. Members *rose—*

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Franks.

Mr. Cecil Franks (Barrow and Furness): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. Like the hon. Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell), I, too, have an interest in the business projected for Friday. But, unlike the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr. Skinner), I was present during those four or five hours of debate to which he referred, and I accept the sincerity of those Kent Members who argued their case. I hope that the hon. Member for Linlithgow will also accept that that was so.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett (Denton and Reddish): Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. My hon. Friend the Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) raised the original point of order over the loss of Friday's business. I think you will recall that on your appointment to the Chair, you made it clear that you felt you had a responsibility to look after the rights of Back Benchers. As Friday's business was won on the private Members' motions Ballot, will you be considering what steps to take to ensure that time is found for Back Benchers to exercise the rights conferred on them by the House? Whether those rights were denied them by deliberate Government manoeuvre or merely by Conservative Back-Bench manoeuvre, there would seem to be considerable duty on the House to find another occasion for my hon. Friend the Member for Linlithgow (Mr. Dalyell) to move his motion.

Mr. Speaker: I confirm to the hon. Member for Newham, South (Mr. Spearing) that at 9.31 we are still discussing Thursday's business, and therefore Friday's business cannot proceed.

It is perfectly true, as I have made plain, that an hon. Member who has won a place in the ballot has a right to move his motion, provided that it is in order. In this case it was in order, and the hon. Member concerned would have had every right to move it. The House will recognise that throughout these proceedings it has been the concern of the Chair to ensure that speeches are in order. Although some of the debates may have been rather long, they were in order, and I have no jurisdiction to go beyond that.

Mr. Bennett: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I accept that there can be no criticism of the debates that took place. But if a manoeuvre results in the small number of days that are set aside for private Benchers' motions being reduced, there would seem to be some duty on the Chair at least to try to influence events so that an alternative date may be found for the debate on those motions.

Mr. Speaker: But I do not have that authority. The House itself decides how many days should be set aside for Back-Bench motions and Back-Bench time generally. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Several Hon. Members *rose——*

Mr. Speaker: Mr. Bennett.

Mr. Bennett: As the House has passed a resolution that a certain number of days should be set aside for private Members' Bills and motions, does not the Chair have some responsibility to ensure that it is carried out?

Mr. Speaker: Unfortunately, the Chair has no responsibility for that. I say again that my main concern is always to ensure that fairness is maintained in the Chamber and that, in particular, the rights and interests of Back Benchers are protected. Sadly, I have no authority to do what the hon. Gentleman wishes me to do.

9.34 am

Sir David Price (Eastleigh): Hon. Members have been raising points of order about the rights of Back Benchers, but my poor old hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) has now lost some of the time allotted to him for his half hour Adjournment debate. But with his permission, and that of the House, I shall reinforce what my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen has said. As he pointed out, the main shipyard in the Southampton area is in my constituency.

I shall stress in particular the points that my hon. Friend made about the importance of the single role mine hunter. We require assurances from the Ministry of Defence about the ordering programme for it. I remind my hon. Friend the Minister that the basic design contract report on the single role mine hunter, which came out in 1983, concluded that after the order for the lead ship—the first of class—had been started orders for 02-05 would be placed in the spring of 1987, and that thereafter ships would be required at the rate of two a year. It is vital that that programme should be maintained. If it is not maintained, my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen has pointed out some of the penalties that we would pay not only in employment but in maintaining the integrity of our design teams.

The order for the single role mine hunter differs from many other naval orders in that it involves new technology in which Vosper Thornycroft leads, I hesitate to say the world, but certainly Europe. From an export point of view, it is essential that it should be enabled to maintain the programme's momentum. It is not a queston of there being competing tenders. I understand that the Ministry of Defence is quite satisfied about the ability and integrity of the ships that Vosper Thornycroft builds, but the problems stems from cash flow problems within the Ministry.

Whatever else is "phased back"—I think that that is the phrase used in the Ministry of Defence—I ask that it should not be the single role mine hunter programme. At this late—or is it early—hour, that is the only point that I wish to make in reinforcing the admirable arguments deployed by my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen.

9.36 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (Mr. John Butcher): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Mr. Chope) on his tenacity in staying with us for so long in order to defend the interests of his constituents, particularly those who work directly or indirectly in the shipbuilding, shiprepair and, indeed, boat building industry. We have shared debates on this sort of topic several times, and he will know that we have have discovered through the economists that about 80 per cent. of the United Kingdom's manufacturing output can be defined as internationally tradeable whereas only about 18 per cent. of service sector activity is so tradeable.

Therefore, any debate that tackles the question of the maintenance of a strong manufacturing base is to be welcome, as that is at the heart of Britain's economic performance and the quality of life of our people. My hon. Friend will know that Britain's share of the world's traded manufactures fell from 14 per cent. in 1964 to about 8 per cent. in 1979. The CBI has told us that each 1 per cent. represents a loss of about 250,000 jobs. Thus, the framework against which my hon. Friend has sought this debate on behalf of Southampton's work force is very important. I know that my hon. Friend also holds very strong views on the matter.

I shall, of course, deal with the single role mine hunter, but I begin by saying that the refit of Brittania is under consideration. As my hon. Friend will expect me to say, it is, however, a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence. But, as my hon. Friend the Member for Eastleigh (Sir D. Price) reminded me, I shall draw it, among other things, to the attention of my right hon. Friend.

Understandably, my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen began the major part of his speech with a resumé of the position at Vosper Thornycroft. It is the largest of the Southampton shipbuilders and one of Britain's premier warship yards. It employs more than 2,700 people in Southampton and Portsmouth. Vosper Thornycroft in many ways exemplifies the attributes that are the strength of Southampton.

The company has been in Southampton since the beginning of the century, when John I. Thornycroft and Co. Ltd. of Chiswick moved to the city. Thornycrofts merged with Vosper and Co. Ltd. of Portsmouth in 1966. Since then, Vosper Thornycroft's main yard has been Woolston in Southampton, where it can build conventional steel hull ships up to 8,000 tonnes, such as frigates, and glass reinforced plastic vessels such as the ultra modern mine counter measures vessels and the single role mine hunters. The order for the first of class single role mine hunter was placed only last year.

Vosper Thornycroft can claim 20 years service to 30 navies. By any yardstick, that is an impressive record. Part of the company's strength has lain in its ability to adapt and to create designs to suit the individual prefrences of overseas customers. Consequently, more than half of its turnover comes from exports of ships and from its products and support services divisions. While Vosper Thornycroft is indeed a shipbuilder, it is much more. In a way typical of Southampton, it has branched out into associated businesses, such as the design and manufacture of hydraulic power equipment, the supply of support services such as training, technical handbooks, maintenance and spares, and the design and manufacture of high technology electronic control equipment for the marine and energy industries. Those products include training simulators, distribution systems, surveillance systems and machinery controls.

Vosper Thornycroft has an impressive past, and, I am sure, an exciting future, but I am aware that, in its main line of business—warship building—it faces critical order problems which rightly worry my hon. Friends. As my hon. Friend the Member for Itchen said, the company is also greatly affected by changes in defence expenditure. Major delays in orders for further single role mine hunters could have a serious impact on its ability to maintain its advanced GRP capability. I say that in the knowledge that the company's only competitor in that area has already had to mothball its similar facility. That presents a pointed and timely example.

I congratulate my hon. Friend on seeking this moment to speak about the maintenance of a strategic capability in the United Kingdom industry which his constituents understandably want to be maintained. The order for frigates for Pakistan has been the subject of prolonged discussions. Throughout, the Government have given Vosper Thornycroft all possible support. My hon. Friend

[Mr. John Butcher]

will appreciate my reluctance to say anything that may prejudice the negotiations, but I can assure him that we are continuing in the hope of securing the contract.

Although Vosper Thornycroft is a company in a so-called traditional sector, it is operating at the forefront of technology. It is no wonder that British Shipbuilders had keen competition when it put the company on the market last year. I am sure that the whole House will wish the winning management buy-out team, led by the managing director, Mr. Peter Usher, every success in the future, especially in the immediate future, bearing in mind the state of current orders.

Vosper Ship repairers Ltd. is part of the equation of capability in Southampton. I should like to take this opportunity to commend the courage, enterprise and determination that fuelled the Vosper Thornycroft management. It is shared by others in Southampton, including others in the troubled shipbuilding and shiprepair industries. Vosper Shiprepairers was also bought from British Shipbuilders last year by its top management. This time last year, there was a strong possibility that Vosper Shiprepairers would have to be closed, but its top management—Mr. John Collins and Mr. Colin Johnson—had confidence in their ability to win orders once freed from the shackles of state ownership. After a difficult start, their confidence is being shown to be well founded, as Vosper Shiprepairers has already secured several major orders, most notably the National Environmental Research Council's scientific research vessel and the ship, previously HMS Hydra, which is being refurbished for the Indonesian navy. Those orders have reversed its recent fortunes, and I am sure that the House will join me in wishing Vosper Shiprepairers every success in the future.

I recognise that there are special difficulties faced by Vosper Hovermarine which, with its parent company, Vosper plc, has recently been put into receivership. I was naturally very sorry to learn of the problems facing this marine and engineering group.

As my hon. Friend knows, significant Government support has been given to the hovercraft activities since 1980, when the hovercraft company was acquired by Vosper plc, and previously. In the mid-1970s the National Research Development Corporation assisted in funancing the development of the company's series of sidewall hovercraft, known as a surface effect ship. More recently, in 1984, the British Technology Group, as successors to the NRDC, agreed to convert into equity in Vosper plc, the £2·2 million of debt owed to it by Vosper Hovermarine in order to help the company's financial position.

In addition, my Department has funded two phases of development of the current 700 series — a sidewall hovercraft of about 600 tonnes designed to operate in high wind conditions. Assistance for a further phase of development was about to be considered when the receivers were appointed.

It has been asked whether more could have been done to save the group from receivership. Although my hon. Friends have not raised the matter, it is a source of prolonged agony for commentators in the area, so I should like to deal with it. The decision to appoint the receivers was a matter for the group's bankers. It appears that neither the bankers nor the shareholders felt able to give the further financial support that would have been necessary to keep the group in business. As ever, this was a commercial decision and, in the circumstances, there was nothing that my Department could do. I suspect that the legislative framework for the type of operation that has been suggested does not exist.

Although the appointment of the receivers will have come as a major disappointment to all involved with the group, I hope that it will prove possible for the receivers to find someone to come forward and acquire the whole hovercraft operation or, at least, the very advanced technology that has been developed. My officials have been in close touch with the directors and with the receivers, and I know that every effort has been made to inform those who may be interested—

The Question having been proposed after Ten o'clock on Thursday evening, and the debate having continued for half an hour, MR. SPEAKER *adjourned the House without Question put, pursuant to the Standing Order.*

Adjourned at thirteen minutes to Ten o'clock am on Friday 6 June 1986.

Written Answers to Questions

Monday 19 May 1986

SCOTLAND

Beekeeping

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will undertake an urgent investigation of the effects of the recent adverse weather on the viability of the beekeeping industry in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: No. It is generally accepted that 1985 was a very poor year for most sectors of the agricultural-horticultural industry, including beekeeping. The problems caused by the adverse weather are worrying for those involved but such reversals are not uncommon and, in the case of beekeeping, have to be seen against bumper crop years such as occurred in Scotland in 1984.

Bilderberg Conference

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the costs to public funds of the policing of the Bilderberg conference.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Conservation

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received from the Countryside Commission about the future and the future extent of the site of special scientific interest affected by the proposed pipeline assembly yard at Tain, Ross-shire.

Mr. Ancram: The Countryside Commission for Scotland has made no representations to my right hon. and learned Friend on this matter. For its interest in the Dornoch firth national scenic area, it has expressed the view to the highland regional council that there are reasons which militate against the development of the site and that it would prefer consent to be withheld and further alternative sites to be investigated. If, however, after due consideration, the regional council considered that planning permission should be given, the commission indicated that it would not wish to have the proposal referred to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Kennedy: asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list and categorise in the *Official Report* each respective section of coastline within the Highland regional council's boundaries over which there exists a planning or development presumption in favour of conservation; and if he will express the total length of coastline so designated as a percentage of the total length of coastline within Highland regional council's boundaries.

Mr. Ancram: The coastal planning guidelines issued by the Scottish Development Department in 1974 classify four parts of the Highland region coastline as preferred development zones (Moray firth, Cromarty firth, Wick area and Thurso area) and the rest of the coastline as a preferred conservation zone. Approximately 90 per cent. of the coastline is within the latter category.

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the ratio of prisoners to prison officers in Scotland.

Mr. John Mackay: On the latest date for which information is kept centrally, there were 5,645 prisoners and 2,645 prison officers, exclusive of governor grades, in the Scottish prison service, giving a ratio of 2·13 to 1.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the average number of hours per day spent by prisoners locked in their cells in Scotland.

Mr. John Mackay: Information is not held centrally in the form requested. Different routines obtain in different establishments and for different categories of prisoner. In general however, convicted prisoners have periods of work, exercise and recreation out of their cells each day. Remand prisoners have a period of exercise and, normally, some recreation each day. The majority of prisoners, remand as well as convicted, take their meals in dining halls rather than in their own cells.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Tanzania

59. **Dame Judith Hart** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about future commitments of aid to Tanzania.

Mr. Raison: Our existing capital aid programme to Tanzania will continue with help on maintaining the Songea-Makambako road and support for the southern regions health project and rural development projects in Lindi-Mtwara and other areas. We also propose to maintain technical co-operation for Tanzanian universities, for English language training and for the Tanzania harbpour authority. In addition, if Tanzania reaches agreement with the IMF on a programme of economic policy changes, I propose to offer fast disbursing balance of payments support over the next two years.

Africa

60. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what plans he has to increase United Kingdom aid to the African continent.

Mr. Raison: Increasing priority is being given to those countries in sub-Saharan Africa where aid can be used effectively. We already have substantial bilateral aid programmes in Africa, and we are a major contributor to increasing multilateral aid programmes.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have any plans to contribute to the International Fund for Agricultural Development's special fund for sub-Saharan Africa.

Mr. Raison: As I told my hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Mr. Chapman) on 21 April at column 17, we currently think it better to help agricultural projects

directly and through the voluntary agencies rather than to contribute extra money to IFAD beyond our share of the recent general replenishment.

Programme Aid

61. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to increase the proportion of the aid budget allocated to programme aid.

Mr. Raison: We have recently been making substantial programme aid commitments in support of IMF and World Bank structural adjustment programmes. The scale of programme aid spending in our aid budget depends on the pace of economic policy reform, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

International Development Association

62. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals have been made by the World Bank for increasing the funding of the International Development Association; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Virtually all donor Governments have affirmed their support for a $12 billion replenishment of IDA. Subject to our share continuing to be 6·7 per cent. and to satisfactory arrangements for the dollar-sterling exchange rate, we are happy to back that total. But the United States' position is crucial to the outcome: I hope that this will be known at the next round of negotiations, probably in July.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Merthyr County Court

52. **Mr. Rowlands** asked the Attorney-General how many sittings of the registrar and deputy registrar are budgeted for in 1986-87 at the Merthyr county court; and what were the figures for 1985-86.

The Solicitor-General: It is expected that the level of registrar sitting days in the current financial year will be broadly the same as for 1985-86. Deputy registrars' sittings are arranged according to need.

Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General how many persons have been prosecuted under the Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983.

The Attorney-General: None. No order has been made under section 8(2) of the Act bringing it into force.

Traffic Accidents (Damages)

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General whether he has plans to introduce legislation to create no-fault liability in respect of actions for damages arising out of road traffic accidents.

The Attorney-General: The Government have no plan to change the existing basis of liability in this way. Such a system would have considerable public expenditure implications and invidiously discriminate between accident victims depending on whether they were injured on the roads or elsewhere.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General how many summonses and writs, respectively, have been issued claiming damages for negligence arising out of road traffic accidents during each of the last five years for which records are available.

The Attorney-General: I regret that this information is not kept separately for road traffic accidents.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General how many, and what percentage of actions claiming damages for road traffic accidents have been settled before reaching trial during each of the last five years for which records are available.

The Attorney-General: I regret that this information is not collected separately for road traffic accidents.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General what he estimates to be the minimum, the average and the maximum legal costs involved in a High Court action for damages arising out of a road traffic accident.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General what he estimates to be the cost to litigants and to the public, respectively, for accidents of negligence arising out of road traffic accidents during the course of any one calendar year.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is not available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General how many, and what percentage of claims, arising out of road traffic accidents which reach trial, succeeded; and how many, and what percentage, failed, respectively, during the last five years for which records are available.

The Attorney-General: Figures for the number of successful and unsuccessful claims for motor traffic accidents after reaching trial are only available for the High Court on an estimated basis, derived from a two-month sample, for 1985. In that year it is estimated that a trial began in 1,140 cases arising from personal injury actions "caused on the roads": in 910 (80 per cent.), judgment was given for the plaintiff; in 60 (5 per cent.) judgment was given for the defendant; 40 (4 per cent.) judgment was given for both; and in 130 cases (11 per cent.) the trial did not proceed to judgment.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General how long he estimates to be the minimum, the average and the maximum time taken between the date of an accident and the dates when a negligence action arising out of that accident is likely to reach trial in the county court or the High Court.

The Attorney-General: Figures are not available in this precise form. However, information collected on a sample basis during 1985 as part of the civil justice review suggests that the average time from incident to trial for all personal injury cases heard in the High Court is between 62 and 64 months, whilst for all personal injury cases heard in the county courts it is 35 months.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney General how long he estimates is the average time between the date of a

judgment for damages awarded to a successful plaintiff in an action for damages arising out of a road accident in a county court or in the High Court, respectively, and the date when the successful sufferer receives those damages.

The Attorney-General: This information is not available, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General whether he will introduce a system whereby sufferers from road traffic accidents in respect whereof liability is admitted by the defendant will receive interim awards of damages, pending trial of their actions.

The Attorney-General: Such a system is already provided by by RSC order 29, rule 10. No further system is in contemplation.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General whether he has carried out an inquiry into the effects of interim awards of damages to sufferers from road traffic accidents whose claims are admitted but in respect whereof the amount of damages is in dispute.

The Attorney-General: No.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General how many, and what percentage of claims for damages arising out of road traffic accidents have been brought by pedestrians, drivers in vehicles and passengers in vehicles, respectively; and how many and what percentage of such claims have succeeded and have failed respectively.

The Attorney-General: This information is not collected, and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General whether he will conduct an inquiry into the accuracy of evidence concerning road traffic accidents, such evidence being given in court a lengthy period of time after the occurrence concerned; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Delay in civil actions for personal injuries is one of the matters being considered by the civil justice review announced by the Lord Chancellor on 6 February 1985. It is difficult to see how an inquiry on the basis indicated by the hon. and learned Member could be mounted or yield conclusive results.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney-General if he will advise Her Majesty to establish a Royal Commission to inquire into the operation of the present system for claims for damages for road accident victims; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury (Cmnd. 7054-I) reported in March 1978. No further inquiry is warranted at this stage.

Mr. Janner asked the Attorney General what information he has about the scope and operation in other countries of the no-fault liability provisions in the law concerning damages for negligence arising out of road traffic accidents; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Volume 3 of the report of the Royal Commission on civil liability and compensation for personal injury (Cmnd. 7054-III) is devoted to an extensive survey of overseas systems of compensation for various injuries, including those sustained in road accidents.

Crown Prosecution Service

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General what level of remuneration the Crown Prosecution Service is offering to barristers for *(i)* a half day's session and *(ii)* a whole day's session in the magistrates' court.

The Attorney-General: The level of remuneration that the Crown prosecution service is at present offering to barristers for a half-day's session of full-list advocacy in the magistrates courts is £60; for a whole-day session, the remuneration is £85. These are minimum rates, and chief Crown prosecutors have discretion to pay higher rates having regard to *(a)* the distance of the nearest barristers' chambers to the court; and *(b)* the level of remuneration prevailing before the establishment of the Crown prosecution service. Further discussions with the Bar on the level of remuneration are envisaged. The Crown prosecution service is only established in the former metropolitan counties outside London and in Northumberland and Durham.

Mr. Michael Brown asked the Attorney-General what is the level of remuneration *(a)* currently paid and *(b)* proposed to be paid by the Crown prosecution service to solicitors who undertake (i) a half day's session and (ii) a whole day's session in the magistrates' court.

The Attorney-General: The level of remuneration currently paid and proposed to be paid by the Crown prosecution service to solicitors who undertake advocacy in magistrates' courts is at the discretion of chief Crown prosecutors. The rates vary from area to area and between different localities within the same area, having regard to local circumstances.

Trials (Statistics)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Attorney-General in what percentage of contested cases there were acquittals in the Crown Courts in England and Wales in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively.

The Attorney-General: The percentage of defendants dealt with in the Crown court in England and Wales who pleaded not guilty to all or some counts, and who are acquitted on all counts to which they pleaded not guilty, was 48 per cent. in 1983, 49 per cent. in 1984 and 49 per cent. in 1985. These figures are published annually in the judicial statistics for the preceding year.

Magistrates

Mr. Hoyle asked the Attorney-General on a ward by ward basis, how many of the magistrates of the petty session districts of Northampton, Peterborough and Swindon, respectively, reside in each ward; and what percentage this is of the total number of magistrates on each bench.

The Attorney-General: The information is not available and could only be ascertained at disproportionate cost.

Oath (Form and Administration)

Mr. Maclennan asked the Attorney-General if he will make a statement on the form and administration of the oath.

The Attorney-General: The form and administration of oaths are laid down in the Oaths Act 1978 and certain other statutes and practice directions.

Offences Outside United Kingdom Jurisdiction

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General if he will list all prosecutions brought in the United Kingdom in the last 10 years in respect of offences committed outside United Kingdom jurisdiction, specifying the nature of the offence or alleged offence, in each case, and the statute under which the prosecution was brought, where appropriate.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply.
The information requested is not collected centrally.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners (Statistics)

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently serving custodial sentences for non-violent offences.

Mr. Mellor: The information about offences held centrally does not identify all prisoners serving sentences for violent offences as defined in schedule 1 to the Criminal Justice Act 1982. It is estimated that on 31 March 1986 about 25,000 prisoners were serving sentences for offences other than violence against the person, rape, buggery and gross indecency, aggravated burglary and robbery.

Licensing Laws

Sir Bernard Braine asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make it his policy not to introduce legislation to relax the licensing laws in England and Wales before publication in full of the findings of the inquiry into the drinking patterns of young people, carried out by the Office of Population, Censuses and Surveys in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I understand that the survey does not deal with the effects of a relaxation in the law on licensing hours. On the timing of legislation, I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Ravensbourne (Mr. Hunt).

Metropolitan Police (Air Surveillance)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the cost of running the Metropolitan police air support unit for 1984-85 and 1985-86.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that the estimated cost of the Metropolitan police air support unit in the financial years 1984-85 and 1985-86 was £1·51 million and £1·38 million respectively.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the photographic surveillance carried out by the Metropolitan police at Grosvenor square, Marble Arch, and Hyde park on demonstrators on 19 April.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that three permanently sited closed circuit television cameras, together with another in a police helicopter, were used to assist in policing this demonstration.

Lancelot George Turnbull

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many times Lancelot George Turnbull had previously absconded from an open prison prior to being sent to Ashwell prison; and what criteria he adopts in deciding to allow a prisoner with a previous record of absconding to be placed for a second time in an open prison;

(2) whether he will make a statement on the criteria which he adopts in deciding whether a man serving a life sentence for a violent crime, including murder, should be sent to an open prison; and what steps he takes to maintain public confidence in this regard;

(3) if he will make a statement on the absconding from Ashwell prison of Lancelot George Turnbull, serving a sentence of life imprisonment for murder.

Mr. Mellor: A life sentence prisoner is considered for transfer to an open prison only after careful assessment in a number of different prisons over a period of years. The advice of the Parole Board is sought in every case and transfer to an open prison is subject to the personal authority of a Minster. As in every decision relating to the progress towards the possible release on life licence of such a prisoner, public safety is the paramount consideration. Each case is considered on its individual merits and transfer to an open prison would not be ruled out solely because of the nature of the prisoner's offence or because of a previous abscond without taking account of other factors, but no life sentence prisoner is transferred to an open prison until he is thought no longer to present any serious risk of re-offending.

Mr. Turnbull was convicted in April 1976 of the murder of a male acquaintance and was sentenced to life imprisonment. When it considered his case in June 1983, The Parole Board recommended his transfer to an open prison with a further review after 12 months in open conditions. This recommendation was accepted and Mr. Turnbull was transferred to Leyhill open prison in September 1983. However, he failed to settle and absconded the following month. He surrendered to the police after four days and was immediately returned to closed prison conditions.

As far as is known, he committed no offences during the period he was unlawfully at large. His case was next considered by the Parole Board in December 1985. The board recommended that Mr. Turnbull should again be tested in open conditions before consideration was given to his suitability for release on life licence and proposed that his case should be reviewed 18 months after his transfer. Having considered all the circumstances of the case, including the previous abscond from Leyhill, my right hon. Friend decided that the recommendation should be accepted. Mr. Turnbull was transferred to Ashwell open prison on 2 April. At about 4.45 am on 2 May, Mr. Turnbull was found to be missing from his room. He had previously been seen by the night patrol at about 3.45 am. The prison was immediately searched and the police were informed as soon as it was apparent that Mr. Turnbull had absconded. He has not so far been apprehended.

News International Plant, Wapping (Police Surveillance)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the extent of

photographic surveillance used by the Metropolitan police from premises near the News International plant at Wapping; and what were the premises used for this purpose, and the nature and intention of this surveillance.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that two cameras, in premises adjacent to the News International printing plant at Wapping, are used to assist in policing demonstrations there.

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1983

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will list the number and nature of non-soccer sporting events which have been designated under the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1983.

Mr. Giles Shaw: None.

Hull Prison

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what *(a)* education, *(b)* training and *(c)* leisure facilities are currently available at Hull prison; and what estimate he has of the time spent per inmate per week in each of these areas;

(2) what estimate he has of the current amount of time spent per week confined in cells for *(a)* prisoners, *(b)* young offenders, and *(c)* those on remand in Hull prison, and of time spent out of the cells on recreation.

Mr. Mellor: This information is not readily available.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners Hull prison was originally intended to cater for; and how many prisoners are currently being held there.

Mr. Mellor: On 9 May 1986, the certified normal accommodation of Her Majesty's prison and remand centre Hull was 329 and its population was 555.

Mr. Sheerman asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether there is a recommended number of prisoners per prison officer; what is *(a)* the national average, *(b)* the average at Lindholme prison and *(c)* the average at Hull prison of prisoners per prison officer; and how many (i) adult prisoners, (ii) young offenders and (iii) people on remand there are in each of these prisons.

Mr. Mellor: The circumstances of establishments differ too greatly to permit a recommended national staff-inmate ratio. The information requested is in the table:

	Staff in post at 1 April 1986 (Prison Officer Class)	*Inmates in custody at 1 April 1986*				*Ratio staff inmates*
		Remand Trial	*Adult prisoners*	*Young offenders*	*Total*	
Hull	255	144	316	36	486	1 : 1·91
Lindholme	143		443	—	443	1 : 3·09
TOTAL	18,887	—	—	—	46,798	*1 : 2·53 †1 : 1·55

* Male.
† Female.

Fines and Maintenance Arrears

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many persons were detained at the last date available for *(a)* non-payment of fines, *(b)* non-payment of maintenance and *(c)* breaches of matrimonial orders.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the table. Breaches of matrimonial orders other than for payment are not separately recorded.

Population of persons committed to custody in prison department establishments in England and Wales for non-payment of fine, maintenance or arrears under an affiliation order: 31 March 1986

Type of committal	*Number of persons**
In default of payment of a fine	520
Non-payment of maintenance	40
Non-payment of arrears under an affiliation order	5

* The figures are those recorded centrally and are approximate: detailed checking would involve disproportionate cost.

Prison Service (Garages)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many garages are owned by Her Majesty's prison service; how many of these are let to prison officers; and how many of these are let to members of the public;

(2) what is his policy on letting garages belonging to Her Majesty's prison service to members of the public resident nearby.

Mr. Mellor: I will reply as soon as possible.

Certification of Death

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to introduce a requirement that all deaths of foster children must be reported to the coroner within 24 hours.

Mr. Mellor: We have no present plans for legislation on this matter. Under the Foster Children Act, the death of a foster child must be notified to the local authority and the person from whom the child was received. If a child is boarded out under the Boarding Out of Children Regulations the foster parents undertake to notify the local authority immediately of a serious occurrence. The register of births, deaths and marriages is required to report to the coroner any death which he has reason to believe was caused by violence or neglect or to have been attended by suspicious circumstances.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in the light of the British Medical Association's report "Deaths in the Community," he has any plans to amend the rules relating to death certification so that in cases where a doctor is unable to verify the cause of death, a certificate of the fact of death is sent to the coroner.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

In the case of a death of any person, a doctor who attended that person during the last illness is required to sign a certificate stating the cause of death to the best of his knowledge and belief. Where no such doctor is available, or where he is unable to give a cause of death or expresses doubts as to the cause of death, the case will be referred to the coroner.

There are no plans at present to amend the legislation relating to death certification in this respect.

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to seek to amend legislation relating to the registration of stillbirths to bring the law into line with the law on registration of other births and deaths.

Mr. Whitney: I have been asked to reply.

While improvements have been made in the certification of stillbirths following the introduction of the new cause of stillbirths certificate on 1 January 1986, there are at present no plans to amend the primary legislation relating to the registration of stillbirths.

Forensic Experts (Accuracy)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will name those forensic experts working for his Department on whose evidence convictions have been secured whose work has subsequenty been shown to have been, on occasion, of doubtful accurancy; and if he will give the dates on which each such person stopped undertaking forensic work for prosecution purposes.

Mr. Hurd: One junior member of the forensic science service has been suspended from court reporting duties since September 1985, following concern about the quality of his work. Two officers were temporarily relieved of court reporting duties in relation to fire examinations only and resumed these duties after their work had been reviewed and they had satisfied their laboratory directors of their competence to undertake such work. These suspensions lasted from December 1983 to May 1985, and February 1985 until May 1985 respectively.

Speeding (A483)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many convictions there have been for speeding on the A483 in the vicinty of Lavister in 1985; what percentage of the vehicles involved were lorries; and what was the average fine.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not available.

Convictions (Agent Provocateur)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of recent new evidence, he will institute an inquiry into police use of an agent provocateur to secure convictions in Wales in 1969; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is not clear from the information provided to which evidence or convictions the hon. Member is referring. I should be willing to consider the matter further if he would provide me with identifying details.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire as to how many police of *(a)* the Wiltshire force and *(b)* other forces were deployed on Salisbury plain in escorting cruise missiles from 7 May to 12 May.

Mr. Giles Shaw: For operational reasons, information of this nature is not disclosed.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Wiltshire as to how many people were arrested by *(a)* military and *(b)* civilian police on Salisbury plain between 7 and 12 May.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable that no arrests were made by the Wiltshire constabulary. 50 people were arrested by the Ministry of Defence police, of whom 12 were later charged with bye-law offences.

Printing Dispute (Wapping)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, since 20 February, officers from forces outside the Metropolitan police district have been placed on standby for mutual aid duties in connection with the current trade dispute at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have been made so far in connection with the current trades dispute at Wapping; if he will give a breakdown of *(a)* the charges laid against those arrested, *(b)* the number of charges that have subsequently been dropped, *(c)* bail conditions imposed by magistrates and *(d)* the number of convictions that there have been; and what sentences have ensued.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I will reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions, and where, road blocks have been used since the trades dispute at the News International plant at Wapping began.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner that roads in the vinicity of the Highway, E1, have been closed on numerous occasions in accordance with directions which he has issued under section 52 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1839.

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the national reporting centre has been activated during the current trade dispute at the News International plant at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Crime Statistics (Tower Hamlets)

Mr. Leighton asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the number of crimes recorded and crimes cleared up in Tower Hamlets, Metropolitan police district H, between January and March; and what were the figures for January to March 1985.

Mr. Mellor: I am informed by the Commissioner of Police for the Metropolis that police in Tower Hamlets in the first quarter of 1985 recorded 5,840 notifiable offences and cleared up 1,176 such offences. Recorded crime figures for the first quarter of 1986 are due to be published next month.

Mental Health Act (Detentions)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps are being taken to ensure that records are being kept of those persons detained under section 136 of the Mental Health Act; and if he intends to issue instructions that such records be kept in those cases where places of safety are found other than in a psychiatric hospital.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Records of persons admitted to hospitals and similar places of safety under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 are maintained by local health authorities. The information is collected centrally by the DHSS and is published annually in "Mental Health Statistics for England." Details of persons detained by the police under this section are recorded in the custody records kept under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Immigration Control

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce an independent element into the investigation of complaints made against the immigration service.

Mr. Waddington: The sixth report from the Home Affairs Committee (Session 1984-85) recommended that an independent element should be introduced into the immigration and nationality department's procedures for the investigation of complaints. The Department's officials are considering the recommendation and my right hon. Friend will make a substantive response to the Committee in due course.

Mr. Madden: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many passengers, granted temporary admission to the United Kingdom on arrival at Heathrow airport in the current year, have been accommodated by his Department in hotels; what instructions have been issued to private security guards on duty there; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: The information available is that, in the period between 27 March and 29 April, accommodation was provided at two hotels near Heathrow for the equivalent of 681 passengers. Some passengers may have been accommodated for more than one night. the passengers concerned had been either required to submit to further examination or refused entry and were given temporary admission and required to reside at one of two hotels.

The employees of Securicor Ltd. who accompanied the passengers to the hotels were instructed that, as the passengers had been given temporary admission, they were not not be prevented from leaving the hotels but that if there was any indication that a person did not intend to return to Heathrow the employee should inform the immigration officer concerned. It was also made clear that such passengers were not be to restrained.

Mr. Madden: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish the newly issued code of practice for immigration officers when searching premises and conducting interviews; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Yes. We hope to do so shortly.

Mr. Madden: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many oral and written complaints have been received in the current year to date about immigration control at Heathrow airport from *(a)* passengers, *(b)* the public and *(c)* right hon. and hon. Members; and how many complaints were received (i) in 1985 and (ii) in 1984.

Mr. Waddington: No statistical record is kept of oral complaints.

Up to 15 May, 77 written complaints have been received this year about the immigration control at Heathrow, of which 14 were made by passengers, 22 by members of the public and 41 by right hon. and hon. Members. The total for 1985 was 213, of which 41 were from passengers, 73 from members of the public and 99 from right hon. and hon. Members. Statistics for 1984 were not kept in the form requested but in that year a total of 212 written complaints were received from all sources about the control at Heathrow.

Mr. Madden: asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many private security firm personnel are employed by his Department on immigration control at Heathrow airport; when they were first employed; at what total cost; and what are their duties.

Mr. Waddington: Securicor Ltd. has been contracted to the Home Office since 1 July 1970 to provide staff who act as orderlies for passengers under examination by an immigration officer and for the purpose of guarding and escorting persons detained under the Immigration Act 1971.

There are 28 Securicor posts at Heathrow airport. There are covered by shiftwork, some for 24 hours per day, so that the actual number of personnel employed is greater. The 28 posts include those at the main terminal buildings as well as at the Queen's building and Harmondsworth detention centres. The cost of the service is a matter of contract, which it would not be appropriate for me to disclose.

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what plans he has to appoint or second immigration officers to the private offices of his Ministerial colleagues; what their duties will be; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The increase in the number of representations by Members in immigration cases made it necessary to provide additional support both at ports and in the private office of my hon. and learned Friend the Minister of State whose responsibilities include

immigration. Two immigration officers have been appointed as assistant private secretaries for an initial period of six months.

Baton Rounds and CS Equipment

Mr. Hind asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 26 November 1985 to the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire, (Mr. Lyell), *Official Report*, columns 515-16, what arrangements he has made for ensuring that plastic baton rounds and CS are made available to police forces; whether he has issued guidelines covering the future use of baton rounds and CS for dealing with serious public disorder; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: As the House was informed at the time, plastic baton rounds and CS equipment for use in dealing with serious public disorder were made available to police forces in Great Britain following the riots in 1981. The Home Office has today issued a circular to chief officers of police and police authorities in England and Wales setting out new arrangements for supplying the equipment.

Future requirements will be met from stocks purchased by the Home Office. Where financial authorisation has been given by the police authority concerned, the force will be able to purchase from the Home Office stocks. Where such authorisation is withheld, and the chief officer's assessment of need is endorsed by HM Inspector of Constabulary, I regard it as essential that the equipment should be provided, as I made clear in reply to a question from my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Mid-Bedfordshire. (Mr. Lyell) on 26 November 1985 at columns 515-16. In such circumstances, equipment will be provided from the central store of equipment at Home Office expense. Arrangements have also been made, on the same basis, for training in the use of the equipment where a police authority is not prepared to pay for this.

A copy of the circular has been placed in the Library.

Revised guidelines on the use of CS and baton rounds to deal with serious public disorder have also been issued today to all chief officers of police in England and Wales.

The guidelines cover the following points:

CS or baton rounds are to be used only with the express authority of the chief officer of police (or in his absence his deputy) under the direction and control of a designated senior officer, and by police officers who have been trained in the use of the equipment and know its characteristics.

CS or baton rounds are to be used only as a last resort where conventional methods of policing have been tried and failed, or must from the nature of the circumstances be unlikely to succeed if tried; and where there is a risk of loss of life, or serious injury (or widespread destruction of property such that there is, or is judged to be, a sufficiently serious risk of loss of life or serious injury to justify the use of baton rounds or CS); and where the use of CS and baton rounds is judged as necessary because it is likely to reduce that risk. An oral warning is to be given to the crowd to disperse before CS or baton rounds are used. Once the use of baton rounds has begun, the need to continue use is to be assessed continuously. Particular caution is to be taken over the use of baton rounds for offensive purposes.

If a chief officer is not present at the scene, he must be satisfied from reports that the criteria for use set out above have been met. In such circumstances, before the chief officer's authority for use is put into effect, a designated senior officer should satisfy himself at the scene that the criteria are met.

After each operational firing of baton rounds, a report on the circumstances of the incident in which they were fired is to be made to the Home Secretary.

Only CS equipment and baton rounds and launchers of a type authorised by the Home Office are to be used for these purposes. Nothing in the guidelines affects the principle, to which section 3 of the Criminal Law Act 1967 gives effect, that only such force as is reasonable in the circumstances must be used. The degree of force justified will vary according to the circumstances of each case.

Plastic baton rounds have never been used in Great Britain and I very much hope that they will never need to be. But it is clearly right that chief officers should have baton rounds and CS equipment available following the unprecedented ferocity of the disorders last autumn. The new arrangements for the provision of this equipment ensure that all chief officers with a requirement for plastic baton rounds and CS equipement will be able to obtain supplies. The revised guidelines set out very strict conditions for the use of the equipment.

Prisons

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the ratio of prisoners to prison officers in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The ratio of prisoners to prison officers in England and Wales on 1 April 1986 was 2·53: 1 males and 1·55: 1 females.

Fire Services

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of the numbers of uniformed and non-uniformed staff which were employed by the former London fire brigade controlled by the Greater London council and the comparable numbers in each category now employed by the London fire and civil defence authority.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The respective establishment figures are:

	31 March 1986	*1 April 1986*
Whole-time uniformed staff	7,159	6,849
Non-uniformed staff	997	1,181
Control room staff	196	196

On 1 April there was no immediate change in whole-time uniformed staff actually in post. The increase in non-uniformed staff chiefly reflected the need for the brigade to absorb a proportion of fire prevention staff formerly in the GLC architect's department, and to become self-administering.

Licensing hours

Mr. John Hunt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is yet in a position to announce the conclusions of his review of permitted opening hours for licensed premises in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: After carefully studying all the relevant facts, and in particular the evidence to emerge from the Scottish experience of longer opening hours, the Government believe that there is a strong case for considering some relaxation of the restrictions on licensing hours in England and Wales.

There is no obvious consensus however, on the precise nature of the changes which should be made. We believe it is important that any relaxation should maintain adequate and effective controls on licensed outlets, given the concern which exists over alcohol misuse and the need

to provide protection for the public against added noise and nuisance. Any change will require legislation, and I cannot give any indication at this stage of when this might be introduced. But we support the case for reform in principle.

Magistrates Courts (Acquittals)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) in what percentage of contested cases there were acquittals in the magistrates courts in England and Wales in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively; (2) in what percentage of all cases there were convictions in England and Wales in magistrates courts in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor: I have been asked to reply and will do so as soon as possible.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what percentage of all cases were convicted in Crown courts in England and Wales in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

The Attorney-General: I have been asked to reply. The percentage of defendants dealt with in the Crown court in England and Wales who were convicted on all or some counts was 79 per cent. in 1983, 79 per cent. in 1984 and 80 per cent. in 1985. These figures include defendants pleading guilty to all or some counts. These alone accounted for 65 per cent., 67 per cent. and 67 per cent. respectively of all defendants dealt with in these years.

Immigration

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average waiting time before interview for an application for entry clearance as a person of independent means at Dacca, New Delhi, Bombay, Islamabad and Karachi.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

Current minimum and maximum waiting times are as follows:

Dhaka 3 days to 4 weeks
New Delhi up to 4 weeks
Bombay 2 to 6 weeks
Islamabad no waiting time — interviewed on day of application
Karachi 2 to 3 weeks

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Debts (Arms Expenditure)

63. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affirs what account his Department takes of a country's expenditure on arms when taking part in discussions on the rescheduling of its debts.

Mrs. Chalker: All aspects of a country's economic performance are considered during debt negotiations. But neither we nor other creditors are in a position to dictate to a country its political priorities, including the priority it gives to arms expenditure.

School Fees

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what are the costs incurred by his Department for *(a)* school fees and *(b)* board and lodging when children are at boarding school in Britain whilst their parents are serving abroad.

Mr. Eggar: In financial year 1985-86, the FCO paid £3,275,807 in boarding school allowances towards the cost of school fees and board and lodging for 856 children of FCO staff, including the ODA and communications department, serving overseas. Separate figures for the costs of school fees and of board and lodging are not available.

GCHQ

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs under what section of the Civil Service code of conduct membership of a trade union may be deemed as an offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: There are no such instructions in the Civil Service code. However, in relation to GCHQ, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, acting in pursuance of article 4 of the Civil Service Order in Council 1982, gave instructions on 22 December 1983 that the conditions of service of employees at GCHQ should be varied so that they should not be members of any trade union other than a departmental staff association approved by the director. The staff regulations applicable at GCHQ have been appropriately amended. Any breach of those conditions may be liable to disciplinary proceedings.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if disciplinary procedures at Government communications headquarters beginning on 19 May will be conducted within the framework of the Civil Service code of conduct; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The disciplinary procedure applying in these cases will be that contained in the existing departmental regulations. However, the recently revised provisions of the Civil Service pay and conditions of service code will also be applied where they increase the protection of the individuals concerned.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the Answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 350, he will make a statement on the advice given by the director of Government communications headquarters to the head of the Civil Service on appropriate penalties for those who have rejoined a union there.

Mr. Renton: Discipline at GCHQ is a matter for the director. I have nothing further to add to the answer I gave on 12 May to the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Mr. Soley) at column *350*.

Political Parties (Funds)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the implications for the United Kingdom of the recent decision of the European Court that the grant of public funds to certain political parties by the European Assembly was unlawful.

Mrs. Chalker: It is for the European Parliament to decide whether the funds distributed to political parties should be recovered.

Guatemala

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what contacts have been held between Ministers and officials in his Department and the Guatemalan Government since the election of President Cerezo; what was the purpose of these contacts; what factors stand in the way of a resumption of consular or diplomatic relations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British delegation attending the inauguration of President Arias of Costa Rica in San Jose met President Cerezo on 7 May and discussed the possibility of re-establishing diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries. President Cerezo of Guatemala expressed satisfaction at the advantages which the resumption of relations could have but indicated that he would consult various sectors in Guatemala to obtain their opinion on the desirability of shortly re-establishing diplomatic and consular relations with Great Britain. The meeting was very cordial. It was agreed that the proposal to re-establish relations was clearly within the framework of co-operation between the European Comunity and the countries of central America.

Belize

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the current agreed period of notice for withdrawal of the British garrison in Belize; what changes in the period of notice have occurred since June 1983; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: As agreed with the Belize Government on independence, the British garrison will remain in Belize for an appropriate period to assist with external defence and with the training of the Belize defence force. There has been no change in the position since independence.

El Salvador

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any action was taken or representations made by Her Majesty's Government following the suspension of guarantees of freedom of expression in El Salvador on 18 April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No, but we are monitoring the situation closely.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent discussions have been held with El Salvador concerning the offer to train officers from El Salvador in the United Kingdom; when he expects such training to begin; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: There have been no substantive discussions recently with the Salvadorean Government on this matter. The first officer cadet is expected to start an eight-month training course at Sandhurst in January after a language course.

Chile

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the officials and Ministers who met a member of the Chilean junta, General Mattei, on his recent visit to the United Kingdom; what was the purpose of the meetings; whether any representations concerning human rights violations of named individuals were made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and noble Friend the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and senior FCO officials met General Mattei during his recent private visit to the United Kingdom. My right hon. and noble Friend expressed concern about the need for early progress towards the orderly restoration of democracy in Chile, and an improvement in the human rights record of the Chilean Government.

SALT II

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the continued observance of the terms of the unratified SALT II treaty by the parties to it; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom is not a party to the SALT II treaty, nor do we participate in the standing consultative commission discussions on compliance issues. But Her Majesty's Government attaches great importance to respect for obligations under existing arms control agreements and we have accordingly urged strict compliance with the treaty by both sides. In this context, the United Kingdom has expressed concern that the Russians have not produced answers to American concerns about their compliance record.

Soviet Union (Food)

Mr. Bendall asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what proposals are currently under consideration by the European Economic Community to supply food to the Soviet Union following the Chernobyl disaster.

Mrs. Chalker: None. The European Community has not received any Soviet request to supply food.

TRANSPORT

British Rail Engineering Ltd.

12. **Mr. Stan Thorne** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met the manager of British Rail Engineering Ltd. and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman of BREL accompanied my right hon. Friend on his visit to China last September, during which a wide range of issues—particularly export promotion—was discussed.

27. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he last met representatives of the staff of British Rail Engineering Ltd., and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend met representatives of BREL's Swindon workforce on 21 March to discuss BREL's closure of the works and the company's alternative employment strategy for Swindon. I have also received delegations from several BREL works in recent months.

36. **Mr. McKelvey** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent information he has received of the British Railways Board's progress on its review of options to the future of British Rail Engineering Limited.

Mr. David Mitchell: The chairman has continued to keep us informed about progress. I understand that the board will be discussing the present position with its trade unions at a meeting of its rail council on 20 May.

Bus Services (Deregulation)

13. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has evidence of the effects on bus fares of deregulation of bus services.

Mr. Ridley: Deregulation will reduce costs of operation; the savings will generally be passed to the passenger in shire counties through lower fares and to ratepayers in the metropolitan counties through lower rates.

15. **Mr. Terry Lewis** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what evidence he has of changes in the quality of bus services as a result of deregulation.

Mr. David Mitchell: Deregulation does not take place until 26 October. Most of the services that operators will be contracted to supply with local authority subsidy have yet to be registered. In preparation for deregulation and competition we are already seeing improved services in some areas, especially with the introduction of high frequency minibuses.

24. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussion he has had with local authorities concerning the implementation of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have been encouraged by the level of bus service registrations and by the positve attitude of many local authorities with whom we have discussed the implementation of the Transport Act. About three quarters, rather more than I anticipated, of existing routes have been registered to operate without subsidy after deregulation on 26 October. The next stage is for county and district councils and PTEs to place contracts for the operation of further as yet unregistered routes and services which they are prepared to subsidise. People who live on these routes will have the certitude of services provided under a contract.

25. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he has had with representatives of passenger transport authorities concerning the impact of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend and I have had a number of meetings with the new passenger transport authorities and discussed various aspects of their responsibilities.

29. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is satisfied with the progress of implementations of the Transport Act 1985.

Mr. David Mitchell: Yes. The bus industry is making significant improvements in its efficiency, more operators are entering the market for local bus services, and new types of service have appeared. I am not satisfied with the unfounded claims that there will be major cuts in services, at a time when local authorities have only started, much less completed, the process of tendering for subsidised services.

32. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many taxi proprietors have registered local bus services under the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: So far, about 40 taxi proprietors have registered services, and I expect that many others will submit tenders for subsidised services. This is a welcome start in providing better and more flexible services for the travelling public.

London Underground

14. **Mr. Spearing** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what recent requests he has made to, and what recent applications he has received from, London Regional Transport concerning plans for extensions to the London Underground system.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend has made no such requests nor received any such applications from London Regional Transport, beyond the present proposals for extending the docklands railway to Bank.

Roads

16. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he intends to review the distribution of responsibility for major roads between his Department and local authorities.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We decided last year to retain responsibility for the trunk road network.

43. **Mr. Coombs** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how he estimates the costs and benefits of road schemes carried out by his Department.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The estimates are based on a comparison between the scheme itself and an alternative "minimum improvement" option. The value of future benefits from reducing journey times, decreases in the number and severity of accidents and savings in vehicle operating costs is estimated and compared with the extra capital and maintenance costs involved. A 30-year life is assumed for appraisal purposes and all costs and benefits are discounted at 7 per cent. per annum to provide a net present value estimate for the scheme.

It is estimated that an average trunk road scheme provides about £1·50 of the discounted future benefits for every £1 spent on its construction. This is broadly equivalent to an internal rate of return of 12 per cent.

Freight Transport

17. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proposals he has for implementing the European Community social regulations on goods transport.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The EEC regulations come into force on 29 September. We intend to make full use of the permissible derogations and to propose to the House associated changes to the provisions of the 1968 Transport Act.

Driving Licence (Cost)

18. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much extra revenue he expects to raise from the recently announced increase in the cost of a driving licence.

Mr. Ridley: Driving licence fees are set at a level sufficient to finance the driver licensing operation at DVLC.

Main Line Services

19. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many main line services British Rail runs on an average weekday.

Mr. David Mitchell: This is a matter for British Rail.

Vehicle Registration Date

20. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received about the proposed change in the date for new vehicle registrations.

Mr. Ridley: I have received representations from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders in support of the change to October in 1987 and from the Motor Agents Association and individual motor traders opposing it. I have made it clear that I am prepared to consider an alternative month to October if the motor industry as a whole now wants this.

Articulated Vehicles

21. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will reconsider increasing the maximum permitted gross vehicle weight for articulated and drawbar trailer combinations to 40 tonnes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: We decided in 1982 that we would go no higher than 38 tonnes. I do not believe the House is ready to reconsider that limit.

Vehicle Excise Duty

22. **Mr. John Mark Taylor** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the levels of evasion and enforcement of vehicle excise duty.

Mr. Ridley: The gross loss of revenue from evasion of VED is estimated at about 4 per cent. Vigorous action is being taken against evaders and in 1985-86 315,000 offenders were prosecuted or made out-of-court settlements. The revenue from fines, back-duty orders and penalties exceeds £21 million, more than double the 1982 figures. Further steps are being taken to improve enforcement, and we are considering the possible need for new legislation.

Motorway Deaths

23. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many motorway deaths were reported in the past 12 months in England and Wales.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: In the most recent 12 months for which data are available, November 1984 to October 1985, there were 219 motorway deaths in England and eight in Wales.

British Rail (Locomotive Procurement Policy)

26. **Mrs. Dunwoody** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has any further plans to discuss locomotive procurement policy with British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: I know of no reason to do so at present.

Lorry Ban (London)

28. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what studies his Department has made into the effects of the Greater London council lorry ban.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department is co-operating in the borough's review of the ban and assisting with finance for traffic counts.

National Bus Company

30. **Mr. Ross** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what progress he has made with regard to the privatisation of the subsidiaries of the National Bus Company.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend received on 15 May the National Bus Company's Disposal programme, submitted under section 47 of the Transport Act 1985. He is considering it urgently and will make a statement as soon as possible. The NBC is currently negotiating the sale of a number of its subsidiaries.

Airline Competition

31. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on his policy towards airline competition in the light of the recent judgment of the European Court.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We welcome the judgment which confirms our view that air transport like other sectors is subject to the competition rules of the treaty of Rome. It underpins our efforts to bring real competition to European air services, preferably as part of a package of liberalising measures agreed by the EC Council of Ministers.

Motor Cyclists

33. **Mr. Couchman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what proportion of motorcyclists passed the part I and II tests in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The proportions are as follows:

	Number of part I motorcycle tests conducted by				*Number of part II motorcycle tests*	
	Department of Transport	*Pass rate (per cent.)*	*Appointed training bodies*	*Pass rate (per cent.)*	*Department of Transport*	*Pass rate (per cent.)*
1983	17,251	50	51,203	93	60,829	73·5
1984	10,495	50	56,597	94	62,700	72·5
1985	7,103	50	48,914	95	58,426	73

These pass rates compare with a pass rate for the single motorcycle L test of 53 per cent. in 1982, that is, before the introduction of the package of safety measures which included the two part test. Part I may be taken as part of a course of training with an appointed training body.

Aircraft (Hijacking)

34. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what further steps are being taken to prevent the hijacking of aircraft; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: I have strengthened the arrangements at airports for searching passengers and their baggage; and I have issued directions under the Aviation Security Act to prevent Libyan trainee mechanics having access to non-public parts of airports or working on aircraft, and to prevent Libyan trainee pilots from flying solo. Our measures are being kept under constant review.

Channel Tunnel Bill

35. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the time table on the Channel Tunnel Bill circulated by his Department.

Mr. David Mitchell: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given to the hon. Member for Glasgow, Shettleston (Mr. Marshall) on 7 May 1986, at column 109.

National Bike Week

37. **Mr. Dormand** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is his policy towards the objectives of National Bike Week; and if he will make a statement.

45. **Mr. Haynes** asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will participate in an appropriate manner in National Bike Week; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have accepted an invitation to attend the launch of National Bike Week at the Royal Festival Hall on 22 May. We wholeheartedly endorse the efforts of the voluntary organisations who are associated with this event. We particularly welcome initiatives within National Bike Week which help to emphasise the measures needed to increase safety. We shall continue to share with local authorities the importance of taking account of cyclists' needs.

Merchant Fleet

38. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the size, by class, of the United Kingdom merchant fleet.

Mr. Ridley: The number and tonnage of vessels of 500 gross registered tons and over in the United Kingdom registered merchant fleet at 28 February 1986 by type of vessel was:

	Number	*Thousand deadweight tons (dwt)*
Passenger vessels	84	167
Cargo liners	85	951
Container vessels	51	1,354
Tramps	151	483
Bulk carriers	70	4,665
Tankers	236	10,089
All vessels	677	17,709

These figures exclude Government-owned vessels, offshore supply vessels, tugs, fishing vessels and other non-trading vessels.

Cars (Child Restraints)

39. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he has taken to encourage the fitting and wearing of child restraints in cars.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The promotional programme for child restraints in cars is as described in the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Mr. King) on 17 March 1986 at column *24*. Since then, there have been more than 6,000 calls on the free telephone information number which the Department advertised. Additionally, stocks of the revised edition of the official leaflet "Protect your child in the car" have been exhausted. A reprint is in hand.

M25 (Injury Rates)

40. **Mr. Wood** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give preliminary figures for injury rates on the M25.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Accident rates for the M25 can be readily estimated for the period 19 January to 17 September 1985. This was a continuous period between the opening of new sections of the orbital motorway. The estimated rates are 0·5 fatal, 1·6 serious and 6·8 slight accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. The figures for all motorways, in 1984, were 0·5 fatal accidents, 2·8 serious accidents and 9·3 slight accidents per 100 million vehicle kilometres. Direct comparisons between M25 figures and figures for all motorways in 1984 may be misleading. M25 traffic patterns have yet to stabilise and the M25 accidents rates are based upon traffic counts taken on a single day in June 1985.

Heavy Vehicles

41. **Mr. Chapman** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on initiatives to discourage heavy vehicles from using inadequate roads, particularly in urban areas.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: One of the Government's main priorities is to carry forward the development of a network of national roads that provide attractive and effective routes for heavy vehicles.

Our policy for lorry management on local roads was set out in circular 2/82. It encourages local authorities to introduce local lorry management measures where this would achieve environmental benefits having due regard to the costs imposed on operators.

The Department is now engaged in a joint study with the Civic trust and three county councils to test a range of low-cost lorry management measures with the aim of producing guidelines.

Motorway Construction Costs

42. **Mr. Waller** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what is the cost of constructing one mile of three-lane motorway now; and what was the equivalent cost in real terms in 1979.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Motorway construction costs vary substantially, depending on factors such as location

and the need for structures, so that average costs of construction per mile in individual years cannot usefully be compared.

The roads output index measures changes in the costs of building motorways and trunk roads. Between 1980-81 and 1985-86, it increased by only about 1 per cent. equivalent to a fall of about 25 per cent. in real terms as measured by the GDP deflator.

Goods Vehicles (Drivers' Hours)

44. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the proposed changes to drivers' hours for goods vehicles; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Operators have welcomed the proposals because of the increased flexibility they would bring. The unions are concerned that more flexible arrangements would be harder to enforce and might lead to increased driver fatigue. After considering all the responses to consultation, we shall soon be laying draft regulations.

European Air Fares

46. **Sir Fergus Montgomery** asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he is yet in a position to make a statement on the recent judgment of the European Court of Justice about arrangements for setting European air fares.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The recent ECJ judgment about European air fares confirms the Government's view that air transport, like other sectors, is subject to the competition rules of the treaty of Rome. Real competition should lead to lower air fares and the judgment strengthens our campaign for the introduction of real competition into European air services.

London Regional Transport

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, when he next meets the chairman of London Regional Transport, he will seek from him an estimate of the additional sums of money received as a result of London underground ticket machines not providing the correct change; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend does not discuss detailed operational matters with the chairman of London Regional Transport. We approved last year investment of £135 million in a new ticketing system for the underground, which will involve replacing all the existing ticket machines.

Trunk Roads (Mobile Refreshment Vans)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the placement of unauthorised signs advertising mobile refreshment vans in trunk road lay-bys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he plans to review the advice to local authorities given in departmental circular WMRT/5072/LB/1 on the establishment of mobile refreshment vans in trunk road lay-bys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No new advice is proposed at present. We are keeping the situation under review and will take account of any representations made to us.

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will review the conditions on litter control applied to mobile refreshment vans trading in trunk road lay-bys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It remains our general policy not to provide litter bins in trunk road laybys except where provision is made for picknicking. Removal of the bins in practice has led to less litter being left in laybys. In the absence of other facilities, we would expect the operators of any mobile refreshment vans allowed there to provide receptacles for litter likely to arise from the sale of refreshments. District councils can in any event impose conditions about litter when giving permits for roadside trading under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provision) Act 1982.

Housing Development (Road Construction)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will give the number of occasions, in each of the last three years, when his Department has insisted that housing developers use direct labour organisations for road construction;

(2) if he will give the number of occasions, in each of the last three years, when his Department has insisted on housing developers signing section 278 agreements under the Highways Act 1980.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: It is our general policy to ask developers to enter into agreements under section 278 and contribute to the costs, where a direct access to a trunk road is proposed and that access necessitates special roadworks, ie something more than verge/footway crossings and acceleration/deceleration lanes. Our agents, the county councils in the shires, normally design the works or approve the developer's design. They also supervise the works to ensure that they are up to the required standards. Unless the works are minor, the agent authority must put them out to competitive tender though it is open to the authority's own direct labour organisation to put in a tender. Exceptionally, we may agree to the developer carrying out the works himself, subject to the agent's supervision.

There have been five agreements made with housing developers over the past three years, as follows: 1983—1; 1984—1; 1985—3. Works in two cases (1984 and 1985) were carried out by direct labour organisations, the first through competitive tendering and the second because the works were minor in nature and the developer agreed to it.

Highways (Stopping-up and Diversion)

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects the consultative paper reviewing the provisions in the Highways Act 1980 for the stopping-up and diversion of highways to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: The consultative paper was issued on 3 April 1985. Copies have been placed in the Library. We are considering the responses to the paper, and I will make an announcement in due course.

Crossing Barrier (Cherry Hinton)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in view of the potential danger to local residents, he will now agree to the installation of a full depth automatic crossing barrier at the level crossing over Cherry Hinton High street in Cambridgeshire.

Mr. David Mitchell: The decision to authorise British Railways to install an automatic half-barrier system of protection at Cherry Hinton level crossing was taken after careful consideration of all the relevant facts and in the knowledge that such a system would provide an adequate level of safety for all the users of the crossing since it fully met the Department's published requirements for level crossings. The making of the statutory order to carry this decision into effect has been temporarily suspended because the Cambridge county and city councils have begun negotiations with British Railways about funding the difference in cost between an AHB and a manually controlled full barrier system operated and supervised with the aid of closed circuit television. I cannot prejudge the outcome of these negotiations. But if British Railways decide to withdraw their application for an AHB and submit a fresh one for an MCB this will also be carefully considered.

Airships (Nuisance)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will take action to reduce the nuisance caused by airships engaged on sightseeing flights.

Mr. Ridley: There are only three airships operating regularly in this country and so far they do not appear to be causing a serious environmental problem. I shall, however, keep the situation under review.

Ports (Ministerial Speech)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will place in the Library a copy of his recent speech to the National Association of Port Employers.

Mr. Ridley: I have today placed copies in the Library.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many men, women and children, respectively, have been killed and injured, respectively, on roads in the United Kingdom during the last five complete years for which records are available; and how many since 1 January.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The readily available date are for Great Britain 1981-84:

Road Casualties (Great Britain)

thousands

	Men		*Women*		*Children*	
	Killed	*Injured*	*Killed*	*Injured*	*Killed*	*Injured*
1981	3·8	176	1·5	94	0·5	44
1982	4·0	196	1·6	103	0·6	53
1983	3·5	140	1·4	85	0·5	45
1984	3·6	170	1·4	98	0·5	47

1985 data will be published later this year in "Road Accidents Great Britain 1985".

M3

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) whether he is satisfied with the condition of the road surface on the M3 between junctions 8 and 9 *(a)* southbound and *(b)* northbound, and whether he will make a statement;

(2) on what date he expects the M3 southbound between junctions 8 and 9 to be re-opened;

(3) what is the nature of the remedial works being carried out on the southbound carriageway of the M3 between junctions 8 and 9; and to what extent his Department is to meet the costs.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Work is being carried out as normal maintenance in accordance with the arrangements described in my reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Derby, North (Mr. Knight) on 2 May. The costs, in the main, will be borne by the contractors.

The road surface meets the Department's specifications.

The southbound carriageway was re-opened to traffic on 15 May. Work on the northbound carriageway is due to start on 28 May after the spring bank holiday and will be completed in July.

Public Transport Staffs (Violence)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Transport if the working group on violence to road passenger transport staff has yet published its report.

Mr. David Mitchell: The working group's report, "Assaults on Bus Staff and Measures to Prevent Such Assaults", is being published today, and I will place a copy in the Library.

Rail Sidings (Grants)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Transport what has been the cumulative total amount of money made available under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 for grants towards the construction of private rail sidings in 1986-87; if he has any plans to increase the amount of money available for this purpose in the current financial year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The total sum available for grants in 1986-87 under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974 including Scotland and Wales and for similar grants under section 36 of the Transport Act 1981 for Waterway Freight Facilities is £7·3 million.

There are no plans to increase this sum which should be sufficient to cover the expected level of demand.

Post Office (Parcel Traffic)

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary State for Transport what estimate he has made of the implications for road traffic levels of extra van or lorry miles consequent upon a loss of the Post Office parcel traffic from British Rail.

Mr. David Mitchell: On the basis of the Post Office's estimates, the addition to total HGV mileage will be less than one tenth of one per cent.

ENERGY

Plutonium

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if any plutonium produced in Central Electricity Generating Board's reactors and exported to any country has ever been used subsequently in weapons production; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: It is on the public record that civil plutonium exported since 1971 has been sent for civil purposes to countries where international safeguards applied, and that in relation to plutonium sent prior to 1971 to the United States of America under the mutual defence agreement, Her Majesty's Government have been informed by the United States Government that it has not been used for weapons purposes.

Nuclear Safety Inspections

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all those United Kingdom nuclear facilities which, due to their joint civil/military purpose, are excluded to *(a)* international nuclear safeguards inspectors and *(b)* international nuclear safety inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency or Euratom.

Mr. Goodland: The only areas to which access to international nuclear safeguards inspectors has been limited are a part of the uranium processing and refining area at British Nuclear Fuels plc, Springfields and the Magnox reprocessing areas at BNF Sellafield. Discussions with Euratom on an inspection regime for the civil material in these areas are nearing completion.

There are no IAEA or Euratom safety inspectors.

British Gas

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy what safeguards are being offered to employees of British Gas in respect of their pension rights after the proposed denationalisation.

Mr. Peter Walker: British Gas has indicated to its employees that the benefits which are provided under its pension schemes will not be affected by privatisation.

National Coal Board

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many employees of the National Coal Board are under 20 years of age; and, of these, how many are employed or based at collieries.

Mr. David Hunt: I will ask the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Accidents

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Energy what studies have been carried out into the possible consequences in Britain of an accident involving a French nuclear reactor on the Channel coast leading to the loss of all or part of its inventory of radioactive materials; and what contingency plans exist for such an eventuality.

Mr. Goodlad: The United Kingdom has a formal agreement with France for the exchange of information in the event of an accident at a nuclear installation. The relevant parts of our own civil nuclear emergency plans would be implemented in the event of any risk of significant radioactivity reaching this country from France.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements have been made with the French Government for the timely passage of information in the event of an accident to a French nuclear reactor.

Mr. Goodlad: An agreement with France on exchanges of information in the event of emergencies occurring in one of the two states which could have radiological consequences for the other state entered into force on 18 July 1983. This agreement, which took the form of an exchange of notes, was published as Cmnd. 9041.

Mr. Wrigglesworth asked the Secretary of State for Energy if any consideration has been given to the establishment of a fund from which property owners, farmers and other individuals affected by a possible accident to a French or other foreign nuclear reactor could seek redress for loss of life or property; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Arrangements for compensation to third parties arising out of nuclear accidents are governed by the 1960 Paris convention on third party liability in the field of nuclear energy and the supplementary 1963 Brussels convention. These are given effect in the United Kingdom by the Nuclear Installations Act 1965, as amended.

Under the terms of the conventions (to which both the United Kingdom and France are signatories) the operator of a nuclear installation is liable up to certain limits for nuclear damage caused by his installation. Beyond these limits, further liabilities up to an internationally agreed limit are met by signatory Governments.

Hinkley Point

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now take steps to ensure that the full report of the Central Electricity Generating Board's board of inquiry into the accident at Hinkley Point on 29 November should be made available to the public.

Mr. Goodlad: I welcome the publication of the conclusions of the thorough investigation which has been carried out by the internal CEGB inquiry team into this incident, in which no worker or member of the public was injured or subjected to detectable radiation. It has resulted in four recommendations relating to the design and handling of components which the CEGB are now implementing with the agreement of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Responsibility for safety of nuclear sites falls by law on the operators of those sites. It is not the CEGB's practice to release the full record of internal investigations of this kind. To do so could affect the willingness of staff to participate fully and openly in such inquiries. Information on the incident is in the Health and Safety Executive's "Quarterly Statement on Nuclear Incidents, Fourth Quarter, 1985".

Pipeline Flow-bundle Assembly Capability

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his policy towards the establishment of a pipeline flow-bundle assembly capability in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: A pipeline flow-bundle assembly capability is already established in the United Kingdom.

Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Energy when the Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations last met; and what major technical issues it has examined in the recent past.

Mr. Goodlad: The Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations last met on 9 May 1986. At that meeting, the committee discussed the Chernobyl accident. In the recent past, the committee has examined, among other things, various aspects of safety relating to the PWR, AGR and Magnox reactors; safety assessment principles for reactors and nuclear chemical plant; decommissioning; long-term safety reviews of Magnox stations; siting policy and emergency arrangements and the work of the nuclear installations inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive.

PRIME MINISTER

Binary Chemical Weapons

Mr. George Robertson asked the Prime Minister if she has received any approaches from other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries, seeking the United Kingdom's agreement to basing binary chemical weapons in the United Kingdom.

The Prime Minister: No.

Chernobyl

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister, pursuant to her answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column 310, if she will now seek from the Atomic Energy Authority an account of contacts between scientists employed by the authority and their Russian counterparts following the Chernobyl incident.

The Prime Minister: As far as I have been able to ascertain, there have been no direct contacts between scientists employed by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority and their Russian counterparts.

Bilderberg Conference

Mr. Nellist asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to public funds of her attendance at the Bilderberg conference.

The Prime Minister: My attendance at the Bilderberg conference at Gleneagles was combined with a visit to the North Sands shipyard in Sunderland. The total cost of travel for myself and my staff was £2,228. It is not practical to break down the separate travel costs incurred on the Sunderland and Gleneagles sections of the visit. The costs of my stay at the conference itself were met by the organisers.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if, pursuant to her reply on 15 May to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, she will now make it her policy in the light of the recent new allegations about the disappearance of British subjects in the Balkans during the Second World War, to seek from the United Nations copies of all documents in their possession relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: It would not be appropriate to consider this before the Ministry of Defence search of military records is complete.

Public Record Office (Missing Documents)

Mr. Janner asked the Prime Minister why the following documents are missing from the Public Record Office, namely, JIC (42) 507(0), JIC (43) 285(0) 3 August 1943, DEFE 3/573, CX/MSS 1250/T13, 1350/T2, 1588 paragraph 29, CX MSS 1421 paragraph 46, 1477 paragraph 33, 1986 paragraph 46; whether any of these documents refer, directly or indirectly, to Dr. Kurt Waldheim or to German Army Group E; and whether she will make copies of these documents available to the hon. Member for Leicester, West.

The Prime Minister *pursuant to her reply*, 16 May 1986, c. 566]: One of the documents referred to (DEFE 3/573) is available on film in the Public Record Office. The remainder fall within the terms of the general approval given by the Lord Chancellor in 1967, under the proviso to Section 3(4) of the Public Records Acts for the retention of documents relating to security and intelligence matters. It is not the practice to disclose any part of the contents of such records.

WALES

Morfa Bychan (Holiday Houses)

47. **Mr. Wigley** asked the Secretary of State for Wales on what date he received a formal request from, or on behalf of, Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor for a meeting with himself, the hon. Member for Caernarfon and representatives of that council, to discuss the implications of a planning consent given in 1964 for 700 holiday homes on land at Morfa Bychan; on what date a full written reply was made by his Department; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The letter from the clerk of Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor requesting a meeting was received in the Welsh Office on 24 April. An answer was given on 9 May and this was followed by a detailed written response on 16 May.

Women's Refuges

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many women at present living in women's refuges in Wales have been living there for 10 weeks or more, in each of the local authorities areas in Wales;

(2) how many women live in women's refuges in Wales at present; and what was the figure for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Battered Women (Rehousing)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are his Department's guidelines to local authorities in Wales for rehousing women who have left home due to domestic violence, and who are living in temporary accommodation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Gas Industry

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the effect of the implementation of the Gas Bill on (i) the number of gas showrooms and (ii) employment in the industry in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The provisions of the Gas Bill do not directly affect the number of gas showrooms or employment in the industry in Wales. These will, as now, be matters for the commercial judgment of management.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are at pesent employed by Nwy Cymru/ Wales Gas; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: 4,230 people were employed by Nwy Prydain (Cymru) British Gas (Wales) at 31 March 1986; the corresponding figures since 1979 were as follows:—

	Number
1979	4,647
1980	4,828
1981	4,990
1982	4,974
1983	4,797
1984	4,649
1985	4,342

Housing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was capital expenditure per capita on housing in Wales in 1984-85 in each of the district authority areas; what are the provisional figures for 1985-86; and what are the projected figures for 1986-87.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply given to him by my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary of State on 17 April 1986 at column 424-6. Figures for 1985-86 and 1986-87 will be available soon, and I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total labour force in employment in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The total number of employees in employment in Wales in December 1985 was 905,000; the corresponding figures for each year since 1979 were as follows:

Figures at December each year

	(000's
1979	1,033
1980	966
1981	921
1982	900
1983	903
1984	904

Source: Department of Employment Quarterly Estimates

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total employed labour force in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Figures are not, at present, available in the format requested. My Department is, however, in the process of collecting information on employment in the public sector in Wales and figures will be made available later this year, when I will write to the hon. Gentleman and place a copy in the Library.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total employed labour force in local government in Wales in *(a)* education, *(b)* social services, *(c)* police and *(d)* other; and in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information in the form requested for the years 1979 to 1985 is published in "Welsh Local Government Financial Statistics, No. 9, 1985", copies of which are available in the Library. Information relating to March 1986 is presently being collected and will be available in June ofthis year.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total employed labour force in central Government in Wales; and what were the corresponding figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Thirty five thousand four hundred people were employed in central Government in Wales at 1 January 1985. This includes both industrial and non-industrial civil servants. The corresponding figures at 1 January for each year from 1979 were as follows:

	000's
1979	40·7
1980	39·1
1981	38·8
1982	37·9
1983	37·3
1984	35·9

Source: Civil Service Statistics.

Rates

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of total personal disposable income in Wales was expended on domestic rates in the years 1956-57, 1979-80 and in 1984-85.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Information is not readily available for 1956-57. For the other two years the percentages were:—

1979-80, 1·48 per cent.
1984-85, 1·63 per cent.

Domestic rate poundages have been used net of rate rebates. Personal disposable income is available only by calendar year, so the 1979 and 1984 figures respectively have been used.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was total *(a)* central Government and *(b)* local authority capital expenditure in each year from 1979-80 to 1985-86 expressed in cash and in real terms, taking 1979-80 as 100.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Gross central Government and local authority expenditure within my responsibility for the years 1979-80 to 1985-86, taking 1979-80 as 100, is estimated to have been as follows:

(a) Central Government

£ million

	(i) Cash terms	*(ii) Real terms*
1979-80 outturn	100	100
1980-81 outturn	127	107
1981-82 outturn	140	107
1982-83 outturn	163	117
1983-84 outturn	194	133
1984-85 outturn*	187	123
1985-86 outturn†	209	129

* Provisional
† Estimated

(b) Local Government

£ million

	(i) Cash terms	*(ii) Real terms*
1979-80 outturn	100	100
1980-81 outturn	107	90
1981-82 outturn	96	74
1982-83 outturn	130	93
1983-84 outturn	162	111
1984-85 outturn*	136	89
1985-86 outturn†	135	84

* Provisional
† Estimated

The real term figures are the cash outturns adjusted by excluding the affect of general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* those locations, institutions or facilities in Wales which have a capability of measuring the incidence of strontium 90 and of plutonium 239; and from which of these his Department has obtained information on the incidence of these isotopes following the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the locations of the two areas of highest rainfall in Wales from which samples of rainfall have been analysed to detect levels of radiation; and if he will publish a full record of the date and time of readings, and of the level of each of the various forms of radioactivity which were recorded, together with the normal level and the lower emergency reference level for each such type of radioactivity.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power Stations, Gwynedd

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now ensure that emergency procedure instructions indicating what local residents should do in the case of a major nuclear accident at either Trawsfynydd or Wylfa nuclear power stations in Gwynedd be issued to every household within 30 miles of either nuclear power station.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Drug Trials

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for Wales if, pursuant to the answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *389*, concerning drug trials in south Wales, he will now investigate the practice of Dr. Bali of Porth, Rhondda, where practitioners are receiving £150 for conducting drug trials, patients consent is not being sought for their participation in the trials and doctors are signing patient consent forms on behalf of patients without their permission.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Breast Cancer

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will outline current provision in Wales for screening of breast cancer; and how this compares with provision in England and Scotland.

Mr. Mark Robinson: There is currently no national breast cancer screening programme in Wales, England or Scotland. On 2 July 1985 the Government established an expert working group to consider the situation concerning breast cancer screening by mammography and it is expected to report later this year.

Chernobyl Nuclear Accident

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what representations he has received alleging lack of co-ordination by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in Wales following the increase in radioactivity arising from the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received no such representations.

National Parks (Military Use)

Mr. Livsey asked the Secretary of State for Wales what estimate he has made of the implications for local residents and tourism of the use of national parks in Wales for military training.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I am aware of the concern expressed over the military use of land within national parks, but such use is kept to the minimum necessary.

Dwyfor District Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if his Deprtment has monitored the performance of Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor in dealing with applications for housing renovation grants within their area over the past seven years; and if he will make a statement on the number of outstanding applications in that area which have not received their grant.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Over the past seven years information on the number of renovation grants approved by Dwyfor district council has been collected by my Department and is as follows:

	Number of grants
1979	101
1980	50
1981	141
1982	528
1983	758
1984	289
1985	79

Since 1984 the information collected has also included the number of grant applications outstanding. At 31 March 1986, Dwyfor district council had 652 valid grant applications outstanding. The council's housing capital allocation was enhanced by 21 per cent. in 1986-87 to help towards the reduction of its renovation grants backlog.

St. David's Hospital, Cardiff

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase the financial resources available to St. David's hospital in Cardiff, West; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The allocation of resources to St. David's hospital is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority to decide.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Assembly

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received regarding the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: I am considering carefully the views expressed in the House, on 1 May at columns 1087-88. I have received no other representations recently. I remain concerned about the Assembly's deliberate neglect of its statutory functions and about the behaviour of some Assembly Members in the Parliament buildings on 15 May.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, pursuant to the reply of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *36*, how much of the £2·8 million already received under the non-quota section of the

European regional development fund has been allocated to each of the district council areas along the United Kingdom frontier with the Republic of Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Of the £2·8 million already received, allocations to each of the seven district council areas involved have been as follows:

	£
Armagh	450,000
Derry	403,215
Dungannon	280,588
Fermanagh	667,852
Newry and Mourne	662,833
Omagh	241,990
Strabane	111,285

Further Education

Mr. John Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has on the cost per Burnham unit for each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland for each of the past 10 years;

(2) what information he has on the accommodation: Burnham unit ratio for each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland in each of the past 10 years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not readily available and could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

Mr. John Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the allocation for teachers' salaries from his Department to each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland at present and for each of the past three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The cost of the Department in respect of full-time staff is as follows:—

College	*1983-84 £ 000's*	*1984-85 £ 000's*	*1985-86 £ 000's*
Belfast Education & Library Board			
College of Business Studies	1,451	1,558	1,699
College of Technology	3,244	3,486	3,721
Rupert Stanley College	1,809	1,940	2,190
North Eastern Education & Library Board			
Antrim Technical College	437	458	495
Ballymena Technical College	1,301	1,384	1,481
Coleraine Technical College	701	758	829
Larne Technical College	666	709	752
Magherafelt College of Further Education	441	492	512
Newtownabbey Technical College	1,322	1,445	1,574
North Antrim College of Further Education	371	412	430
Northern Ireland Hotel & Catering College	261	264	277
South Eastern Education & Library Board			
Castlereagh College of Further Education	932	976	1,037
Down College of Further Education	664	706	768
Lisburn College of Further Education	1,167	1,228	1,359
Newcastle College of Further Education	354	364	438
North Down College of Further Education	1,473	1,610	1,704
Southern Education & Library Board			
Armagh College of Further Education	769	830	888
Banbridge College of Further Education	342	354	386
East Tyrone Further Education Area	866	917	994
Lurgan College of Further Education	785	743	852
Newry Kilkeel Further Education Area	1,044	1,116	1,203
Portadown College of Further Education	1,239	1,313	1,409
Western Education & Library Board			
Fermanagh College of Further Education	831	880	950
Limavady Technical College	467	502	552
North West College of Technology	1,758	1,904	2,027
Omagh Technical College	769	817	853

Note:
Figures for 1986-87 are not available

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has on the staff: Burnham unit ratio in each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland in each of the past 10 years;

(2) what information he has on the full-time/part-time ratio of teaching staff in each further education college in Northern Ireland at present and in each of the past three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: Although none of the ratios is based on Burnham units, information is available on the number of full-time and part-time staff and the Burnham unit totals. I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Leisure Centre (Armagh City)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has as to why no staff have been appointed to work in the new Armagh city leisure centre; if the opening of this centre is now behind schedule; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The supervision of the contract, appointment of staff and management of the centre is the direct responsibility of the district council.

Security Forces (Re-housing)

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many members of the security forces have *(a)* requested to be re-housed following acts of intimidation, and *(b)* been re-housed since 1 March; and on what basis any requests have been turned down.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *37*]: From the Loyalist day of action on 3 March to 7 May, 65 families have been re-housed. The decision to grant a request for re-housing by members of the security forces is primarily a matter for the Chief Constable of the RUC and the General Officer Commanding the Army in Northern Ireland. Their decision will take account of the nature of the threat and of the circumstances surrounding

each individual case. Decisions are made on the basis of a detailed threat assessment taking each case on its merits whether or not a request for re-housing has been made.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acts of intimidation were carried out against members of the security forces by *(a)* Loyalist groups, and *(b)* non-Loyalist groups since 1 March.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *37*]: It is not possible to state the motive in every case of intimidation involving members of the security forces and their families. From 3 March to 7 May approximately 365 reported incidents of intimidation are believed to have been perpetrated by Loyalists and a further 10 by non-Loyalist groups or individuals.

Harland and Wolff

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what sums have been made available from public funds to Harland and Wolff since June 1979, analysed under appropriate headings.

Dr. Boyson: The following table lists the financial assistance provided to Harland and Wolff from all Government sources in each of the financial years from May 1979 until March 1986.

	1 May 1979 to 31 March 1980 £ *million (cash)*	*1980-81* £ *million (cash)*	*1981-82* £ *million (cash)*	*1982-83* £ *million (cash)*	*1983-84* £ *million (cash)*	*1984-85* £ *million (cash)*	*1985-86* £ *million (cash)*
Special assistance							
Interest-free loans	13·325	37·565	40·562	40·245	32·669	28·321	31·385
Intervention fund grants	4·410	3·912	5·438	7·031	7·229	7·966	4·892
Selective training and other grants	—	—	—	0·324	0·102	1·213	0·223
Standard assistance							
Capital grants (on machinery and buildings) Shipbuilders' relief Cost escalation Insurance (gross)* Regional employment premium refunds* Security staff grants*	2·279	6·020	5·463	5·921	1·634	1·262	2·355
Total	20·014	47·497	51·463	53·521	41·634	38·762	38·855

* Now discontinued.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Jaguar plc

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will explain the reasons for the provision of the golden share in the sale of Jaguar plc.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The special rights redeemable share ("golden share"), was issued on the privatisation of Jaguar plc in August 1984. It gives its holder, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, the right to veto alterations to provisions in Jaguar's articles of association limiting individual shareholdings to 15 per cent., and thus protects Jaguar from the threat of unwelcome takeover bids in its formative years as an independent company. The golden share will lapse on 31 December 1990.

Information Technology Centres

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the number of information technology centres now in operation, including as a separate figure those located in Scotland; and if he will make a statement regarding their continuing progress.

Mr. Pattie: One hundred and seventy-five ITECs are currently in operation, of which 23 are situated in Scotland.

The majority of centres have received their full entitlement of Department of Trade and Industry pump-priming support of £75,000 payable over three years. My Department is continuing to support the programme, however, by funding a nationwide marketing organisation which will help ITECs with revenue generation.

Product Liability

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will include no-fault liability for road accident victims in the product liability legislation to be introduced to comply with the European Economic Community directive on product liability approved by Parliament in July 1985.

Mr. Howard: No. We do not consider that this would be appropriate. The EC directive is concerned only with liability for defective products; we plan to introduce legislation to implement it as soon as possible, but we do not intend to extend this legislation to cover liability for road accidents.

EC (Trade Statistics)

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what was the value of exports to, and imports from, the European Economic Community broken down into the categories oil, manufactures, and other, annually for 1980 to 1985 inclusive and for the quarters 1985 (1) to 1986(1), inclusive.

Mr. Butcher: The information is in the following table:

**United Kingdom Trade with the European Community*
BOP Basis *£ billion. Not seasonally adjusted*

	Exports			*Imports*		
	†Fuels	*‡Manufactures*	*Other*	*†Fuels*	*‡Manufactures*	*Other*
1980	4·4	14·1	3·1	1·5	15·2	4·0
1981	5·7	13·3	3·0	1·6	15·9	4·4
1982	6·5	14·6	3·2	1·6	18·9	4·9
1983	8·4	15·9	3·6	1·6	23·1	5·6
1984	10·0	18·9	4·1	2·6	26·9	6·5
1985	11·7	21·8	4·5	2·4	30·5	7·0
1985 Q1	3·9	5·3	1·1	1·1	7·6	1·6
Q2	2·8	5·6	1·1	0·5	7·8	1·7
Q3	2·5	5·0	1·0	0·4	7·1	1·8
Q4	2·5	5·9	1·2	0·4	8·0	1·8
1986 Q1	2·3	5·2	1·2	0·3	8·0	1·7

Notes:
* Present membership throughout.
† Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), Section 3. Data for oil (SITC 33) is not available for trade with the Community on the balance of payments basis but in 1985, oil accounted for about 96 per cent. of exports of all fuels to the Community and about 86 per cent. of imports.
‡ Standard International Trade Classification, Section 5 to 8.
Source: Department of Trade and Industry.

Nissan Cars

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what discussions he has had with Nissan United Kingdom about including 1986-87 Washington-produced cars as additional production over and above the present agreed import quota.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The treatment of production at Nissan's Washington plant in the first phase of the project remains as set out in the heads of agreement between my Department and Nissan dated 1 February 1984. Exploratory talks are taking place with Nissan on its future plans for the project.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry pursuant to the answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *31*, if he will list the public sector orders for which he expects British Shipbuilders to compete in the financial years 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders has been invited to bid for the following public sector orders:—

Fisheries protection vessel for the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Scotland.

A new passenger/vehicle ferry for service to the Scottish west coast islands. The customer is Caledonian Macbrayne.

Decisions on these orders are expected soon.

British Shipbuilders would be expected to bid for any further public sector orders.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of new world orders for merchant ships were won by British Shipbuilders in each year since 1979; and what is the latest figure for 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will provide a breakdown of Government support to British Shipbuilders since 1979, showing for *(a)* merchant ships and *(b)* warships and other work the amount spent in each year on (i) capital investment and (ii) other support.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The available information is as follows:

	Capital Investment (£ million)	*Public Dividend Capital/Loans (£ million)*	*Intervention Fund (£ million) (merchant shipbuilding)*
1979-80	18	181	31
1980-81	17	110	40
1981-82	37	107	46
1982-83	43	70	44
1983-84	48	*275	34
1984-85 (i) warship	84	78	
(ii) merchant	12	*125	18
1985-86 (i) warship (est)	41	32	
(ii) merchant (est)	17	*35	22

* Includes the costs of the sale of the Scott Lithgow yard.

Information on the breakdown of investment and public dividend capital between warshipbuilding and merchant shipbuilding is not available prior to 1984-85.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the duration of the term of office of Mr. Phillip Hares as chairman of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The Secretary of State appointed Phillip Hares as chairman and chief executive of British Shipbuilders for a term of three years from 1 May 1986.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will list the payments made each year, including bonuses, to Mr. Graham Day in his capacity as Chairman of British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is as follows:

Financial year	*Payments made (including bonus payments) £*
1983-84	58,055
1984-85	101,298
1985-86	109,415

Mr. Day became chairman on 1 September 1983.

These payments do not include Mr. Day's performance-related bonus payment for the period from 1 July 1985, which has yet to be decided.

Shipbuilding Work Force

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many employees there were in merchant shipbuilding in (i) Britain and (ii) other European Economic Community countries in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I will reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Morocco and Algeria

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the total volume of imports from the United Kingdom to Morocco, and imports from Morocco, including invisibles and tourism, in the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what has been the total volume of exports from the United Kingdom to Algeria, and imports from Algeria, including invisibles in the years 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Figures relating to volume of trade, and invisible trade and tourism with individual countries, are not available. Visible trade figures by value for the five years 1981 to 1985 are published in table 1B of the appropriate volumes of the "United Kingdom Overseas Trade Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library.

United States Export Denials List

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what steps he takes to publicise in the United Kingdom, or cause his officials to publicise or use in the United Kingdom, the United States export denials list; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: None. British companies which appear on the list in the course of legitimate trading should contact the Department of Trade and Industry.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what status he accords to the United States export denials list in the United Kingdom in relation to its use by his officials; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs on 27 March at column 53 and to the replies given by my hon. Friend the Minister fo Trade on 27 March and 21 April at columns 611 and 8-9

EC (Consumer Products)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Trade an Industry if there have been any developments concernin the proposed European Community system of informatio on accidents involving consumer products; and if he wi make a statement.

Mr. Howard: I am happy to report that a Counc decision of 22 April 1986 approved this project. Th European system will be based largely on our ow successful home accident surveillance system, which i now on its tenth year of operation. At the time of it inception, HASS was unique in Europe and, with th exception of the United States, in the world. We hav provided the European Commission with considerabl help and expertise to enable this valuable project t proceed. It will be of great help in determining policy o home accident prevention and consumer product safety i the Community.

EMPLOYMENT

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Meacher asked the Paymaster General (1) why hi Department has issued circular 30/1986, dated 15 Apri 1986, to regional, area benefit, benefit and local manager and regional finance officers, prohibiting advice t redundant mineworkers on signing on to receiv unemployment benefit;

(2) how many times, and in what circumstances, in th last year his Department has issued instructions not t advise people seeking advice on when to sign on a unemployment benefit offices or on whether or not t claim unemployment benefit.

Mr. Lang: The circular emphasises standing instructions that advice should be confined to an explanation of the various conditions governing the payment of benefit but stresses that it is for the individual to decide whether or not to claim.

This is the only occasion such a reminder has been issued in the last year but similar general instructions were issued annually in the past until incorporated into standing instructions.

The date that a claim begins determines which tax year's national insurance contributions are taken into account to assess the claim. However, details of national insurance records are not immediately available to staff in benefit offices and in the absence of this information such advice on whether or not a claim should be made could be misleading.

Langbaurgh

Mr. Holt asked the Paymaster General what new measures he proposes for Langbaurgh to reduce unemployment.

Mr. Lang: Langbaurgh will benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise, boost employment opportunities for the young and help the long-term

unemployed find work. It will also benefit from the measures to assist the north-east announced on 14 May by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Labour Mobility

Mr. Holt asked the Paymaster General what proposals he has to assist in the mobility of labour.

Mr. Lang: The Manpower Services Commission operates the job search scheme which helps unemployed people with the costs of travelling to job interviews. My right hon. and noble Friend and I are considering a proposal from the Commission to replace this by a new travel to interview scheme, recently piloted in MSC's northern region, which is more cost-effective and simpler to administer. My right hon. and noble Friend and I will write to my hon. Friend once that decision is taken.

Restart Programme

Mr. Leighton asked the Paymaster General how many of the long-term unemployed obtained jobs as a result of the restart programme pilot project at Ealing; and how many Manpower Services Commission staff were employed on this project.

Mr. Lang: Between 6 January and 9 May 1986, 220 people left the unemployment register in Ealing after being counselled as part of the restart programme. The precise number who obtained jobs is not known. Ten Manpower Services Commission staff were employed on all aspects of the pilot project at Ealing during that period.

Community Industry Schemes

Mr. Rowe asked the Paymaster General how many community industry schemes have been monitored in the last 18 months by his Department or by the Manpower Services Commission; what proportion of the total schemes this number represents; what general conclusions as to the quality of community industry schemes he has reached; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: Between 1 November 1984 and 30 April 1986, 79 monitoring visits were made to the 57 community industry scheme area units by officials of the Manpower Services Commission. I am generally satisfied with the standard of performance being achieved by the area units and that the needs of the young people covered are being met.

Mr. Rowe asked the Paymaster General what was the total cost to central Government funds of the community industry scheme in 1975 and in 1985; and how much per young employee that represented.

Mr. Lang: The figures provided are for financial years. In 1975-76 the average number of young employees on the payroll at month ends was 1,829 and the total cost of the community industry scheme was £3,224,000. In 1985-86 the average number of young employees was 6,754 and the estimated cost of the scheme was £24,186,000.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Rowe asked the Paymaster General what was the cost per YTS place in 1985.

Mr. Trippier: Expenditure information is usually given by financial year. The average cost per filled place of one year YTS in 1985-86 is estimated at around £2,800 per year.

Wages Councils

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General how many wages inspectors and other wages council staff were employed in each wages inspectorate division in each year since 1975.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General how many wages inspectorate and other wages council staff he estimates will be employed in each division after the Wages Bill is enacted.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is given in the following table.

Wages inspectorate staffing
Proposed number of posts at 31 March 1987

Division	*Outdoor Wages Inspectors*	*Other Wages Inspectorate staff*	*Total*
London	8	8½	16½
South East	7	7½	14½
Eastern	7	7½	14½
South West	9	8	17
Midlands	10	9	19
North West	11	9½	20½
Yorks and Humberside	7	7	14
Northern	5	4	9
Scotland	7	7	14
Total	71	68	139

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General what percentage of wages inspectorate inquiries concern *(a)* holiday pay, *(b)* workers under 21 years and *(c)* payment in recognition of years service in each year since 1975.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is not available.

However, an analysis of inquiries received from employers and workers between July and December 1981 showed that 47·6 per cent. related to holidays and holiday pay.

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General how many wages council prosecutions have taken place in each wages inspectorate division each year since 1975.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is given in the following table:

Wages Inspectorate Divisions
Prosecutions 1975-1985

Division	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986 to date*
London East	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
London West	—	—	—	3	2	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
South East	—	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Southern	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eastern	1	—	—	1	—	1	2	3	1	1	—	1
South West	1	—	1	3	4	2	4	—	1	1	—	—
Midlands (East)	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Midlands (West)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1
Northwest (East)	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northwest (West)	—	—	—	1	—	2	1	—	—	—	—	—
Yorks and Humberside	—	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	—	—	1	—
Northern	—	—	1	3	1	3	1	1	—	—	—	—
Scotland (East)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—
Scotland (West)	—	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Wales	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Benefits (Fraud)

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General (1) how many of those presently claiming unemployment benefit he estimates are doing so fraudulently; and on what evidence this figure is based;

(2) how many self-employed people he estimates are claiming unemployment benefit fraudulently.

Mr. Lang: There is a good deal of public concern about the abuse of unemployment benefits and we have substantially increased the resources allocated to the detection of fraud. We do not know how many of those presently claiming are doing so fraudulently, nor how many self-employed people are claiming fraudulently, but in 1981 Sir Derek Rayner, in his report on payment of benefits to unemployed people, estimated the figure to be a minimum of 8 per cent.

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General (1) if he will list the nine areas in which pilot schemes have been conducted by his Department's fraud teams into the extent of fraud by the long-term unemployed;

(2) if he will summarise the findings of his Department's fraud teams following the completion of nine pilot schemes looking into claims for benefit made by the long-term unemployed;

(3) how many people, previously claiming benefit as long-term unemployed, ended their claims when invited to interviews by members of his Department's fraud teams in each of their recently conducted pilot schemes.

Mr. Lang: Since 6 January the Manpower Services Commission has been operating pilot schemes to help long-term unemployed people in nine areas. The pilots were introduced for a six-month trial period and are still in operation. The nine areas involved are:

Billingham
Crawley
Dundee
Ealing
Huddersfield
Plymouth
Port Talbot
Preston
Stoke

Contrary to recent press reports, the pilot schemes are not a fraud exercise and do not involve the Department's fraud teams. Their main purpose is to invite all those unemployed for more than a year to an interview with Manpower Services Commission staff at which their employment difficulties can be discussed in detail and they can be offered a positive opportunity of some kind to help them back into employment.

In the period 6 January to 9 May, 3,738 people in the pilot areas have ceased to claim unemployment related benefits after being contacted by the Manpower Services Commission. The figures for each pilot area are as follows:

	Number
Billingham	204
Crawley	320
Dundee	488
Ealing	409
Huddersfield	372
Plymouth	400
Port Talbot	402
Preston	428
Stoke	715
	3,738

The pilots are not due to finish until the end of June, but the main finding so far is that 90 per cent. of those interviewed have been offered positive help in getting back into employment.

Benefits

Mr. Evans asked the Paymaster General how many claims were made against the Department of Employment for non-payment or underpayment of benefit in 1985; what was the total amount of money involved; how many claims were unsuccessful; and how much money, in terms of payments not made, was saved.

Mr. Lang: Queries made by benefit claimants about non-payment or under-payment of unemployment benefit are usually decided locally and are not centrally recorded. However, claimants who have been disallowed benefit by independent adjudication officers have a right of appeal to a Social Security Appeal Tribunal. In the first six months of 1985 approximately 17,000 such appeals were made and nearly 6,000 were unsuccessful. Information is not yet available for the second half of 1985.

The amount of benefit involved is not quantifiable.

Radiation

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General in what ways the dose limits for occupational exposure to ionising radiation for individual body organs specified in the Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 differ from the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The dose limits for individual organs for employees aged 18 years or over as specified in the Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 do not differ from the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General what will be the maximum permitted exposure arising from the exposure of a single organ of the body of a worker to ionising radiation.

Mr. Trippier: The dose limits for individual organs depend on the organ concerned, for example:

	mSv/year
gonads	200
breast	330
red bone marrow	420
lung	420
thyroid	500
bone surfaces	500

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General what would be the maximum annual permissible dose of ionising radiation to the following organs, if exposed singly, that would be consistent with the recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection that the whole body effective dose equivalent not exceed 50 mSv/yr: lung, thyroid, bone, gonads, breast and red marrow.

Mr. Trippier: The information requested is:

	mSv
Lung	420
Thyroid	1,670
Bone surfaces	1,670
Gonads	200
Breast	330
Red marrow	420

In practice, the limit for the thyroid and for bone surfaces would be the individual organ dose limit, namely 500 mSv in one year.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Paymaster General whether, in the event of a worker receiving a dose of 500 mSv to his or her lungs as permitted under schedule II to the Ionising Radiation Regulation 1985 a whole body effective dose equivalent greater than 50 mSv, as permitted under the same schedule of the regulations will result; whether a similar organ dose of 500 mSv to breast, red marrow or gonads would also result in a whole body exposure greater than 50 mSv effective dose equivalent; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A 500 mSv dose to the lungs, breast, red marrow or gonads would result in a whole body effective dose equivalent greater than 50 mSv.

However, in practice, the overriding whole body effective dose equivalent limit would be reached first.

Loan Guarantee Scheme

Mr. Bright asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to promote the new loan guarantee scheme in general and to the banks and accountants in particular.

Mr. Trippier: Under its new terms the loan guarantee scheme will be very attractive to eligible small firms. Details of the scheme have been circulated to small firms advisers and included in the "Action for Jobs" booklet. My Department is discussing the promotion of the scheme with banks and accountancy bodies.

Unemployed Claimants (Availability Test)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North of 18 March, *Official Report*, column *178*, he will now make available the findings of the review on the operation of the availability test for unemployed claimants; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: This information will not be available until testing and evaluation of the pilot scheme has been completed. The results will be available in the autumn.

Newham

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what is the total number of people unemployed in the borough of Newham for the last year for which figures are available; and what is the number of people unemployed who are *(a)* under 25 years old, *(b)* 25 to 40 years old and *(c)* 41 to 60 years old.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed claimants in the London borough of Newham

	11 April 1985	*11 July 1985*	*10 October 1985*	*9 January 1986*
Under 25 years	6,363	6,334	6,623	6,646
25 to 39	5,416	5,387	5,481	5,763
40 to 59	4,390	4,477	4,515	4,714
TOTAL UNEMPLOYED	16,952	16,787	17,217	17,664

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people in the London borough of Newham have been unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to two years and *(d)* over two years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the requested information for 9 January 1986.

Unemployed claimants in the London borough of Newham

	Number
Under six months	6,908
Six months to one year	3,117
One year to two years	3,086
Over two years	4,553

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people under the age of 25 years have been unemployed for longer than one year in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the London borough of Newham aged under 25 years who have been unemployed for more than 12 months was 1,980.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Paymaster General if he will publish in the *Official Report* the rate of unemployment in each parliamentary constituency in the United Kingdom, showing also the rate *(a)* under 20 years, *(b)* under 25 years and *(c)* over 25 years.

Mr. Lang: Unemployment rates are not calculated for areas smaller than travel-to-work areas. Unemployment rates by age are not calculated below the national level.

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate

Mr. Craigen asked the Paymaster General what is the current establishment of Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate; and what were the numbers in post in 1983 and 1980.

Mr. Trippier: On 1 May 99 nuclear installations inspectors were employed in Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. On 1 May 1983 there were 97 and on 1 May 1980 there were 86.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Magistrates

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of magistrates who reside in each ward, on a ward by ward basis; and what percentage this is of the total magistrates on each bench in the petty sessional districts of Wigan, St. Helens, Halton and Bury, respectively.

Mr. Tebbit: The figures for which the hon. Member asks are not immediately available, and would need to be compiled. I will therefore reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Elderly People (Severe Weather)

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what surveys have been undertaken by his Department as to the effect on elderly people of the severe weather of last winter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: As I indicated in my reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Mr. Davis) on 25 March, at column *462*, we are considering the results of a study by officials of recent hypothermia statistics.

Glasgow Resettlement Unit

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the implications for his policy concerning the Glasgow resettlement unit of the recent report sent to him by the hon. Member for Glasgow, Maryhill; and what consideration he is giving to the points raised concerning its provision of services and accommodation for single homeless men.

Mr. Major: The report on the Glasgow resettlement unit, which was drawn up by the Council of Civil Service Unions, will be considered in the light of the recommendations made by the regional review team which has been looking at the needs of and provision for single homeless people in Scotland. The outcome of our regional consultation exercise, of which the Scotland review forms a part, will be discussed at a national resettlement conference on 3 June, after which we will decide on the next steps.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Winnick asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people of working age are now in receipt of supplementary benefit; what was the number in May 1979; and what is the percentage increase.

Mr. Major: The latest information available is as follows:

	(Thousands)
May 1979	1,157
February 1985	3,026
Percentage increase	162

Source: "Quarterly Statistical Enquiries."

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are claiming supplementary benefit in the London borough of Newham for the latest date available.

Mr. Major: The London borough of Newham is covered by three of the Department's offices, Canning Town, Plaistow and Woodgrange Park, but their boundaries are not conterminous.

The total number of people receiving supplementary benefit from these offices on 6 May 1986 was 33,592.

Source: 100 per cent. count of live cases in action.

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library figures showing how many people were in receipt of supplementary benefit in each of the years 1979 to 1985; and what percentage change in these figures occurred between 1979 and 1985. in each of the places listed in the letter to him from the hon. Member for Peckham of 29 January.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February c. *609*]: A table has been placed in the Library showing the numbers of people receiving supplementary benefit in May 1979 and each subsequent year until 1985 together with the percentage changes in these numbers during that period, as requested in the hon. Member's letter of 29 January 1986.

Mr. Pendry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total number of claimants in receipt of supplementary benefit in the Greater Manchester area, by constituency; of these, how many are pensioners, families with children, and young single people under the age of 25 years; and of each of these threecategories, what information he has regarding additional requirements which are included in their supplementary benefit assessment, by type and average amount of additional requirements.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March, 1986 c. *380*]: The information is not available in the precise form requested as constituency boundaries are not conterminous with local office boundaries. The tables show the figures available for the Greater Manchester area as a whole. The figures provided refer to the position in December 1983, the latest details available.

Table A
*Number of claimants**

	Thousands
Total number of supplementary benefit claimants	267
Total number of pensioners	98
Total number of claimants with dependants	61
Total number of claimants under 25 years	57

* Number of claimants rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Table B
*Recipients of additional requirements**

thousands

Additional requirements by type	*Number of pensioners*	*Number of claimants with dependants*	*Number of claimants under 25 years*
Heating	86	46	9
Average amount	£3·05	£3·17	£3·98
Diet	15	3	†
Average amount	£2·42	£2·56	—
Age addition	25	—	—
Average amount	£0·26	—	—
Blind addition	2	†	†
Average amount	£1·25	—	—
Laundry	6	1	†
Average amount	£1·10	£1·66	—
Domestic assistance	†	—	†
Average amount	—	—	—
Extra baths	†	†	—
Average amount	—	—	—
Clothing and footwear	—	†	—
Addition for hire purchase	—	†	†
Average amount	—	—	—

* Number of payments rounded to nearest thousand.
† Less than 500.

The information in the table relates to claimants receiving additional requirements at the date of the Annual Statistical Inquiry in December 1983. As the figures are derived from an analysis of a sample of casepapers they are accordingly subject to the normal sampling error.

Maternity Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what additional revenue is expected from the taxation of statutory maternity pay.

Mr. Newton: About £15 million in 1987-88, rising to about £20 million in 1988-89.

Fleming Memorial Hospital

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the proposed closure of the Fleming memorial hospital, Newcastle upon Tyne, outlining the criteria used to reach such a decision.

Mr. Hayhoe: Newcastle health authority will shortly be considering comments made on its proposal to transfer services from the Fleming memorial hospital. If the proposal is subsequently referred to me, I shall consider the case on its merits.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what has been the change in waiting lists for in-patient hospital treatment in each of the health regions in England and Wales in 1979, 1982 and the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is given in the table.

Numbers of persons on in-patient waiting lists at 30 September for admission to NHS hospitals

Region	1979	1982	1985	Change between 1979 and 1982 Number	Change between 1979 and 1982 Percentage	Change between 1982 and 1985 Number	Change between 1982 and 1985 Percentage
Northern	42,288	49,958	36,154	7,670	18·1	−13,804	−27·6
Yorkshire	47,223	53,033	45,763	5,810	12·3	−7,270	−13·7
Trent	66,498	73,509	62,190	7,011	10·5	−11,319	−15·4
East Anglian	27,971	32,935	27,388	4,964	17·7	−5,547	−16·8
NW Thames	*43,595	40,785	40,265	−2,810	−6·4	−520	−1·3
NE Thames	*53,146	58,207	66,406	5,061	9·5	8,199	14·1
SE Thames	*49,920	51,820	50,087	1,900	3·8	−1,733	−3·3
SW Thames	*37,244	36,456	36,752	−788	−2·1	296	0·8
Wessex	40,222	45,317	42,003	5,095	12·7	−3,314	−7·3
Oxford	36,180	35,734	33,309	−446	−1·2	−2,425	−6·8
South Western	45,876	47,142	43,639	1,266	2·8	−3,503	−7·4
West Midlands	87,693	86,544	80,974	−1,149	−1·3	−5,570	−6·4
Mersey	38,572	37,674	30,141	−898	−2·3	−7,533	−20·0
North Western	71,948	69,697	58,465	−2,251	−3·1	−11,232	−16·1
SHAs	7,350	7,054	7,713	−296	−4·0	659	9·3
England	695,726	725,865	661,249	301,139	4·3	−64,616	−8·9

* Figures for Thames regions for 1979 are not strictly comparable with those for 1982 and 1985 because of changes made in the NHS reorganisation of 1 April 1982.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average waiting time for urgent and non-urgent consultations, respectively, in ear, nose and throat, gynaecology and orthopaedics, respectively, in the United Kingdom as a whole and in the Southed health authority, respectively, at the most recent dates for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend the information he seeks. Information on waiting time for out-patient consultation is not collected centrally. He may wish to write to the chairman of the Southend district health authority for the information requested. Figures for the rest of the United Kingdom are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland, for Wales and for Northern Ireland.

Road Accident Statistics

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how men, women and children, respectively, have been treated in hospitals in England, Scotland and Wales, respectively, for injuries arising out of road accidents during each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. and learned Member all the information he seeks. The information collected centrally for England is given in the table. Figures for the rest of Great Britain are a matter for my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales.

Estimated number of in-patient discharges (including deaths in hospital) of road traffic accident cases, NHS hospitals England.

Year	Adults/males*	Adult/females*	Children†
1980	37,760	15,930	11,380
1981	37,170	15,410	10,510
1982	37,610	15,370	10,710
1983	35,430	13,750	10,530
1984	34,530	14,400	10,260

* Aged 15 years or over.
† Aged 0 to 14 years.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what he estimates to be the cost of hospital treatment for people injured on Britain's roads during the last 12 months.

Mr. Whitney: In 1983, the latest year for which the relevant statistics are available, the cost to the hospital service of treating all road accident victims is estimated at about £105 million for England. A comparable figure for the whole of Britain is not available.

Personal Injuries Scheme

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many persons he expects to be affected by the amendments to *(a)* articles 23 and 48 and *(b)* article 25A of the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Scheme 1983, proposed in the Personal Injuries (Civilians) Amendment Scheme 1986 (S.I., 1986, No. 628); and what will be the effect on public expenditure of *(a)* and *(b)*.

Mr. Major: The personal injuries (civilians) scheme provides for the payment of pensions and allowances, similar to those made to service men under the war pensions scheme, to civilians who were disabled or died as a result of enemy action during the 1939-45 war. The amendments remove some ambiguities in the legislation that have recently come to light. The number of people affected will be minimal, as will the effect on public expenditure.

Schizophrenia

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were admitted to mental institutions suffering from schizophrenia in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what records are available of the breakdown by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex and *(c)* ethnic origin.

Mr. Whitney: The available information on numbers of admissions is given in the table. Analyses are also available by age and sex, but not by ethnic origin. Admissions to mental illness hospitals and units in the combined diagnostic group schizophrenia and paranoia are analysed by age and sex in booklet No. 12 (Diagnostic

data) in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England" for the years 1983 and 1984. Similar information for earlier years is included in HMSO publications in the series "In-patient statistics from the Mental Health Inquiry for England". Copies of both series are in the Library.

Admissions to NHS mental illness hospitals and units† in England of people with a diagnosis of schizophrenic psychoses.*

Year	*Number*
1980	24,763
1981	25,397
1982	23,991
1983	24,413
1984	25,100

* Some people have more than one admission in a year and are represented more than once in the figures.

† A small number of these admissions was to mental handicap hospitals and units and Special Hospitals.

Mental Patients (Imprisonment)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were transferred to mental institutions from prison in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what records are available of the breakdown by *(a)* age, *(b)* sex and *(c)* ethnic origin.

Mr. Whitney: Information is not collected centrally in precisely the form requested. The available information on numbers of transfers is given in the table. Analyses are also available by age and sex, but not by ethnic origin. Relevant transfers to mental illness and mental handicap hospitals and units are analysed by sex in booklet 11 (Legal status of patients) in the series of DHSS booklets "Mental Health Statistics for England" for the years 1983 and 1984. For earlier years some analyses by sex and age are contained in HMSO publications in the series "In-patient statistics from the Mental Health Enquiry for England". Copies of both series are in the Library.

Admissions to mental illness hospitals from units† in England of people transferred from penal establishments*

Year	*Number*
1980	550
1981	598
1982	517
1983	572
1984	598

* A small number of these admissions was to mental handicap hospitals and units and special hospitals.

† Anyone admitted more than once in a year would be represented more than once in the figures.

Psychiatrists (Ethnic Minorities)

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what measures the Government are taking to encourage more members of the ethnic minorities to become doctors qualified in the area of mental health.

Mr. Hayhoe: Doctors from ethnic minorities already make a substantial contribution to service in psychiatric specialties according to the latest available figures.

Hospital doctors in psychiatric specialties† at 30 September 1985: England*

	(a) All places of birth	*(b) born outside United Kingdom or Ireland‡*	*(c) (b) as percentage of (a)*
All doctors	5,224	1,816	35
Consultants	1,771	497	31
Training grades¶	2,137	781	37
Other hospital medical staff	1,336	538	40

* Includes NHS and Special Hospitals.

† Includes specialties of Mental Illness; Mental Handicap; Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; Forensic Psychiatry and Psychotherapy.

‡ It is generally accepted that doctors born outside United Kingdom or Ireland are mainly from the New Commonwealth.

Includes Senior Hospital Medical Officers with Allowance.

¶ Includes Senior Registrars; Registrars; Senior House Officers and House Officers.

Hospital Doctors

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to establish an even distribution of doctors in hospitals throughout the United Kingdom ; if he will encourage greater use of performance indicators to measure work load and output of National Health Service staff; whether he will provide a larger number of doctors for the medical specialties of the elderly, mentally ill and mentally handicapped; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's declared policy devolves to health authorities in England the determination of requirements for numbers of doctors for service plans, within available resources and staffing structure agreements. Gradual reduction of geographical disparities in England of the distribution of doctors is expected to continue.

The use of performance indicators, which contain staffing, work load, and output data, to appraise service performance, is already encouraged.

The numbers of doctors training in geriatrics, mental illness, and mental handicap have already been increased and are now sufficient to sustain expansion in these specialties, in accordance with declared national priorities.

Whooping Cough

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what resources he has allocated to the Health Education Council for its programme on whooping cough.

Mr. Whitney: In the year ending March 1986, the Health Education Council, which is Government funded, allocated £100,000 towards a whooping cough campaign which the Department augmented with a further £480,000. The scope for additional effort in this field during 1986-87 is being assessed with the council.

Health Authorities (Payment Limits)

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to review the authorised limits for payments by health authorities as set out in paragraph 3 of HC80/3.

Mr. Whitney: We have no plans to do so.

Local Office Staff

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 5,000 additional staff at the Department of Health and Social Security local offices will be posted to the offices in *(a)* Greenock, *(b)* Port Glasgow, *(c)* Strathclyde and *(d)* Scotland.

Mr. Major: The increase of 5,000 staff was given against the baseline of the 1986-87 earned complement. On this basis, the figures requested are as follows:

	Number of staff
Greenock ILO	26
Port Glasgow AO	14
Strathclyde	478
Scotland	804

Special Claims (Staff)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 5,000 additional staff at the Department of Health and Social Security local offices will be posted to the special claims section; and if he will break this down by region.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Gynaecological Service, Bassetlaw

Mr. Ashton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the acute gynaecological emergency service in Bassetlaw has been withdrawn by the health authority; when it will be restored; and what action he is taking in the meantime to provide an alternative facility.

Mr. Whitney: Pending the appointment of a locum or full-time registrar, Bassetlaw health authority is temporarily unable to provide an emergency admissions service for gynaecology patients. Neighbouring districts have been asked to provide alternative facilities but any patients arriving at Bassetlaw accident and emergency department and judged unfit to be transferred will be treated as usual. On the advice of the consultants, the service was restricted with effect from 12 May. I understand that the district and Trent regional health authority are making every effort to make the appointment urgently. The hon. Member may wish to contact the chairman of the health authority if he wants further information.

Social Security Appeals

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the number of social security appeals which have been referred by the Social Security Commissioners to the European Court of Justice; and what was the ruling in each case, during the last five years.

Mr. Major: During the period 1981-86, the Social Security Commissioners referred five cases to the European Court of Justice. Rulings on three of these are awaited. The rulings of the two cases received are as follows:

(1) The issue concerned the applicability of Community overlapping benefit provisions and whether a divorced woman residing in the United Kingdom could continue to receive United Kingdom child benefit for the same period and in respect of the same children for whom a corresponding benefit was being paid in the Republic of Ireland to her former husband.

The court ruled:

"i. the provision for suspension contained in the first sentence of Article 10(1)(a) of Regulation No 574/72 of the Council of 21.3.72 must be interpreted as meaning that it applies whenever the institution of another Member State has in fact granted family benefits to a worker in respect of the same child, in pursuance of Article 73 of Regulation No 1408/71 of the Council of 14.6.71, without it being necessary to examine whether all the conditions for the grant of those benefits are satisfied under the legislation of that other Member State.

ii. the second sentence of Article 10(1)(a) of Regulation No 574/72 must be interpreted as meaning that it applies to a divorced spouse."

This ruling extended the meaning of the word "spouses" in the relevant EC provisions to include "former spouses" so as to prevent the overlapping benefit provisions from operating unjustly in the case of divorced claimants of family benefits. As the claimant was working in the United Kingdom, she continued to receive the United Kingdom benefit and the Irish benefit was suspended.

(2) The issue concerned the application of Community provisions on the taking into account of contributions paid in another member state for the purpose of entitlement to sickness benefit/invalidity benefit, where those contributions had been paid after, rather than before, the period of the claim for which the United Kingdom was responsible.

The court ruled:

"i. only the legislation of the Member State in whose territory the worker is or was last employed is applicable with regard to sickness benefit by virtue of Article 13(2)(a) of Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 of the Council of 14 June 1971. The competent institution or institutions of the Member States are competent to aggregate the insurance periods pursuant to Article 18 of that regulation;

ii. invalidity benefit due under the legislation of a Member State following a period of incapacity for work during which the worker received benefits in respect of that incapacity, including benefit from another Member State, which is to be taken into account pursuant to Article 40(3) of Regulation No 1408/71, may, where appropriate, be validly reduced pursuant to Article 46(3) of that regulation."

This ruling means that, in deciding a claim to sickness benefit, contributions paid in another member state are to be taken into account only if they were paid prior to the period of the current claim.

Health Authorities (Women Appointees)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many women have been appointed this year to regional health authorities and district health authorities, respectively.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information she seeks as some is not held centrally. District health authority members are appointed by the appropriate regional health authority and relevant local authorities. The hon. Member may therefore wish to seek this information from the chairman of the regional health authority concerned. Of the current regional health authority members, 56 are women. In addition, 30 district health authority chairmen are women.

Unclaimed Benefits

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the amount of money saved by his Department each year by the failure of people to claim benefits for which they would be eligible.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of people who failed to claim unemployment benefit for which they were eligible in each of the last three years.

Mr. Major: No estimates are available on the number of people who fail to claim unemployment benefit.

Surrogate Mothers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to amend the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 so as to make payments to surrogate mothers for the keeping of a diary during their pregnancy a specific criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Severe Weather Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been paid in 1986 to date by way of exceptionally severe weather payments in Scotland.

Mr. Newton: Information on the amount of benefit paid to date is not available, but approximately 57,000 payments had been made to claimants living in Scotland by 6 May. When the period during which payments are likely to be made is over, local offices will be asked to make a return so that the total number of payments made for last winter, and the amount paid, can be calculated.

Hip Replacement Operations

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what estimate he has of the total cost to the National Health Service which has arisen from the introduction and development of hip replacement operations; how many hip operations have been carried out since the introduction of the technology to the most recent date for which figures are available; and if he has any estimate of the actual and projected level of future demand for such operations.

Mr. Whitney: A reliable estimate of the cost to the National Health Service of introducing and developing hip replacement operations cannot be given, since the procedures and the prosthesis themselves have changed over the years. There are no separate figures before 1967 but it is estimated that, between 1967 and 1984, inclusive over 420,000 hip replacements were carried out. In 1984, some 38,000 operations were performed—an increase of over 35 per cent. since 1978. Existing levels of demand for this procedure cannot be accurately gauged, but demand is likely to rise over the next decade, as the elderly population grows.

Alcohol (Illness)

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what details or estimates he can provide of the annual costs incurred by the National Health Service through the treatment of illnesses attributable, in part or whole, to the consumption of alcohol.

Mr. Whitney: The true costs to the National Health Service of the treatment of all the conditions which may be induced or aggravated by alcohol cannot be calculated on present information. Recent research into the cost of alcohol misuse to the National Health Service has produced an estimate of some £95 million per annum (1983 prices) for England and Wales.

London Teaching Hospitals (Admissions)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of in-patient admissions in each of the London teaching hospitals for the three months commencing 1 January and the number of re-admissions of patients previously treated;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the number of admissions of in-patients in each of the London teaching hospitals, together with the percentage normally resident in the immediate locality covered by the relevant district health authorities during the three months commencing 1 January.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not available centrally. He may wish to write to the chairmen of the special health authorities and the four Thames regional health authorities for the information requested.

Westminster Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library copies of the correspondence he has exchanged with the Riverside health authority concerning the future of Westminster hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Orthopaedic Operations

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the longest time a patient now waits for an orthopaedic operation; and what is the average time in the South West Thames regional health authority area.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 24 March, c. *382*]: In National Health Service hospitals in the South West Thames regional health authority, it is estimated that in 1984, the latest year for which information is available centrally, the median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to departments of orthopaedic surgery was 11 weeks compared with 12 weeks in England as a whole. In South West Thames, an estimated 3 per cent. waited 21 months or more, compared with 5 per cent. nationally.

Statutory Sick Pay Scheme

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what plans his Department has to review the operation of the statutory sick pay scheme since April 1983

in the light of the criticisms contained in the new report published by the Disability Alliance, ERA, Leicester rights centre and the Leicester city council low pay campaign, copies of which were sent to him; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Major *[pursuant to his reply,* 9 May 1986, c. *290*]: We have kept the operation of the statutory sick pay scheme under continuous review since its introduction in April 1983 and devoted considerable effort to making employers familiar with it. In the first year of the scheme, 85 per cent. of all employers were visited by DHSS inspectors and SSP payments checked. The overall error rate was 15 per cent. but this will have improved as more employers have become accustomed to the rules. Since then we have concentrated our checks on those employers whom we believe to be most likely to make mistakes, either because of our findings on the first phase of visits or because the employer may be less familiar with the SSP arrangements. The error rate is correspondingly high (28 per cent.), made up of 16 per cent. overpayments and 12 per cent. underpayments. These mistakes are discussed with the employer to ensure that he understands the rules for the future. In 1985 we checked 116,000 employee records in this way. We also maintain a random sample check of employers generally. Our monitoring generally is at a level recommended by the Public Accounts Committee.

We expect and wish to achieve lower error rates. We shall keep the operation of the scheme under close scrutiny and seek continued improvement, which I believe will come as all employers gain more experience of SSP. The report to which the hon. and learned Member refers concludes that the transfer of sickness payments to employers has been a failure, but I cannot accept this. The vast majority of employers take their responsibilities in this area seriously. Most of their mistakes have been technical—for example, failure to apply the rule about waiting days — and I am sure that we are right to concentrate our checking efforts on the minority of employers where mistakes persist at an unduly high rate.

Health Authorities (Expenditure)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the spending per capita in the Leicester health authority area at the latest available date; and what is the comparable figure for the other health authorities within the Trent region;

(2) what is the spending per capita in the Trent region at the latest available date; and what is the comparable level of spending in the other regions of England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply,* 9 May 1986, c. *290.*]: The tables show health authority revenue expenditure per head of resident population in 1984-85 for each regional health authority in England and for each district health authority in the Trent region.

Expenditure per capita is not the best basis for comparison between health authorities, as it does not reflect the greater demands made on health services by the very young and by elderly people, or the differing patterns of morbidity across the country. Nor does it take account of patient flows across health authority boundaries. In allocating resources to regions, the Department "weights" regional populations to take account of each region's age and sex distribution, and of its relative mortality (as a proxy for morbidity). The population figures are also adjusted to take account of patient flows between regions for treatment. Column (2) of table 1 shows expenditure in each region in 1984-85 relative to the "weighted" population data used for resource allocations for that year.

Comparable data on district populations are not available centrally, but my hon. Friend may like to approach the chairman of the Trent regional health authority for further details.

Table 1

Region	*(1) Revenue Spending per capita 1984-5*	*(2) Revenue Spending per head of weighted population 1984-85*
	£	£
Northern	189·73	182·05
Yorkshire	182·72	182·14
Trent	172·69	183·97
East Anglian	172·87	181·63
North west Thames	202·01	212·11
North east Thames	235·75	216·92
South east Thames	214·75	208·56
South west Thames	198·48	204·49
Wessex	170·88	183·06
Oxford	158·79	190·13
South Western	182·72	179·47
West Midlands	177·60	182·61
Mersey	199·05	188·08
North Western	203·79	183·96
All England	191·00	191·00

Notes

1. The table excludes extra provision made for certain specialist services.

2. Comparable data are not available for Wales.

Table 2

Trent RHA Districts	*Revenue Spending per capita, 1984-85*
N. Derbyshire	105·50
S. Derbyshire	160·10
Leicestershire	157·53
N. Lincolnshire	191·61
S. Lincolnshire	134·01
Bassetlaw	124·07
C Nottinghamshire	153·77
Nottingham	206·19
Barnsley	138·34
Doncaster	149·62
Rotherham	126·42
Sheffield	255·83
All Districts	168·07

Notes

1. Table excludes expenditure on regionally provided services.

2. Comparisons between expenditure per head of resident population as shown in the table need careful interpretation as patient flows across health authority boundaries for treatment are significant at district level.

Claimants (Camden)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for the latest available year *(a)* the number of disqualifications for unemployment benefit and *(b)* the number of deductions from supplementary benefit experienced by claimants in Camden on the ground of voluntary unemployment.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply,* 12 May 1986, c. *384-5*]: I regret that information on the number of deductions from supplementary benefit experienced by claimants in Camden on the grounds of voluntary

unemployment is not available centrally. Statistics are not kept routinely, so that the information could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

The Department of Employment informs me that in the year ended 31 March 1986, 888 claims for unemployment benefit were disqualified on the grounds of voluntary unemployment at the two Camden unemployment benefit offices.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has concerning the numbers of war widows who are in receipt only of the Department of Health and Social Security pension.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, *c. 497*]: Of the 65,000 widows receiving war widows pension, a small minority also receive a pension from the Ministry of Defence under the armed forces pension scheme.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cereals

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, what was the actual reduction in prices of cereals under the common agricultural policy in the last year; what is proposed for this year; and what is the estimated surplus production.

Mr. Gummer: The reductions in cereal intervention prices for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are set out in the table. Production of all cereals in the Community in 1985-86 is estimated to be 18·8 million tonnes above consumption. Current intervention stocks for all cereals in the Community amount to 15·3 million tonnes.

CAP Support Prices: Changes Between Marketing Years

	*1985-86** *ECU/tonne*	*1986-87** *ECU/tonne*
Common Wheat	−3·29	0‡
Barley	−3·29	−8·97
Maize	−3·29	0
Sorghum	−3·29	−8·97
Rye	−3·35	−1·79‡
Durum Wheat	0	−12·48

* The changes relate to the first month of the marketing years.

‡ The 1986-87 common intervention price is only payable for wheat meeting specific technical quality criteria. A 2 per cent. premium has been introduced for breadwheat of a higher quality. Wheat failing to meet the technical quality standards will be subject to a discount of up to 7 per cent.

‡ The 1986-87 intervention price is payable for rye of breadmaking quality. Feed rye is subject to a discount of −5·9 per cent.

Bees

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture Fisheries and Food whether he will introduce a scheme to give financial relief to commercial beekeepers who lose more than 50 per cent of their stock because of adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is prepared to relax on a temporary basis import restrictions on new colonies of bees to allow the commercial beekeeping industry to restock after the losses caused by the recent adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner: No. Import controls were introduced to protect bee health in the United Kingdom. Any relaxation of these controls would be potentially more damaging to our bee population than the effects of recent bad weather.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is prepared to grant financial assistance to beekeepers who have to import bees to restock due to losses caused by the recent adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner: No. Many beekeepers do not favour increased import of bees as a means of making up losses in the bee population.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will investigate the possibility of making sugar available to commercial beekeepers at subsidised rates to allow them to recover losses sustained as a result of the recent adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Replanting Grants

Sir John Wells asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, in view of the level of up-take of replanting grants for apple trees, he will extend the period for which such grants are available.

Mrs. Fenner: The orchard replanting grants were introduced for a period of five years to give a short-term boost to replanting, and we have no plans to extend the period.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the difference between the assumed fall and the actual fall in the value of the dollar, the cost of the difference, the assumed rate in the current year and the actual rate this year to date since his written reply dated 3 May 1985, *Official Report*, column *277*, concerning the effect of a fall in the dollar on expenditure under the common agricultural policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: The exchange rate used to estimate agricultural expenditure in the 1985 Budget was 1·30 ecu to the US dollar. The actual average rate in 1985 turned out higher, at 1·33 ecu to the US dollar. The 1986 budget adopted by the European Parliament assumed a rate of 1·20 ecu to the US dollar. The average rate to 14 May this year has been 1·06 ecu to the US dollar.

Beer

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Economic Community Commission on behalf of the British brewing trade to allow British beers free access to the German market; whether any restrictions are imposed against the export of British beers in any other European Economic Community country; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ascertain the specific reasons why British beers are not allowed to be exported to Germany and, in particular, whether there are substances, including formaldehyde in the beers which are causes for objection.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Milk

Mr. Hicks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quantities of milk supplied to each local education authority in Great Britain on which a European Economic Community subsidy was claimed during the 1984-85 school year.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what will be the stocking rate to be used for standard quota, with reference to landlords and tenants in the milk producers outgoers scheme.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each product the increase in farm support prices this year in the United Kingdom in terms of sterling, together with the increase in productivity expected on the basis of past trends.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *485*]: A note giving details of the recent CAP prices settlement has been placed in the Library of the House. Changes in the support price levels applicable in the United Kingdom are shown, for the main commodities, in the table. Future changes in productivity will be influenced by many factors, including developments in plant and animal breeding, the organisation of farming and the weather. Provisional calculations, described in "The Annual Review of Agriculture 1986" (Cmnd 9708), paragraph 22, suggest that the productivity of United Kingdom agriculture rose by an average of around 3 per cent. a year over the last decade, and by 2·5 per cent. a year over the last five years.

CAP Support Prices applying in the United Kingdom: Change between the 1985-86 and 1986-87 Marketing Years

		£ per tonne
Wheat*† (common intervention price)		+ 1·50
Barley*† (common intervention price)		− 4·13
Sugar (minimum price for sugar beet, A quota)		+ 0·35
Oilseed rape*‡ (intervention price)		+ 3.54
Beef and veal (guide price)		+34·79
Pigmeat‖ (basic price)		+34·51
Sheepmeat¶ (basic price)	pp litre	+73·37
Milk (target price)		+ 0·49

Notes:

* The changes shown are based on the interim support prices for 1985-86 set by the Commission and relate to the first months of the marketing year.

† A 2 per cent. (£2·25 per tonne) premium has been introduced for breadwheat of a higher quality. Wheat failing to meet the intervention quality will be subject to a discount of up to 7 per cent. (£7·88 per tonne). A corresponsibility levy (set at 3 per cent. of the wheat intervention price — or some £3·37 per tonne) is to be collected at the time of first processing, sale into intervention or on export. A number of other changes have been made to the cereals support arrangements.

‡ The intervention price is subject to a reduction of up to £14·55 per tonne if forecast EC10 production exceeds the maximum guaranteed quantity for the 1986-87 marketing year.

‖ The price for 1986-87 relates to a revised (higher) standard quality of carcase.

¶ The marketing year corresponds to the calendar year: the basic price in ECUs is unchanged for 1987. The increase shown represents the extent to which the basic price would rise in a full year due solely to the devaluation of the green £ operative from 12 May.

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether West Germany has been authorised to take national measures to help their farmers as a result of the price settlement under the common agricultural policy.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *485*]: This year's price-fixing agreement did not include authorisation for the introduction of national measures to help farmers in West Germany. Any aids which the German authorities might decide to offer would have to conform to the treaty of Rome and be notified to the Commission accordingly.

Hill Land Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the remaining 25 per cent. of the payment for hill land compensatory allowances will be paid to farmers.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Trichinella Spiralis

Mr. John asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will estimate the cost per carcase if current testing for trichinella spiralis was carried out within the state veterinary service.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *94*]: The cost per carcase, if testing for trichinella spiralis were undertaken by the state veterinary service, would depend on several factors; in particular, it would depend on the number of samples presented for testing on a regular basis and the proximity of the laboratory to slaughter-houses. It is estimated that the cost would vary around the average cost for testing carried out under the supervision of local veterinary inspectors. My Department is currently reviewing the cost of the present arrangements and in this connection will consider, consistent with the need to meet the West German requirements, whether it would be cost-effective for the state veterinary service to provide a trichinella testing service in particular areas.

Milk Quotas

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what steps he intends to take to assist those dairy farmers affected by the decision to make a 3 per cent. cut in milk quotas over the next three years.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *535*]: The 3 per cent. cut in milk quotas will be achieved

as far as possible through the Community milk outgoers scheme. I am consulting industry organisations with a view to ensuring that we operate this scheme in the most effective possible way.

Pest Infestation Research Laboratory

Mr. Watts asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement about the future of the pest infestation research laboratory in London road, Slough.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 May 1986, c. *595*]: The efficiency scrutiny of central agricultural science service and food science laboratories (a copy of which was placed in the Library of the House of Commons in June 1985) identified the potential for improved management and the more effective use of manpower and equipment in locating all ASS laboratories on one site. The ASS Laboratory in London road, Slough is one of the laboratories involved.

My Department is presently examining possible options for relocation.

Thames Barrier

Mr. Spearing asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement concerning the condition of electrical control equipment of the Thames barrier and the extent to which it is currently restricted in its operation.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 16 May 1986, c. *596*]: This is a matter for the Thames water authority. I understand that some of the electrical relays used in the control equipment at the Thames barrier have proved less reliable than the specification required. All of these relays are being replaced by a modified type that is expected to perform satisfactorily.

Neither the present condition of the relays nor the work of replacement is restricting the operation of the Thames barrier.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Late Night Car Service

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal whether, pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 662-3, to the hon. Member for Leicester East, the costs given for the late night car service were grossed up for tax.

Mr. Biffen: No.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal, pursuant to the answer of 28 April, *Official Report*, column 662-3, to the hon. Member for Leicester, East, about the late night car service, what advice is given to House of Commons staff about the tax treatment of the car service.

Mr. Biffen: Discussions took place between the authorities of the House and the Inland Revenue Department some years ago concerning the treatment of House of Commons staff in respect of the use of the late night car service facility in cases where such use might give rise to a liability to tax. Following those discussions the Revenue, applying its usual "de minimis" principle, indicated that it would not treat as a taxable benefit the use of the facility from time to time by a member of staff, as a result of irregular and unpredictable late sittings of the House.

House of Commons staff are treated no differently than any other taxpayer in this respect, and the need to provide general advice does not, therefore, arise.

Magazine and Periodicals

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the weekly and annual cost of weekly magazines and periodicals supplied to the House; what was the cost in each of the past three years; and if he will list the newspapers supplied and break down their cost as between each title.

Mr. Biffen: Expenditure on weekly magazines and periodicals cannot readily be identified separately. The overall costs of newspapers and periodicals supplied to the Library Department and to the Serjeant at Arms' Department respectively in the past three years were as follows:

Library Department

	£ *Total Cost*	£ *Weekly Rate*
1982-83	35,125	675
1983-84	37,112	714
1984-85	48,423	931
1985-86	46,181	888

Serjeant at Arms Department

	£ *Total Cost*	£ *Weekly Rate (sitting weeks only)*
1982-83	15,019	429
1983-84	13,977	437
1984-85	17,527	487
1985-86	18,159	504

A list of titles filed in the Library is available in the Reference Room; and further details can be provided on request to the respective Departments. A number of newspapers are supplied to the House free of charge.

ENVIRONMENT

Rate Capping

Mr. Stern asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, by what date he will announce any decision to impose general rate capping for 1987-88.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Rates Act 1984 does not specify a date by which my right hon. Friend must announce any intention to impose general rate limitation for the following financial year. A proposal to introduce general rate limitation would need the approval of both Houses.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish details of the economic model used to forecast local government expenditure and rate support grant mechanisms.

Mrs. Rumbold: A number of methods are used to forecast local authority expenditure and the impact of rate

support grant mechanisms. These include taking account of past trends and future expenditure commitments, and the reports of the expenditure groups of the consultative council on local government finance. Limited use has also been made of a prediction model, details of which will shortly be published in the academic journal "Government and Policy".

Radiation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment for how long it is intended that regular monitoring for radioisotopes of barium 140, caesium 134 and 137, iodine 131, ruthenium 103 and tellurium 132 in soil, air, rain and surface water will be continued; and with what regularity sampling analysis will be undertaken.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and the National Radiological Protection Board monitor the long-term movements of all radionucleides on a regular basis and the results are published.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the derived emergency reference levels used by the National Radiological Protection Board take into account the fact that iodine-131, caesium-137, strontium-90 and other fission products do not normally appear individually in the environment.

Mrs. Rumbold: Yes.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the levels of strontium-90 in the environment and food at the present time as a result of the Soviet reactor incident.

Mrs. Rumbold: Only small amounts have been found and levels are radiologically much less significant those of iodine-131 and radiocaesium.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish figures of the incidence and intensity of the level of caesium 137 at the various radioactivity monitoring points for each of the days, or readings taken over the period, since the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the bulletins issued by my Department and the data collated by the National Radiological Protection Board. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measurements of radioactivity and allied readings were carried out over the past month by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology on his behalf in Cumbria and nearby areas; what were the results; and what were the results of comparable tests carried out in these areas by other bodies.

Mr. Waldegrave: No monitoring of radioactivity from the Chernobyl accident was carried out by the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology on behalf of the Department although monitoring was carried out at the initiative of the institute. This included measurements of radioactivity in rainwater, milk and bulked vegetation. Measurement reported to the Department up to 10·00 hours on 15 May 1986 have been included in the collection of monitoring results issued on 15 May. The rainwater and milk measurements are consistent with other measurements in the same area.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what instructions were given on his behalf to officers of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology regarding communicating to the media the results of their monitoring of radioactivity and allied readings.

Mr. Waldegrave: Officers of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology were informed of the co-ordination arrangements for the collation and publication of monitoring results which have been provided by my Department. The ITE made its results available to the co-ordination team and those available to DOE by 10·00 hours on 15 May 1986 are included in a collation issued on 15 May. The MAFF assessed the results and concluded that they did not justify any special advice being offered to the public.

Drigg

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals for revising the radioactive discharge authorisation for Drigg; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The authorisation for the Drigg radioactive waste disposal site is currently under review.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how long, in general, intermediate-level nuclear waste has to be stored before it becomes low-level nuclear waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: The length of storage will depend entirely on the radionuclides present and their half-lives.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received about his Department's report on best practicable environmental options for disposal of nuclear waste from those organisations consulted during its drafting; and how many of these representations were critical, favourable or neutral, respectively.

Mr. Waldegrave: I received a number of favourable comments as well as constructive criticisms on the draft final report made available in November 1985.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what relative weight the authors of the report on best practicable environmental options for disposal of nuclear waste were asked to give to *(a)* the cost of disposal and *(b)* safety.

Mr. Waldegrave: The authors were not directed to give any specific weight to cost of disposal and safety. The range of weights reflects the views of the experts involved in the study.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to what extent storage costs of nuclear waste have been revised downwards since the preparation of his Department's report on best practicable environmental options.

Mr. Waldegrave: Subsequent studies suggest that the assessment of storage costs in the BPEO report were good. I am sending to the hon. Member a copy of a report on "Implications of long-term surface or near-surface storage of intermediate and low-level radioactive wastes in the United Kingdom" which gives further details.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the names of the 18 independent consultants who were involved in the drawing up of the assessment of best practicable environmental options for managment of low and intermediate-level solid radioactive wastes; and what are their individual areas of specialist knowledge.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give his response to the recommendation of the Environment Committee in paragraph 280 of the report on radioactive waste, that responsibility for final short listing of possible nuclear dump sites shall rest with his Department rather than NIREX; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government's response to the Environment Committee's recommendation 36 was set out in paragraphs 42 to 44 of the Government's first stage response on 2 May 1986 to the Committee's report.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many letters he received from firms and individuals concerned in the food industry about the inclusion of Killingholme in the special development order on nuclear dumping; how many he has replied to before publishing the order; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: Seven letters from those known to be involved in the food industry. Replies to all outstanding correspondence will be sent as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many delegations and deputations he received on the special development order on nuclear dumping; how he evaluated their arguments; what changes he made to the NIREX proposals as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My right hon. Friend, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I have together or separately met a number of deputations from local authorities and other bodies. Representations made then and in correspondence were carefully considered and a number of changes made to the draft order.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, what is the total volume of radioactive nuclear waste, differentiating between low-level waste, intermediate-level waste and high-level waste arising from different sources, namely: reprocessing, power stations, research, medical and industrial sources up to the year 2030 showing the amount from each of the above sources and the extent to which any of the low-level waste could be categorised as very low-level waste.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her answer*, 12 May 1986, c. *358*]: The figures given were incorrect. The following corrected figures are for conditioned wastes likely to arise by 2,030, assuming moderate growth in nuclear power generation and in reprocessing.

Source	*HGW*	*ILW*	*LLW*
Reactors (committed and proposed including decommissioning)	—	53,000 cubic metres	278,000 cubic metres
Reprocessing	8,300 cubic metres	109,000 cubic metres	840,000 cubic metres
Research/Medical		35,000 cubic metres	75,000 cubic metres
Industrial	—		
Total	8,300 cubic metres	197,000 cubic metres	1,193,000 cubic metres

The LLW is assumed to be compacted.

The figure for heat-generating waste (HGW) relates to the form in which such wastes are currently stored: HGW will be solidified into glass blocks when the new plant is available and this will have the effect of reducing the volume to about one third.

It is not possible to estimate what proportion of LLW could be categorised as very low-level waste.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he received the letter of 4 April 1985 sent by Mr. R. A. Shearing of 43 Landsdowne Avenue, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear dump at Killingholme; if he has yet replied to this letter; and if he will make it his policy to allow Mr. Shearing time to reply to him before he brings forward the special development order;

(2) when he received the letter of 7 April 1985 from Mrs. V. Ingram of 116 Pelham Avenue, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear dump site at Killingholme; if he has yet replied to this letter; and if he will allow Mrs. Ingram time to reply to him before he brings forward his proposals;

(4) if he will make it his policy to reply to Councillor Doug Pitchett of 198 Broadway, Grimsby DN34 5QJ, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the recipient to reply before any special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will reply to Councillor John Colebrook of 56 Gloucester Avenue, Grimsby, South Humberside DN34 5BZ about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the recipient to reply before the special development order is laid, and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to the answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *549*]: I wrote to the hon. Member on 14 May in response to his letter covering that from Mrs. Ingram. Replies to outstanding letters from the hon. Member covering letters from his constituents will be sent as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he intends to collect evidence from the Anglian water authority on the four possible nuclear dump sites before a special development order is laid;

(2) what consultations he has had with the Anglian water authority about the drainage, water table, dampness and water flow problems of the land at Killingholme, South Humberside, selected by NIREX as a possible nuclear dump.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 16 May 1986, c. *549*]: I consulted the authority over the terms of the special development order. Consultations with the authority on specific hydrogeological factors are initially a matter for NIREX.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many sites will be producing waste

which will be taken to the Government's proposed low-level nuclear waste dump once it is in operation; how many are accessible for rail transportation; how many would be sending waste by road; what preference he has expressed to NIREX for transportation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *550*]: There are some 2,000 premises in England and Wales where radioactive substances are produced. Many of these will probably make use of the proposed disposal facility. It is not possible to say at this stage how much waste will travel to the site by road or rail. My Department has not expressed any preference, but mode of transport will be taken into account when the proposals from UK NIREX Ltd are considered.

Mr. Lyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of research report number DOE/RW/85-124 referred to in the reply to the hon. Member for Mid-Bedfordshire of 12 May column *358* in the Library.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what is his estimate of the proportion by volume of low-level nuclear waste produced each year by reprocessing of *(a)* British nuclear waste and *(b)* imported nuclear waste and his estimate of the amount by volume of low-level waste when the THORP reprocessing plant is completed;

(2) what is the difference between the radiological risks of storing nuclear waste on nuclear power station sites and those for early disposal in nuclear dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the letters protesting at the inclusion of Killingholme in the special development order on nuclear dumping he replied to before publishing it.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Conservation and Development Conference

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the members of the United Kingdom delegation to the international conference on conservation and development in Canada; how many United Kingdom delegates are women; if the Overseas Development Administration health and population division is represented; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The world conservation strategy conference, to be held in Ottawa from 31 May to 5 June, is not an intergovernmental conference. However, a number of British organisations will be represented. The Department of the Environment will be represented by my hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local Government. Within the United Kingdom the occasion will be marked by the publication of the United Kingdom Government's response to the world conservation strategy, "Conservation and Development: The British Approach," which will record the United Kingdom's achievements in the field of environmental conservation, and relate these to the guiding principles of the world conservation strategy.

The Overseas Development Administration will be represented at the conference by Mr. Eamoinn Taylor from its natural resources and environment department and Dr. David Butcher, its senior social development adviser with special responsibility for women in development. In representing the ODA, this team will incorporate the concerns of the health and population department.

Nuclear Dumping

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many staff in his Department are currently engaged in replying to correspondence on nuclear dumping.

Mr. Waldegrave: The division which deals with administrative matters concerning radioactive waste management policy, including the bulk of correspondence on the subject, currently consists of 14 staff, of whom one is supernumerary. The number of staff dealing with correspondence at any one time depends on the volume and urgency of other work.

Radioactivity (Sussex)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what radioisotopes were detected in air, rainwater and surface deposits in East and West Sussex, respectively, over the period between Monday 21 April and Monday 12 May; and what are their respective chemical and biological half-lives.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer my hon. Friend to the bulletins issued by my Department and the data collated by the National Radiological Protection Board. Copies have been placed in the Library of the House.

Kirby Town Football Club

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the way in which Knowsley council has monitored, on behalf of his Department, the work carried out with public funds at Kirby town football club; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Allegations that public funds have been misappropriated are the subject of police investigations. I cannot comment further until those are complete.

Lionise Development Company

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will detail the public funds that have been made available to the Liverpool development company, Lionise.

Sir George Young: An urban development grant of £99,000.

Sewage

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will give details of the locations around the coast of the United Kingdom where macerated or screen sewage not subjected to any form of biological treatment is deposited directly into the coastal waters;

(2) if he will give details of all locations around the coast of the United Kingdom where macerated or screened sewage not subject to any form of biological treatment is deposited directly into coastal waters above the 100 m high water mark;

(3) if he will give details of the sites around the coast of the United Kingdom where sewage sludge is deposited in the coastal waters;

(4) if he will give details of all locations around the coast of the United Kingdom where untreated sewage is put directly into coastal waters above the 100 m high water mark;

(5) if he will give details of all places around the coast of the United Kingdom where untreated sewage is put directly into coastal waters.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information sought by the hon. Member is not held centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Planning (County Councillors)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the declaration of interest required of county councillors dealing with and voting on planning matters in which they may have an interest.

Mr. Tracey: The statutory requirements governing the declaration of pecuniary interests by local authority members are contained in sections 94 to 98 and 105 of the Local Government Act 1972. These are summarised in Department of the Environment circular 105/73. Guidance on the declaration of non-pecuniary interests is contained in the national code of local government conduct, published as DOE circular 94/75.

Housing Staff College

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards the proposal by the Audit Commission in the report entitled "Managing the Crisis in Council Housing" for a housing staff college.

Mr. John Patten: We are considering how best to use the clause 11 provisions in the new Housing and Planning Bill, if enacted, to make grants for housing management, education and training. The Audit Commission's proposal for a housing staff college will be one of the potential initiatives examined in that context.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if pursuant to his reply of 16 January, *Official Report*, column *662*, he will list the 50 English housing authorities which owned the highest number of the 13,500 dwellings which had been vacant for more than two years; and what percentage of the stock this figure represents.

Mr. John Patten: The 51 English local authorities which, in their housing investment programme returns, reported owning more than 20 dwellings vacant for more than two years (including those which were closed) at 1 April 1985, are as listed:

Local Authority	*Vacant more than two years*	
	Number	*Per cent. of stock*
1 Liverpool	2314	3·65
2 Manchester	1058	1·31
3 Hackney	860	1·88
4 Tower Hamlets	528	2·83
5 Sunderland	491	1·07
6 Newham	452	1·45
7 Sheffield	348	0·38
8 Lewisham	324	0·77
9 Oldham	317	1·21
10 Lambeth	291	0·60
11 Camden	275	0·81
12 Knowsley	252	0·95
13 Salford	233	0·55
14 Islington	227	0·55
15 Westminster	207	0·89
16 North Tyneside	190	0·66
17 Brent	180	0·83
18 Burnley	176	2·40
19 Corby	172	1·69
20 Calderdale	171	1·08
21 Gateshead	169	0·47
22 Sandwell	161	0·29
23 Test Valley	146	1·92
24 Leeds	146	0·16
25 Wolverhampton	139	0·34
26 Bradford	138	0·37
27 Haringey	137	0·57
28 Newcastle upon Tyne	131	0·28
29 Coventry	130	0·51
30 Dudley	125	0·34
31 Wandsworth	112	0·29
32 Rochdale	107	0·49
33 Birmingham	78	0·06
34 Hammersmith and Fulham	66	0·35
35 Doncaster	64	0·18
36 Kensington and Chelsea	58	0·65
37 Rotherham	58	0·17
38 West Lancashire	54	0·48
39 Waltham Forest	52	0·25
40 Greenwich	50	0·14
41 Preston	46	0·40
42 Leicester	44	0·13
43 Thurrock	33	0·21
44 Darlington	32	0·38
45 Bolsover	29	0·34
46 Hartlepool	27	0·24
47 Ashford	26	0·29
48 Tonbridge and Malling	25	0·35
49 East Staffordshire	24	0·34
50 Ealing	21	0·10
51 Warrington	21	0·16

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if, pursuant to his reply of 15 January, *Official Report*, columns *573-6*, he will give a breakdown of the numbers of dwellings shown in sections D1 and D13 as vacant and available for letting which had been in this condition for *(a)* more than three months, *(b)* more than six months and *(c)* more than one year;

(2) if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr, of 28 January, *Official Report*, column *470*, he will list for each housing authority the numbers of empty dwellings vacant for more than one year and which had been available for letting for more than one year.

Mr. John Patten: Information is not collected about how long local authority dwellings vacant at any date have been available for letting.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 50 most deprived housing authorities as measured by his Department using the housing Z score, giving the figure for each authority.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer this question shortly.

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will seek to ensure that the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee has no members from the board of NIREX.

Mr. Waldegrave: This suggestion will be borne in mind in considering the Government's response to the Environment Committee's recommendation on the membership of the Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee.

Housing (Land Availability)

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, in the light of his inspector's report of 25 February on the appeal by Crest Homes plc in respect of land in Ferndown, he will make a statement on the availability of land for housing in south-east Dorset.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend understands that sufficient land is available in south-east Dorset to meet the housing provision in the south-east Dorset structure plan. Structure plan policies are only one of the material considerations to be taken into account when determining planning applications. It is declared Government policy that there is a presumption in favour of allowing development unless harm would thereby be caused to interests of acknowledged importance.

Rates

Mr. Rogers asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of total personal disposable income was expended on domestic rates in the years 1956-57, 1979-80 and in 1984-85.

Mrs. Rumbold: Domestic rate payments, net of rate rebates, as a proportion of total personal disposable income in the United Kingdom are estimated to be 2 per cent. in 1956-57 and 1979-80, and 2·3 per cent. in 1984-85. The 1956-57 figure is not comparable with those for later years as it includes charges for water and sewerage.

Smith Houses

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will list the criteria used in determining the terms of the designation order for Smith houses in Leicester with particular reference to the availability of an approved scheme or system of repair; and whether he will make a statement on the position of owner-occupiers of such houses in Leicester.

Sir George Young: The definition of the Smith designated class and qualifying defect were based on the Building Research Establishment's findings. Copies of the BRE's reports on Smith houses are in the Library: these describe the way these houses were constructed and the defects found. The cut-off date specified (19 December 1985) is the date of publication of the BRE's most recent report. My hon. Friend the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction announced on that day that the government intended to designate Smith houses nationally under the housing defects legislation. That designation is now in force and owners are now entitled to assistance. For assistance via grant aid for reinstatement, Leicester city council has to be satisfied that the works proposed deal satisfactorily with the qualifying defect and that the other conditions set out in the legislation are met. I am not currently aware of a Smith repair system yet confirmed as satisfying all those requirements. But I hope such systems will be developed, as they are being for other designated types. If not, or where it would be unreasonable to expect owners to await the carrying out of repairs, the legislation provides for repurchase, at 95 per cent. of defect-free value.

London Residuary Body (Chairman)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the chairman of the London Residuary Body is permitted under his terms of appointment to accept paid directorships.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The terms of the chairman's appointment take account of the guidance to Departments on non-departmental public bodies issued by the Cabinet Office (MPO) and Her Majesty's Treasury. A copy of the guidance is in the Library. The terms of appointment do not preclude the chairman from accepting other paid appointments. However, they do require him to declare any potential conflict of interest, financial or otherwise, to the members of the London Residuary Body's board; and to agree arrangements with them to avoid any such conflict.

Dog Licence Fees

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from individual councils regarding his Department's consultation on dog licence fees.

Mrs. Rumbold: Some 80 borough, district and county councils and some 50 town and parish councils responded to our consultation paper on future dog licensing arrangements in Great Britain. We have also received about 40 further representations since the end of the consultation period.

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when a decision will be announced regarding the public response to his Department's consultation paper on dog licence fees; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: We will announce our conclusions as soon as possible.

Water Industry

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the provision for first-time sewerage and new developments in rural areas following privatisation of the water authorities.

Mrs. Rumbold: We have no plans to change the basic principles governing these matters, but our recent consultation paper on water and sewerage law proposed some detailed changes in the requisitioning arrangements. The consultation period ends on 30 May.

Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why access to the Queen's Gallery at

Buckingham Palace has been made impossible for visitors in wheelchairs; if he will take steps to remove the obstacles; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Access to the Queen's Gallery has had to be temporarily diverted whilst construction work is in progress on an adjacent site. In order to maintain access to the gallery during the course of this work, a temporary staircase has been erected. Regretfully this is the only safe entrance for the public and this temporary arrangement will have to remain in place until the construction work is completed in the spring of 1987.

Nuclear Dumps

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will reply to the letter to him from Councillor S. J. Norton of 38 Melrose Way, Grimsby, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the councillor to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will make it his policy to reply to Councillor J. F. Orchard of 8 Worsley Close, Immingham, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the recipient to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make it his policy to reply to the letter to him from Councillor A. M. Webster of 66 Caister Drive, Grimsby, South Humberside, about the South Killingholme proposed nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for the councillor to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(4) if he will make it his policy to reply to Mrs. J. Bourne of 25 Edge Avenue, Grimsby, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for her to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement;

(5) if he will make it his policy to reply to Councillor N. Perkins of Oakhurst, 66 Station Road, Great Coates, Great Grimsby, about the South Killingholme potential nuclear waste disposal site in sufficient time for him to have a reasonable opportunity to reply before the special development order is laid; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to the answers*, 9 May 1986, c. *308*, and 12 May 1986, c. *358*]: Replies will be sent to all letters received as soon as possible.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what steps his Department takes to keep informed of the substance of contacts between British and Soviet scientists on nuclear energy matters;

(2) what information is given to his Department about discussions between British scientists and the International Atomic Energy Agency;

(3) what guidance his Department gives to British scientists about the formality and substance of contacts they have with eastern bloc scientists on nuclear energy matters.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Norman Shaw South (Drinking Water Taps)

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he expects the additional drinking water taps in Norman Shaw South to be connected to the water supply as referred to in the answer of 25 July 1985, *Official Report*, columns *705-6*, by the Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young).

Sir George Young: They have been connected. I regret that the work was not completed as quickly as anticipated.

Water Industry

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he intends to issue the document "Water Privatisation: Proposals for Water Companies" for public comment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to whom he circulated the document "Water Privatisation: Proposals for Water Companies"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Palace of Westminster (Lighting and Ventilation)

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what criteria are applied in the Palace of Westminster for determining lighting and ventilation standards in the office areas; and if he will arrange for an independent review of their adequacy.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The lighting standard applied by the Property Services Agency to office areas in the Palace of Westminster is 350 lux, which is a measure of brightness. In office areas with openable windows ventilation is mostly by natural means alone; in other office areas the agency applies the criteria recommended in the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers guide and London borough byelaws.

The provision of satisfactory lighting and ventilation in the Palace, and the associated operational problems, are subject to ongoing review; although I do not consider that a general review of this wholly atypical building would serve a useful purpose at this juncture. But if the hon. Member has any particular areas in view that require more light being thrown upon them, I will see what can be done.

NATIONAL FINANCE

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what are the implications for the completion of the internal market of the European Economic Community of the rate of participation of member states in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The completion of the internal market does not depend directly on the participation of member states in the exchange rate mechanism of the European monetary system.

EC (Taxes and Duties)

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list all regulations made by him since 1983 relating

to the implementation of value added tax, other indirect taxes, customs duties and excise duties, in accordance with European Community rules.

Mr. Brooke: Following is the information:

Regulations:—

SI 1984/155 —The Value Added Tax (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1984.
SI 1985/105 —The Value Added Tax (General) (Amendment) Regulations 1985.
SI 1985/886 —The Value Added Tax Regulations 1985.
SI 1985/1032—The Excise Duties (Hydrocarbon Oils) (Deferred Payment) Regulations 1985.
SI 1985/1377—The Excise Duties (Relief on Small Consignments) Regulations 1985.
SI 1985/1650—The Value Added Tax (General) Regulations 1985 (Amendment) Regulations 1985.
SI 1985/1737—The Car Tax Regulations 1985.
SI 1984/718 —The Customs Duties (Personal Reliefs) (No. 1) Order 1968 (Amendment) Order 1984.
SI 1984/719 —The Customs Duties (Community Relief) Order 1984.
SI 1984/746 —The Value Added Tax (Imported Goods) Relief Order 1984.
SI 1984/895 —The Customs and Excise Duties (Relief for Imported Legacies) Order 1984.
SI 1984/1685—The Value Added Tax (Place of Supply) Order 1984.
SI 1985/432 —The Value Added Tax (Finance) Order 1985.
SI 1985/799 —The Value Added Tax (Hiring of Goods) Order 1985.
SI 1985/1375—The Customs Duty (Personal Reliefs) (No. 1) Order 1968 (Amendment) Order 1985.
SI 1985/1376—The Customs and Excise Duties (Personal Reliefs for Goods Permanently Imported) Order 1983 (Amendment) Order 1985.
SI 1985/1378—The Customs and Excise Duties (Relief for Imported Legacies) Order 1984 (Amendment) Order 1985.
SI 1985/1384—The Value Added Tax (Imported Goods) Relief (Amendment) Order 1985.
SI 1985/1646—The Value Added Tax (Temporarily Imported Goods) Relief Order 1985.
SI 1985/1900—The Value Added Tax (Welfare) Order 1985.

National Balance Sheet

Mr. Higgins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimates have been made by the Government or their associated public bodies as to the state of the Government or national balance sheet; and whether any future publication of such a balance sheet is planned.

Mr. Lawson: The Central Statistical Office publishes balance sheet information in a number of places:

(i) tables published annually in the June edition of "Financial Statistics" give figures for financial assets and liabilities by sector at market value. For the non-bank private sector only, this information is supplemented by tables published in each edition of "Financial Statistics".
(ii) the annual publication "United Kingdom National Accounts" (the "Blue Book") gives estimates for each sector, and the nation as a whole, of the stock of fixed capital at replacement costs, both gross and net of depreciation.
(iii) the annual publication "United Kingdom Balance of Payments" (the "Pink Book") shows the United Kingdom's overseas assets and liabilities.
(iv) the February edition of "Financial Statistics" gives a table which analyses the debt of the public sector at nominal value by type of instrument and sector of holder.
(v) the February edition of "Financial Statistics" also gives a table showing the balance sheet of the personal sector (physical assets and financial assets and liabilities) at market value. Full balance sheets of this kind for all sectors were last published in "Economic Trends", November 1980 with data up to the end of 1975.

Agricultural Expenditure

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether an increase in agricultural spending above the guideline in one year raises the ceiling for the next year under the agreed formula.

Mr. Brooke: No. The base for calculating the level of EC agricultural spending consistent with the financial guideline is the average of the expenditure outturn in 1984 and 1985.

EC Budget

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the forecast contribution to the European Economic Community budget this year, including supplementaries, as a percentage of the contribution in 1979 in terms of sterling, *(b)* the corresponding increase in expenditure by the United Kingdom Government and *(c)* the increase in the retail prices index.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the figure for gross receipts from, and gross payments to, the European Economic Community budget given in his reply of 7 July 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1986, including forecast supplementaries, together with a forecast for next year; and how the figure for refunds is made up.

Mr. Booke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the table published in the *Official Report* on 3 April 1984, *Official Report*, columns 451-2, giving details of the United Kingdom contribution to the European Economic Community budget; and if he will add an estimate for this year and the forecast for next.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether the Government are satisfied with the results achieved in the EEC budgetary field as a result of the Fontainebleau agreement; what has been the increase in the share of the European Community budget spent on agriculture since 1983; what is forecast for this year and next; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing what the United Kingdom gross contribution to the European Economic Community budget is expected to be this year, before allowance is made for any rebates, the amount of the rebate, and the amount which is represented by the 0·4 per cent. addition to the United Kingdom's value added tax contribution.

Mr. Brooke: The Fontainebleau agreement has been working as expected. We have already received £605 million in respect of 1984, and are receiving our 1,400 mecu abatement for 1985 at the rate of £75 million a

month. The Commission will propose to increase this by 500 mecu (£25 million a month) in the supplementary budget it is to introduce.

The percentage points increases in the share of the budget taken by agriculture, and the forecasts for 1986 and 1987, are as follows:

	Actual share per cent.	*percentage points increase*
1983	64·9	—
1984	66·6	+1·7
1985	70·2	+3·6
1986*	62·4	−7·8
1987	62·6	+0·2

* includes full amount proposed by Commission for supplementary budget

The other information requested is as follows:

	mecu
Gross contribution (at uniform VAT rate) assuming Commission's proposed Supplementary budget is adopted	6,796
Total abatement (inc proposals in supplementary budget)	1,900
Yield of 0·4% VAT in 1986	1,324

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement about the payment in May of non-value-added tax own resources to the European Communities.

Mr. Brooke: In accordance with article 10(2) of Council regulation 2891/77, the Commission has again invited member states to advance the payment of own resources other than VAT in respect of agricuitural, sugar and isoglucose levies and customs duties collected by the Government on its behalf.

In accordance with this request, the Government propose to make an advance payment of some £131 million on 20 May. This will be financed initially by a repayable advance from the contingencies fund, pending parliamentary approval of a summer Supplementary Estimate. The payment of levies and duties on 20 June under section 2(3) of the European Communities Act 1972 will be reduced by the amount of the advance. There will therefore be no net addition to forecast public expenditure for 1986-87.

Drugs

Dr. Marek asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the value of drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise at *(a)* London Heathrow, *(b)* Dover, *(c)* other points of entry to the United Kingdom and *(d)* elsewhere in the United Kingdom for the last year for which figures are available.

Mr. Brooke: The street value of all drugs seized by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise during 1985 was £107 million. It would not be in the public interest to disclose information about the value of seizures made at specific locations.

Private Investment

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the volume of private fixed investment in the years 1980 to 1985 inclusive, excluding housing but including such information as he has about investment by enterprises privatised during the period.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures of gross domestic fixed capital formation by the private sector, excluding dwellings and transactions in land and existing buildings, at constant 1980 prices, are as follows:

	£ million
1980	20,997
1981	19,385
1982	19,950
1983	20,040
1984	23,075
1985	25,339

These figures include fixed investment by privatised enterprises since their privatisation.

Figures of fixed capital formation by sector at current and constant prices are published annually in the CSO publication "United Kingdom National Accounts".

Sir Ian Gilmour asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the volume of private investment in housing, excluding purchases from the public sector, for the period 1980 to 1985, inclusive.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures of gross domestic fixed capital formation in dwellings by the private sector, at constant 1980 prices, excluding purchases from the public sector, are as follows:

	£ million
1980	5,883
1981	5,497
1982	6,065
1983	6,585
1984	6,715
1985	6,604

These figures are published in the CSO publication "Economic Trends", page 16.

Earnings

Mr. Favell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has made of the number of jobs which would be created if the increase in average earnings remained at or below the rate of inflation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. MacGregor: Evidence summarised in a paper by Treasury officials, published in January 1985 ("The Relationship between Employment and Wages"; HM Treasury), suggested that a 1 per cent. reduction in real wages could lead to between 110,000 and 220,000 extra jobs in the long run.

Cars (Freeports)

Dr. Marek asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the tax position in relation to the import and export of cars through freeports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Share Option Schemes

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many approved share option schemes have

been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1984; and how many employees are covered by the approved share option scheme set up in each year.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many savings-related share option schemes have been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1980; and how many employees are covered by the savings-related share option schemes set-up in each year.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Share Trusts

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many approved deferred share trusts have been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1978; and how many employees are covered by the approved deferred share trusts set up in each year.

Mr. Moore: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Capital Gains Tax

Mr. Wigley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimate of revenue forgone in 1985 from exempting gains in the value of sole or main residences from the provisions of capital gains tax in *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* Wales.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 13 May 1986, c. *451*]: Only very tentative estimates are possible. For 1985-86, *(a)* about £2,500 million; *(b)* less than £100 million. The estimates assume that there would be no relief for gains when disposal proceeds are applied to the purchase of another dwelling, and that there would be no consequential effects on the length of ownership and on the housing market.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the average amount by which public expenditure has exceeded the amount spent in 1978-79, in each year from 1979-80, in actual and real terms and as a percentage of 1978-79 figures.

Mr. MacGregor [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *564*]: The outturn figure for the public expenditure planning total for 1978-79 given in the 1986 public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702) was £65·7 billion. The latest estimated outturn for 1985-86 published in the Financial Statement and Budget Report 1986-87 was £133·9 billion. The average annual difference from the 1978-79 planning total over the period 1979-80 to 1985-86 was £44·5 billion, which is equivalent to 67·6 per cent. of the 1978-79 planning total. In real terms, the planning total has increased from £117·4 billion in 1978-79 to £126·3 billion in 1985-86 (base year 1984-85), with an average annual difference from 1978-79 of £6·1 billion, equivalent to 5·2 per cent. of the 1978-79 planning total in real terms.

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Abse asked the Secretary of State for Defence when the research into the alleged presence of trichothecenes in samples of vegetation from south-east Asia provided from the United States of America by the Chemical Defence Research Establishment will be completed; whether the research includes a review of the Harvard university study relating to the bees' faeces; and whether he will make a statement on the implications of the results to date of the research for the validity of the United States of America State Department claims that the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics supplied Vietnam with chemical weapons.

Mr. Stanley: Our chemical defence establishment at Porton Down has analysed a number of environmental and biomedical samples from alleged chemical warfare attacks in south-east Asia to see whether traces of trichothecene mycotoxins could be detected. These have yielded negative results.

The absence of positive results is not necessarily incompatible with positive findings elsewhere from different samples. We are, however, confident that our analytical techniques would have detected trichothecenes had they been present in the alleged chemical warfare samples analysed at CDE.

Whilst our investigation into trichothecene mycotoxins has proved negative, it is our view on the basis of epidemiological evidence that chemical warfare attacks probably did take place in south-east Asia. We are, however, unable to identify the agent or agents used; nor can we say for certain who may have supplied them.

CDE has also reviewed the Harvard university study, as presented in *Scientific American* of September 1985, to which the hon. Gentleman refers. CDE has concluded that its own findings neither support nor contradict the theory that "yellow rain" could be bee faeces.

Royal Fleet Auxiliary Orders

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he expects to begin tendering for any Royal Fleet Auxiliary orders in the financial years 1986-87 or 1987-88.

Mr. Lee: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the statement by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Defence, on 24 April at column 434, concerning the auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel. No decisions have been taken on the timing of further new build orders, nor are there any plans at present for other classes of RFA ships.

Strategic Defence Initiative

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Secretary of State for Defence if anything in the memorandum of understanding with the United States of America on strategic defence initiative research affects other existing United Kingdom treaty obligations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: I have been asked to reply.

The MOU is not a treaty. Existing treaty obligations of both sides were taken fully into account in the negotiations of the MOU and will not be affected.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Education Statistics

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what was the number of young people reaching minimum school-leaving age in each year from 1970 to the present, showing the number who stay on in education *(a)* at school and *(b)* at college or elsewhere; and what was the first destination of those who left school showing, where possible, separately, whether it was *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, *(c)* job creation programme, youth opportunities programme or YTS, *(d)* unemployed and *(e)* other.

Mr. Dunn: Information on the types of employment outcome of school leavers is not available from statistics collected by this Department. Available information on full-time education is in the table.

Young People Reaching the Minimum School-leaving Age—England

Thousands

	[6]1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Young people of minimum school-leaving age[1]	674	690	710	738	755	769	791	794	776	766	741	737
Number who stayed on in full-time education:												
At School[2]	177	192	199	200	206	214	225	244	242	228	220	[3]217
At College[4]	75	90	91	98	102	108	118	136	150	136	128	[5]127

Notes:

[1] In the middle of the year.

[2] Figures relate to the January of the following year and refer to those aged 16 at the start of the academic year.

[3] Projected.

[4] All maintained, assisted and grant-aided further education establishments. Figures relate to the November of the year shown and refer to those (including sandwich students) aged 16 at the start of the academic year. In the years 1974 to 1978, small numbers of overseas students are included.

[5] Provisional.

[6] Comparable information cannot be given for years before 1974, owing to the raising of the School Leaving Age.

Science Teachers

Mr. Thornham asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, during 1984, 1985 and 1986 to date *(a)* how many applications were received for science teacher training courses, *(b)* how many places were filled and *(c)* how many new science teacher posts were taken up.

Mr. Walden: The available information is as follows:

	1984	*1985*	*As at 7 May 1986*
(a) Applications to science teacher training courses*	3,308†	2,597†	1,771
(b) Students admitted to science teacher training courses	1,419	1,312	Not Available
(c) Science graduates taking up first teaching posts in secondary schools.‡	1,550	Not Available	Not Available

* *Source*: Central Register and Clearing House and the Graduate Teacher Training Register. Applications to undergraduate courses in universities which recruit through UCCA are excluded.

† Total applications for entry to courses in the year in question.

‡ The information is not available in the form requested.

Secondary Education (Expenditure)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the expenditure per pupil on secondary education of each of the metropolitan district local education authorities.

Mr. Dunn: The latest information available is for 1984-85 and is as follows:

Net institutional expenditure per pupil in secondary education

	£
Birmingham	1,060
Coventry	1,180
Dudley	990
Sandwell	1,135
Solihull	1,020
Walsall	1,105
Wolverhampton	1,135
Knowsley	1,240
Liverpool	N/A
St. Helens	1,040
Sefton	1,045
Wirral	1,035
Bolton	1,035
Bury	1,100
Manchester	1,295
Oldham	995
Rochdale	1,155
Salford	1,110
Stockport	1,130
Tameside	1,070
Trafford	1,040
Wigan	1,110
Barnsley	1,070
Doncaster	1,065
Rotherham	995
Sheffield	N/A
Bradford	990
Calderdale	1,000
Kirklees	965
Leeds	970
Wakefield	975
Gateshead	1,080
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne	1,245
North Tyneside	1,180
South Tyneside	1,150
Sunderland	1,060
All Met. Districts	1,080

Further Education Unit

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the annual cost of the further education unit; and how much of the cost can be ascribed to publications.

Sir Keith Joseph: A general grant-in-aid of £1,999,991 was made available to the Unit in financial year 1985-86 together with a further £1,559,917 in respect of a series of special projects commissioned by the Department and the Welsh Office. Within the grant-in-aid, expenditure totalling £396,806 can be broadly related to dissemination and publicity activities.

Education Provision

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on his policy towards the level of educational provision, in so far as it relates to the rate of school closures in response to falling rolls, in the light of the recent report of the Audit Commission for England and Wales.

Mr. Dunn: Targets for the removal of surplus school places to 1991-92 were promulgated in the Public Expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702) and are reflected in the Government's plans for public expenditure. In allocating resources for capital expenditure on education the Department gives priority to work arising from proposals for rationalisation approved under the Education Act 1980.

Teachers

Mr. Key asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many teachers, by scale position, have left the profession in each of the past 10 years, before normal retirement age has been reached.

Mr. Dunn: Readily available information is as follows. It covers teachers under the normal minimum retirement age of 60 who have left full-time teaching in maintained nursery, primary or secondary schools in England and Wales other than to go to full-time teaching in other maintained, assisted or grant-aided establishments in England and Wales (mainly special schools and further education establishments).

	Grade							
Year ending 31 March	*Head teacher*	*Deputy head*	*Senior teacher*	*Scale 4*	*Scale 3*	*Scale 2*	*Scale 1*	*Total: all grades*
1978	378	480	60	496	1,923	8,820	12,981	25,138
1979	462	636	82	593	2,266	9,698	14,093	27,830
1980	603	775	117	789	2,613	9,711	15,320	29,928
1981	735	986	159	825	2,775	8,784	15,678	29,942
1982	974	984	208	821	2,639	7,484	13,607	26,717
1983	1,025	1,067	240	912	2,570	7,415	12,839	26,068
1984	1,224	1,138	285	973	2,673	7,132	12,395	25,820

Independent Schools

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the number of pupils currently attending independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: In January 1985, the latest year for which figures are available, there were 501,422 full-time and 14,723 part-time pupils in independent schools in England. Full details are published in "Statistics of Eucation, Schools 1985", a copy of which is in the Library.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what estimate he has made of the implications for the education budget of the abolition of independent schools.

Mr. Dunn: The effect would be complex but the annual cost to public funds, including some allowance for any necessary capital work, might be of the order of £250 million to £350 million at 1985-86 prices.

Student Grants

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has any plans to review the student grant system in the light of the proposed changes in eligibility for social security benefit; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Government are still considering the report of the Social Security Advisory Committee on the proposed changes in eligibility for social security benefit, and a statement will be made in due course.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Capital Expenditure Allocations

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, if he will list in the *Official Report*, for each local education authority, his Department's capital expenditure allocation at outturn and at constant prices from 1981-82 to 1986-87; and what were the original bids received by his Department for each year.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *284*]: The information is shown in the following two tables.

Table 1

Plans for and allocations of LEA prescribed expenditure, 1981-82 to 1986-87

£ thousands

Local Education Authority	*1981-82*				*1982-83*				*1983-84*			
	Cash Prices		*Constant Prices†*		*Cash Prices*		*Constant Prices†*		*Cash Prices*		*Constant Prices†*	
	*Plans**	*Allocation*	*Plans*	*Allocation*	*Plans**	*Allocation*	*Plans*	*Allocation*	*Plans**	*Allocation*	*Plans*	*Allocation*
Avon	—	2,712	—	3,163	—	4,296	—	4,681	—	5853	—	6,104
Barking	—	2,661	—	3,103	—	2,391	—	2,606	—	2,283	—	2,381
Barnet	—	5,102	—	5,950	—	2,214	—	2,413	—	1,541	—	1,607
Barnsley	—	640	—	746	—	182	—	438	—	384	—	400
Bedfordshire	—	5,011	—	5,844	—	4,142	—	4,514	—	2,437	—	2,542
Berkshire	—	4,091	—	4,771	—	4,875	—	5,312	—	8,826	—	9,204
Bexley	—	932	—	1,087	—	679	—	740	—	1,633	—	1,703
Birmingham	—	7,453	—	6,691	—	5,976	—	6,512	—	5,224	—	5,448
Bolton	—	3,095	—	3,609	—	2,867	—	3,124	—	2,047	—	2,135
Bradford	—	5,349	—	6,238	—	4,447	—	4,846	—	6,969	—	7,268
Brent	—	1,176	—	1,371	—	836	—	911	—	1,180	—	1,231
Bromley	—	1,570	—	1,831	—	947	—	1,032	—	841	—	877
Buckinghamshire	—	7,889	—	9,200	—	7,164	—	7,741	—	6,605	—	6,888
Bury	—	1,707	—	1,991	—	638	—	615	—	182	—	1,024
Calderdale	—	1,341	—	1,564	—	999	—	1,089	—	1,293	—	1,348
Cambridgeshire	—	6,527	—	7,611	—	5,462	—	5,952	—	6,370	—	6,643
Cheshire	—	8,084	—	9,427	—	6,125	—	6,740	—	8,232	—	8,585
Cleveland	—	9,458	—	11,029	—	5,661	—	6,178	—	4,009	—	4,181
Cornwall	—	5,472	—	6,381	—	5,123	—	5,583	—	5,592	—	5,838
Coventry	—	3,755	—	4,379	—	3,222	—	3,511	—	3,478	—	3,627
Croydon	—	581	—	678	—	358	—	390	—	800	—	834
Cumbria	—	2,100	—	2,449	—	1,374	—	1,497	—	2,318	—	2,417
Derbyshire	—	8,751	—	10,205	—	8,490	—	9,252	—	6,899	—	7,195
Devon	—	9,287	—	10,830	—	7,757	—	8,453	—	4,817	—	5,024
Doncaster	—	1,761	—	2,054	—	1,512	—	1,648	—	1,386	—	1,445
Dorset	—	5,673	—	6,616	—	5,578	—	6,079	—	4,736	—	4,939
Dudley	—	2,567	—	2,993	—	2,361	—	2,573	—	3,150	—	4,119
Durham	—	2,527	—	2,947	—	2,037	—	2,220	—	1,711	—	1,784
Ealing	—	1,465	—	1,708	—	1,817	—	1,980	—	693	—	723
East Sussex	—	5,170	—	6,029	—	4,965	—	5,411	—	5,567	—	5,806
Enfield	—	1,077	—	1,256	—	457	—	498	—	311	—	324
Essex	—	10,492	—	12,235	—	7,236	—	7,885	—	6,357	—	6,630
Gateshead	—	682	—	795	—	501	—	546	—	1,003	—	1,046
Gloucestershire	—	3,187	—	3,716	—	2,582	—	2,814	—	2,974	—	3,102
Hampshire	—	9,430	—	10,997	—	9,617	—	10,480	—	10,638	—	11,094
Haringey	—	2,403	—	2,802	—	2,071	—	2,257	—	1,597	—	1,665
Harrow	—	543	—	633	—	337	—	367	—	305	—	318
Havering	—	373	—	435	—	390	—	425	—	299	—	312
Hereford and Worcester	—	3,319	—	3,870	—	2,346	—	2,557	—	1,504	—	1,568
Hertfordshire	—	4,527	—	5,279	—	3,232	—	3,522	—	5,473	—	5,708
Hillingdon	—	1,719	—	2,005	—	1,685	—	1,836	—	896	—	934
Hounslow	—	1,983	—	2,312	—	1,987	—	2,165	—	2,611	—	2,723
Humberside	—	5,980	—	6,974	—	6,761	—	7,368	—	7,133	—	7,439
ILEA	—	13,561	—	15,814	—	12,444	—	13,561	—	9,683	—	10,098
Isle of Wight	—	853	—	995	—	475	—	518	—	541	—	564
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	8,816	—	10,281	—	5,751	—	6,257	—	4,829	—	5,036
Kingston	—	1,315	—	1,533	—	1,982	—	2,160	—	2,270	—	2,367
Kirklees	—	5,639	—	6,576	—	4,046	—	4,409	—	4,102	—	4,278
Knowsley	—	653	—	761	—	420	—	458	—	665	—	694
Lancashire	—	11,246	—	13,114	—	8,308	—	9,053	—	11,119	—	11,596
Leeds	—	7,354	—	8,576	—	4,826	—	5,259	—	3,381	—	3,526
Leicestershire	—	9,180	—	10,705	—	6,430	—	7,007	—	5,099	—	5,318
Lincolnshire	—	2,895	—	3,376	—	3,799	—	4,140	—	3,442	—	3,590
Liverpool	—	5,967	—	6,958	—	3,462	—	3,773	—	3,768	—	3,930
Manchester	—	4,822	—	5,623	—	3,867	—	4,214	—	4,349	—	4,535
Merton	—	712	—	830	—	386	—	421	—	408	—	425
Newcastle	—	1,998	—	2,330	—	2,092	—	2,280	—	3,134	—	3,268
Newham	—	3,163	—	3,689	—	2,501	—	2,725	—	2,084	—	2,173
Norfolk	—	3,876	—	4,520	—	5,196	—	5,662	—	5,735	—	5,981
Northamptonshire	—	7,028	—	8,196	—	5,085	—	5,541	—	3,916	—	4,084
North Tyneside	—	555	—	647	—	868	—	946	—	606	—	632
Northumberland	—	3,779	—	4,407	—	2,291	—	2,497	—	1,481	—	1,545
North Yorkshire	—	3,229	—	3,765	—	2,524	—	2,750	—	2,703	—	2,819
Nottinghamshire	—	6,756	—	7,878	—	4,903	—	5,343	—	2,493	—	2,600
Oldham	—	1,289	—	1,503	—	852	—	928	—	780	—	813
Oxfordshire	—	3,185	—	3,714	—	4,273	—	4,656	—	4,014	—	4,186

Local Education Authority	1981-82				1982-83				1983-84			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Redbridge	—	545	—	636	—	912	—	994	—	872	—	909
Richmond	—	1,320	—	1,539	—	373	—	406	—	557	—	581
Rochdale	—	1,851	—	2,159	—	1,853	—	2,019	—	1,174	—	1,224
Rotherham	—	1,021	—	1,191	—	406	—	442	—	515	—	537
Salford	—	1,651	—	1,925	—	1,369	—	1,492	—	1,038	—	1,083
Sandwell	—	1,621	—	1,890	—	1,651	—	1,799	—	1,436	—	1,498
Sefton	—	1,250	—	1,458	—	379	—	413	—	578	—	603
Sheffield	—	3,245	—	3,784	—	2,667	—	2,906	—	3,439	—	3,586
Shropshire	—	3,573	—	4,167	—	3,132	—	3,413	—	2,727	—	2,844
Solihull	—	199	—	232	—	371	—	404	—	356	—	371
Somerset	—	2,981	—	3,476	—	1,517	—	1,653	—	3,127	—	3,261
South Tyneside	—	1,870	—	2,181	—	1,668	—	1,818	—	1,181	—	1,232
Staffordshire	—	11,912	—	13,891	—	8,428	—	9,184	—	7,676	—	8,005
St. Helens	—	3,652	—	4,259	—	3,260	—	3,661	—	2,385	—	2,487
Stockport	—	1,580	—	1,843	—	1,384	—	1,508	—	1,067	—	1,113
Suffolk	—	5,646	—	6,584	—	3,607	—	3,931	—	3,752	—	3,913
Sunderland	—	2,568	—	2,995	—	2,780	—	3,029	—	3,347	—	3,491
Surrey	—	3,227	—	3,763	—	3,884	—	4,233	—	3,733	—	3,893
Sutton	—	196	—	229	—	157	—	171	—	266	—	277
Tameside	—	2,118	—	2,470	—	1,526	—	1,663	—	1,871	—	1,951
Trafford	—	586	—	683	—	404	—	440	—	693	—	723
Wakefield	—	4,311	—	5,027	—	2,711	—	2,954	—	2,044	—	2,132
Walsall	—	4,620	—	5,388	—	3,019	—	3,290	—	1,340	—	1,397
Waltham Forest	—	1,710	—	1,994	—	1,694	—	1,846	—	1,624	—	1,694
Warwickshire	—	1,366	—	1,593	—	1,366	—	1,489	—	1,991	—	2,076
West Sussex	—	2,315	—	2,700	—	2,306	—	2,513	—	3,705	—	3,864
Wigan	—	3,505	—	4,087	—	7,624	—	2,859	—	2,518	—	2,626
Wiltshire	—	2,152	—	2,510	—	2,978	—	3,245	—	3,136	—	3,270
Wirral	—	1,541	—	1,797	—	656	—	715	—	2,403	—	2,506
Wolverhampton	—	3,123	—	3,642	—	2,471	—	2,693	—	2,309	—	2,408
Total England	—	354,748	—	413,688	—	292,359	—	318,591	—	293,225	—	305,796

* Cash plans were not requested in these years.
† Calculated at 1984-85 prices using the GDP deflator.

Table 1—(continued)

Local Education Authority	1984-85				1985-86				1986-87			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices*		Cash Prices		Constant Prices*		Cash Prices		Constant Prices*	
	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Avon	11,121	5,270	11,121	5,270	10,965	3,951	10,443	3,763	10,821	4,070	9,862	3,709
Barking	695	1,442	695	1,442	1,579	947	1,504	902	3,717	1,135	3,388	1,034
Barnet	2,759	2,453	2,759	2,453	5,825	2,612	5,548	2,488	7,399	1,621	6,743	1,477
Barnsley	865	401	865	401	1,226	1,090	1,168	1,038	1,054	577	961	526
Bedfordshire	4,534	2,439	4,534	2,439	5,427	1,625	5,169	1,548	6,282	1,934	5,725	1,763
Berkshire	10,238	8,227	1,238	8,227	11,584	7,490	11,032	7,133	10,696	5,399	9,748	4,920
Bexley	1,399	845	1,399	845	1,396	504	1,330	480	2,096	715	1,910	652
Birmingham	9,533	6,484	9,553	6,484	6,569	3,695	6,256	3,519	9,015	5,016	8,216	4,571
Bolton	2,229	1,536	2,229	1,536	1,317	570	1,254	543	1,692	576	1,542	525
Bradford	18,220	6,707	18,220	6,707	13,383	8,269	12,746	7,875	10,116	7,061	9,219	6,435
Brent	2,576	1,678	2,576	1,678	4,619	891	4,399	849	4,797	1,589	4,372	1,448
Bromley	3,777	492	3,377	492	4,518	628	4,303	598	3,357	1,747	3,059	1,592
Buckinghamshire	18,602	6,854	18,602	6,854	12,649	5,178	12,047	5,693	15,970	5,582	14,555	5,087
Bury	1,824	1,030	1,824	1,030	1,507	803	1,435	765	995	882	907	804
Calderdale	3,408	1,090	3,408	1,090	2,305	830	2,195	790	1,708	1,203	1,557	1,096
Cambridgeshire	6,655	5,039	6,655	5,039	6,506	4,387	6,196	4,178	4,910	2,591	4,475	2,361
Cheshire	10,594	7,366	19,502	7,366	9,518	5,005	9,065	4,767	11,327	3,837	10,323	3,497
Cleveland	7,463	3,626	7,463	3,626	7,482	4,493	7,126	4,279	12,605	4,933	11,488	4,496
Cornwall	6,943	4,377	6,943	4,377	4,523	3,319	4,308	3,161	7,583	3,592	6,911	3,274
Coventry	5,188	2,919	5,188	2,919	7,419	3,094	7,066	2,947	15,286	5,396	13,931	4,918
Croydon	1,749	1,227	1,749	1,227	3,626	2,170	3,453	2,067	3,519	2,784	3,207	2,537
Cumbria	8,026	3,982	8,026	3,982	5,254	3,803	5,004	3,622	5,640	2,254	5,140	2,054
Derbyshire	9,885	6,546	9,885	6,546	10,794	7,239	10,280	6,894	13,942	7,202	12,706	6,564
Devon	9,087	7,832	9,087	7,832	11,046	6,405	10,520	6,100	16,957	8,418	15,454	7,672
Doncaster	1,778	1,226	1,778	1,226	1,353	424	1,289	404	771	338	703	308
Dorset	8,744	5,385	8,744	5,385	8,666	5,265	8,253	5,014	8,255	3,377	7,523	3,078
Dudley	5,460	3,516	5,460	3,516	7,016	2,671	6,682	2,544	6,703	2,012	6,109	1,834
Durham	4,271	2,054	4,271	2,054	6,415	2,995	6,110	2,852	6,264	2,231	5,709	2,033
Ealing	2,721	1,347	2,721	1,347	3,352	2,451	3,192	2,334	5,702	2,154	5,197	1,963
East Sussex	10,389	4,601	10,389	4,601	7,993	4,870	7,612	4,638	10,176	3,786	9,274	3,450
Enfield	901	576	981	576	1,375	966	1,310	920	1,698	706	1,548	643
Essex	17,675	6,604	17,675	6,604	28,705	11,679	27,338	11,123	31,384	11,417	28,602	10,405
Gateshead	3,934	572	3,934	572	3,714	1,122	3,537	1,069	4,968	1,451	4,528	1,322
Gloucestershire	6,416	2,772	6,416	2,772	7,261	4,652	6,915	4,430	10,306	6,561	9,393	5,979
Hampshire	20,652	9,666	20,652	9,666	23,877	11,844	22,740	11,280	29,354	12,905	26,752	11,761
Haringey	2,640	1,090	2,640	1,090	3,644	895	3,470	852	4,455	797	4,060	726
Harrow	2,785	523	2,785	523	3,007	299	2,864	285	5,315	4,078	4,844	3,717
Havering	894	216	894	216	1,013	334	965	318	1,074	395	979	360
Hereford and Worcester	3,378	1,669	3,378	1,669	2,688	1,480	2,560	1,410	3,911	1,929	3,564	1,758

Local Education Authority	1984-85 Cash Prices		1984-85 Constant Prices*		1985-86 Cash Prices		1985-86 Constant Prices*		1986-87 Cash Prices		1986-87 Constant Prices*	
	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Hertfordshire	5,412	5,479	5,412	5,479	8,417	5,960	8,016	5,676	10,968	4,677	9,996	4,262
Hillingdon	4,362	1,068	4,762	1,068	2,368	521	2,255	496	1,806	306	1,646	279
Hounslow	4,987	3,063	4,987	3,063	4,638	1,566	4,417	1,491	4,783	668	4,359	609
Humberside	11,677	6,883	11,677	6,883	7,400	4,138	7,048	3,940	10,802	7,524	9,845	6,857
ILEA	22,045	9,703	22,045	9,703	27,686	15,080	26,368	14,362	29,331	12,575	26,731	11,460
Isle of Wight	1,445	948	1,445	948	2,125	1,230	2,024	1,171	2,270	1,139	2,069	1,038
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	8,716	4,347	8,716	4,347	9,481	5,209	9,030	4,961	9,801	6,405	8,932	5,837
Kingston	2,673	1,330	2,673	1,371	4,070	2,131	3,876	2,030	6,445	1,806	5,874	1,646
Kirklees	6,746	3,753	6,746	3,753	6,955	3,304	6,624	3,147	7,548	1,956	6,879	1,783
Knowsley	1,174	895	1,174	895	1,986	973	1,891	927	2,750	1,483	2,506	1,352
Lancashire	13,646	11,055	13,646	11,055	20,050	15,156	19,045	14,434	21,743	12,538	19,816	11,427
Leeds	5,184	2,899	5,184	2,899	9,301	3,325	8,858	3,167	8,557	2,634	7,799	2,401
Leicestershire	8,229	7,074	8,229	7,074	12,299	6,718	11,713	6,348	12,311	7,061	11,220	6,435
Lincolnshire	9,022	4,455	9,022	4,455	8,834	3,532	8,413	3,364	6,044	3,908	5,508	3,562
Liverpool	6,973	4,243	6,973	4,243	8,461	4,870	8,058	4,638	7,878	2,904	7,180	2,647
Manchester	11,180	6,997	11,180	6,997	17,545	7,450	16,710	7,095	21,998	6,501	20,048	5,925
Merton	2,098	993	2,098	993	4,226	2,277	4,025	2,169	3,959	1,203	3,608	1,096
Newcastle	3,600	2,265	3,600	2,265	3,948	1,716	3,760	1,634	8,641	2,586	7,875	2,357
Newham	4,232	2,039	4,232	2,039	7,672	2,558	7,307	2,436	6,825	1,271	6,220	1,158
Norfolk	7,771	4,261	7,771	4,261	6,698	3,070	6,379	2,924	7,004	4,394	6,383	4,005
Northamptonshire	7,059	4,179	7,059	4,179	6,268	4,492	5,970	4,278	7,536	4,339	6,868	3,954
North Tyneside	3,673	721	3,673	721	4,300	2,235	4,095	2,129	3,210	1,536	2,925	1,400
Northumberland	2,580	1,002	2,580	1,002	2,322	1,754	2,211	1,194	2,687	1,003	2,449	914
North Yorkshire	11,725	5,675	11,725	5,675	6,625	3,798	6,310	3,617	5,576	2,504	5,082	2,282
Nottinghamshire	4,376	2,666	4,376	2,666	4,810	3,421	4,581	3,258	5,847	3,043	5,329	2,773
Oldham	1,778	968	1,778	968	2,650	1,014	2,524	966	2,910	1,428	2,652	1,301
Oxfordshire	4,194	3,245	4,194	3,245	9,134	3,650	8,699	3,476	13,423	2,055	12,233	1,873
Redbridge	1,971	1,006	1,971	1,006	1,738	1,330	1,655	1,267	2,167	1,149	1,975	1,047
Richmond	2,106	735	2,106	735	752	379	716	361	1,050	249	957	227
Rochdale	3,805	1,452	3,805	1,452	2,885	1,802	2,748	1,716	4,545	2,163	4,142	1,971
Rotherham	1,182	471	1,182	471	1,751	481	1,668	458	1,651	578	1,505	527
Salford	2,230	822	2,230	822	2,891	1,551	2,753	1,477	3,782	1,625	3,082	1,481
Sandwell	3,453	1,705	3,453	1,705	4,429	1,914	4,218	1,823	4,091	1,203	3,728	1,096
Sefton	2,334	824	2,334	824	2,060	1,671	1,962	1,591	3,983	2,667	3,630	2,431
Sheffield	5,035	3,007	5,035	3,007	8,044	3,497	7,661	3,330	7,810	2,330	7,191	2,123
Shropshire	4,359	2,072	4,359	2,072	5,680	3,924	5,410	3,737	5,277	2,602	4,809	2,371
Solihull	708	723	708	723	1,297	642	1,235	611	2,666	1,295	2,430	1,180
Somerset	3,367	2,559	3,367	2,559	2,941	1,243	2,801	1,184	6,832	2,014	6,226	1,835
South Tyneside	3,765	1,280	3,765	1,280	2,851	1,339	2,715	1,275	2,911	732	2,653	667
Staffordshire	15,277	10,691	15,277	10,691	13,621	9,717	12,972	9,254	17,517	9,313	15,964	8,488
St. Helens	3,031	2,111	3,031	2,111	3,190	1,827	3,038	1,740	2,325	772	2,119	704
Stockport	1,540	1,770	1,540	1,770	2,691	1,411	2,563	1,344	3,702	1,453	3,374	1,324
Suffolk	5,554	4,348	5,554	4,348	6,505	3,871	6,195	3,687	8,619	5,866	7,855	5,346
Sunderland	4,354	2,862	4,354	2,862	4,679	3,047	4,456	2,902	7,188	1,928	6,551	1,757
Surrey	8,416	4,340	8,416	4,340	9,717	4,365	9,254	4,157	11,030	3,610	10,052	3,290
Sutton	1,011	451	1,011	451	966	474	920	451	1,318	329	1,201	300
Tameside	3,116	1,690	3,116	1,690	1,360	532	1,295	507	1,685	306	1,536	279
Trafford	1,631	1,027	1,631	1,027	3,208	1,594	3,055	1,518	2,702	1,276	2,463	1,163
Wakefield	3,993	1,596	3,993	1,596	3,307	1,438	3,150	1,370	3,284	1,990	2,993	1,814
Walsall	4,116	1,026	4,116	1,026	3,222	1,329	3,069	1,266	3,711	1,119	3,382	1,020
Waltham Forest	2,613	889	2,613	889	2,334	985	2,223	938	3,962	2,184	3,611	1,990
Warwickshire	2,781	1,428	2,781	1,428	3,105	1,763	2,967	1,622	2,993	1,236	2,728	1,126
West Sussex	6,544	5,027	6,544	6,027	5,641	3,429	5,372	3,266	6,116	2,157	5,574	1,966
Wigan	3,041	2,004	3,041	2,004	3,990	1,464	3,800	1,394	3,243	2,339	2,956	2,132
Wiltshire	6,771	3,810	6,771	3,810	6,314	3,478	6,013	3,312	4,556	1,983	4,152	1,807
Wirral	4,114	2,117	4,114	2,117	2,585	766	2,462	730	2,824	1,402	2,574	1,278
Wolverhampton	3,890	2,375	3,890	2,375	3,793	2,047	3,612	1,950	6,664	1,418	6,073	1,292
Total England	542,674	309,103	542,674	300,103	588,932	305,643	560,888	291,089	684,347	292,986	623,692	267,014

* Calculated at 1984-85 prices using the GDP deflator.

Table 2

Plans for and allocations for capital expenditure by governors of aided schools, 1981-82 to 1986-87, by LEA area

£ thousands

Local Education Authority	1981-82† Cash Prices		1981-82† Constant Prices†		1982-83‖ Cash Prices		1982-83‖ Constant Prices†		1983-84¶ Cash Prices		1983-84¶ Constant Prices†	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Avon	—	—	—	—	424	165	462	180	316	352	330	367
Barking	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	15	—	16	—
Barnet	—	—	—	—	495	260	539	283	380	192	396	200
Barnsley	—	—	—	—	90	106	98	116	—	36	—	38
Bedfordshire	—	—	—	—	156	172	170	187	43	41	45	43
Berkshire	—	—	—	—	170	200	185	218	95	86	99	90
Bexley	—	—	—	—	88	82	96	89	15	47	78	49
Birmingham	—	—	—	—	480	576	523	628	1,626	622	1,696	649
Bolton	—	—	—	—	227	65	247	71	200	194	209	202
Bradford	—	—	—	—	762	779	830	849	898	835	937	871

Local Education Authority	1981-82†				1982-83				1983-84¶			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Brent	—	—	—	—	402	342	438	373	338	298	352	311
Bromley	—	—	—	—	100	119	109	129	1,100	80	1,147	83
Buckinghamshire	—	—	—	—	229	308	250	292	389	603	406	629
Bury	—	—	—	—	41	47	45	51	62	44	65	46
Calderdale	—	—	—	—	140	29	153	32	185	145	193	151
Cambridgeshire	—	—	—	—	502	194	547	211	821	196	856	204
Cheshire	—	—	—	—	1,059	1,035	1,154	1,128	366	568	382	592
Cleveland	—	—	—	—	537	556	585	606	1,409	116	1,469	121
Cornwall	—	—	—	—	512	229	558	250	154	360	161	375
Coventry	—	—	—	—	23	27	25	29	22	23	23	24
Croydon	—	—	—	—	22	24	24	26	25	29	26	30
Cumbria	—	—	—	—	320	345	349	376	112	156	117	163
Derbyshire	—	—	—	—	693	576	755	628	215	310	224	323
Devon	—	—	—	—	42	49	46	53	946	573	987	598
Doncaster	—	—	—	—	140	152	153	166	—	28	—	29
Dorset	—	—	—	—	79	93	86	101	308	84	321	88
Dudley	—	—	—	—	845	402	921	438	890	603	928	629
Durham	—	—	—	—	387	219	422	239	223	181	233	189
Ealing	—	—	—	—	341	185	372	202	640	350	667	365
East Sussex	—	—	—	—	35	35	38	38	50	43	52	45
Enfield	—	—	—	—	95	81	104	88	320	314	334	327
Essex	—	—	—	—	808	514	881	560	335	184	349	192
Gateshead	—	—	—	—	60	66	65	72	172	118	179	123
Gloucestershire	—	—	—	—	194	223	211	243	340	406	355	423
Hampshire	—	—	—	—	450	388	490	423	34	48	35	50
Haringey	—	—	—	—	195	147	212	160	171	58	178	60
Harrow	—	—	—	—	16	21	17	23	36	22	38	23
Havering	—	—	—	—	54	24	59	26	100	43	104	45
Hereford and Worcester	—	—	—	—	683	285	744	311	937	115	977	120
Hertfordshire	—	—	—	—	550	406	599	442	500	244	521	254
Hillingdon	—	—	—	—	330	94	360	102	243	131	253	137
Hounslow	—	—	—	—	129	24	141	26	220	76	229	79
Humberside	—	—	—	—	143	145	156	158	45	28	47	29
ILEA	—	—	—	—	2,369	3,181	2,582	3,466	2,777	2,416	2,896	2,520
Isle of Wight	—	—	—	—	45	18	49	20	73	20	76	21
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	—	—	—	—	1,620	1,404	1,765	1,530	454	713	473	744
Kingston	—	—	—	—	107	8	117	9	132	168	138	175
Kirkless	—	—	—	—	162	96	177	105	46	121	48	126
Knowsley	—	—	—	—	158	159	172	173	75	105	78	110
Lancashire	—	—	—	—	n/a	706	n/a	769	1,004	928	1,047	968
Leeds	—	—	—	—	127	146	138	159	160	36	167	38
Leicestershire	—	—	—	—	1,007	794	1,097	865	345	274	360	286
Lincolnshire	—	—	—	—	529	301	576	328	104	195	108	203
Liverpool	—	—	—	—	590	643	643	701	889	1,440	927	1,502
Manchester	—	—	—	—	350	294	381	320	944	704	984	734
Merton	—	—	—	—	310	347	338	378	124	119	129	124
Newcastle	—	—	—	—	106	108	116	118	203	96	212	100
Newham	—	—	—	—	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	12	10	13	10
Norfolk	—	—	—	—	891	843	971	919	280	479	292	500
Northamptonshire	—	—	—	—	35	41	38	45	184	245	192	256
North Tyneside	—	—	—	—	27	24	29	26	240	109	250	114
Northumberland	—	—	—	—	163	175	178	191	54	107	56	112
North Yorkshire	—	—	—	—	80	94	87	102	230	183	240	191
Nottinghamshire	—	—	—	—	310	259	338	282	540	619	563	646
Oldham	—	—	—	—	149	172	162	187	26	99	27	103
Oxfordshire	—	—	—	—	60	47	65	51	455	56	475	58
Redbridge	—	—	—	—	180	212	196	231	460	454	480	473
Richmond	—	—	—	—	104	48	113	52	21	19	22	20
Rochdale	—	—	—	—	529	622	576	678	Nil	57	Nil	59
Rotherham	—	—	—	—	480	559	523	609	805	70	840	73
Salford	—	—	—	—	214	122	233	133	167	203	174	212
Sandwell	—	—	—	—	32	31	35	34	47	26	49	27
Sefton	—	—	—	—	418	369	456	402	443	452	462	471
Sheffield	—	—	—	—	100	24	109	26	100	56	104	58
Shropshire	—	—	—	—	200	114	218	124	236	45	246	47
Solihull	—	—	—	—	240	94	262	102	435	108	454	113
Somerset	—	—	—	—	755	888	823	968	8	8	8	8
South Tyneside	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	78	29	81	30
Staffordshire	—	—	—	—	700	588	763	641	410	431	428	449
St. Helens	—	—	—	—	135	147	147	160	170	30	177	31
Stockport	—	—	—	—	148	156	161	170	400	323	417	337
Suffolk	—	—	—	—	194	136	211	148	240	83	250	87
Sunderland	—	—	—	—	40	47	44	51	220	31	229	32
Surrey	—	—	—	—	545	640	594	697	320	315	334	329
Sutton	—	—	—	—	127	76	141	83	285	188	297	196
Tameside	—	—	—	—	363	181	396	197	266	394	277	411
Trafford	—	—	—	—	150	223	163	243	48	42	50	44
Wakefield	—	—	—	—	10	8	11	9	65	52	68	54
Walsall	—	—	—	—	700	287	763	313	400	533	417	556
Waltham Forest	—	—	—	—	87	—	95	—	91	48	95	50
Warwickshire	—	—	—	—	605	259	659	282	268	346	279	361
West Sussex	—	—	—	—	240	129	262	141	283	288	295	300

Local Education Authority	1981-82†				1982-83				1983-84¶			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices‡		Cash Prices		Constant Prices‡		Cash Prices		Constant Prices‡	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Wigan	—	—	—	—	869	766	947	835	775	718	808	749
Wiltshire	—	—	—	—	452	526	493	573	16	40	17	42
Wirral	—	—	—	—	995	1,141	1,084	1,243	290	155	302	462
Wolverhampton	—	—	—	—	625	147	681	160	260	78	291	81
Total England	—	—	—	—	32,482	28,148	25,399	30,674	32,314	23,846	33,696	24,869

* Allocations for 1981-82 were made on a different basis from those for later years and have therefore been omitted.
† The allocations shown are those announced before the start of the financial year in question and do not include subsequent revisions.
‡ Calculated at 1984-85 prices using the GDP deflator.
The allocations made may be greater than the planned expenditure shown in the table. The information provided on bids was sometimes incomplete and compensatory adjustments were made to allocations.
¶ The planned expenditure relates to new work only but the allocations included allowances for on-going projects.

Table 2 (continued)

£ thousands

Local Education Authority	1984-85				1985-86				1986-87			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Avon	477	144	477	144	965	391	919	372	696	193	634	176
Barking	7	7	7	7	112	20	107	19	118	Nil	108	Nil
Barnet	2,380	1,091	2,380	1,091	3,021	1,662	2,877	1,583	1,844	400	1,681	365
Barnsley	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	103	—	94	—
Bedfordshire	50	15	50	15	335	40	319	38	457	—	416	—
Berkshire	287	145	287	145	1,150	22	1,095	20	794	265	724	242
Bexley	389	5	388	5	421	42	401	40	188	3	171	3
Birmingham	995	182	995	182	1,816	1,070	1,777	1,019	1,380	615	1,258	560
Bolton	722	101	722	106	578	578	550	550	1,023	575	932	526
Bradford	290	60	290	60	631	350	628	337	866	320	789	292
Brent	566	340	566	340	485	46	462	44	299	12	272	11
Bromley	325	32	325	32	311	211	295	201	30	Nil	27	Nil
Buckinghamshire	475	175	475	175	1,437	11	1,367	10	831	423	757	386
Bury	206	47	206	47	227	40	216	35	241	3	220	3
Calderdale	234	230	234	230	361	151	344	144	231	3	211	3
Cambridgeshire	672	395	672	395	577	87	550	86	1,137	127	1,036	116
Cheshire	1,688	652	1,688	652	1,615	867	1,538	826	2,192	836	1,998	762
Cleveland	738	213	738	213	1,119	200	1,066	197	1,471	135	1,341	123
Cornwall	110	35	110	35	299	176	285	168	814	252	742	230
Coventry	302	28	302	28	358	70	341	67	127	22	116	20
Croydon	85	45	85	45	145	45	138	43	158	48	144	44
Cumbria	578	300	578	300	825	528	786	503	514	401	468	365
Derbyshire	475	225	475	225	455	375	436	357	665	190	606	173
Devon	2,900	1,410	2,900	1,410	3,084	1,472	2,937	252	2,176	132	1,983	120
Doncaster	50	40	50	40	95	95	90	90	66	50	60	46
Dorset	1,339	610	1,339	610	643	135	612	21	2,133	216	1,944	197
Dudley	2,567	417	2,569	417	2,227	666	2,121	634	1,858	724	1,693	660
Durham	668	258	668	258	863	448	522	427	1,339	425	1,220	387
Ealing	720	340	720	340	773	341	736	325	1,108	331	1,010	302
East Sussex	230	35	230	35	722	640	688	610	960	380	875	346
Enfield	538	375	538	375	858	620	817	590	1,579	97	1,439	180
Essex	320	215	320	215	813	467	774	445	333	150	303	137
Gateshead	260	233	260	233	832	318	321	303	200	163	182	149
Gloucestershire	670	285	670	285	712	366	678	349	1,313	252	1,197	230
Hampshire	147	40	147	40	432	60	411	57	467	70	426	64
Haringey	400	60	400	60	898	425	355	405	779	323	710	296
Harrow	163	10	163	10	208	20	198	19	235	1	214	1
Havering	100	20	100	20	61	13	58	12	180	Nil	164	Nil
Hereford and Worcester	1,135	650	1,135	650	1,102	793	1,050	755	1,563	1,399	1,424	1,275
Hertfordshire	640	295	640	295	465	209	443	199	2,261	46	2,061	42
Hillingdon	570	175	570	175	4,205	67	4,005	*64	672	40	612	36
Hounslow	628	190	628	190	545	324	519	309	833	169	759	154
Humberside	114	35	114	35	20	20	19	19	2,053	1,818	1,871	1,657
ILEA	4,978	1,590	4,978	1,590	8,362	3,477	7,964	3,311	4,171	1,686	3,801	1,537
Isle of Wight	80	10	80	10	84	23	80	22	72	2	82	2
Isles of Scilly	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kent	1,630	935	1,630	935	1,438	307	1,370	292	1,285	496	1,171	452
Kingston	360	190	360	190	221	71	210	69	295	44	269	40
Kirklees	334	254	334	254	330	180	314	171	166	16	151	15
Knowsley	390	110	390	110	378	190	360	181	670	600	611	547
Lancashire	2,161	1,500	2,161	1,500	2,533	2,244	2,412	2,137	1,471	1,302	1,341	1,187
Leeds	20	15	20	15	139	30	132	29	220	90	201	82
Leicestershire	1,257	705	1,257	705	1,022	928	973	882	1,594	2,611	1,453	1,131
Lincolnshire	337	177	337	177	320	160	325	152	310	3	283	3
Liverpool	2,400	1,275	2,400	1,275	2,962	2,080	2,821	1,981	2,557	2,360	2,330	2,151
Manchester	2,741	1,145	2,741	1,145	2,666	1,602	2,539	1,526	3,060	2,250	2,789	2,051
Merton	78	20	78	20	213	118	203	112	220	70	201	155
Newcastle	418	65	418	65	627	218	597	208	351	191	867	174
Newham	233	15	233	15	160	25	152	24	101	47	92	43
Norfolk	511	180	511	180	177	177	169	169	568	89	518	81

Local Education Authority	1984-85				1985-86				1986-87			
	Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†		Cash Prices		Constant Prices†	
	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation	Plans*	Allocation	Plans	Allocation
Northamptonshire	n/a	90	n/a	90	539	44	513	22	590	505	538	460
North Tyneside	514	285	514	285	627	429	547	409	325	20	296	18
Northumberland	119	35	119	35	103	40	95	38	98	—	89	—
North Yorkshire	1,614	580	1,614	580	2,260	1,890	2,152	1,800	1,009	273	920	249
Nottinghamshire	372	190	372	190	207	22	197	21	341	66	311	60
Oldham	123	40	123	40	355	73	338	70	502	16	458	15
Oxfordshire	155	15	155	15	1,215	113	1,157	108	2,068	470	1,885	428
Redbridge	756	555	756	555	808	695	770	662	138	28	126	26
Richmond	211	100	211	100	173	—	165	—	118	—	108	—
Rochdale	283	75	283	75	225	125	214	119	558	—	509	—
Rotherham	112	61	112	61	86	46	82	44	144	69	131	63
Salford	616	80	616	80	758	129	722	123	1,037	610	945	556
Sandwell	54	10	54	10	53	25	50	24	88	—	80	—
Sefton	144	45	144	45	52	52	50	50	446	2	406	2
Sheffield	278	33	278	33	365	115	348	110	480	300	437	273
Shropshire	562	75	562	75	565	284	538	270	242	112	221	102
Solihull	108	86	108	86	189	75	180	71	231	—	211	—
Somerset	28	30	28	30	102	30	97	29	28	22	26	20
South Tyneside	210	65	210	65	185	185	176	176	290	185	264	169
Staffordshire	784	435	784	435	671	239	639	228	627	181	571	165
St. Helens	302	32	302	32	198	63	189	60	344	6	314	5
Stockport	652	40	652	40	1,243	269	1,184	256	982	447	895	407
Suffolk	355	200	355	200	279	164	266	156	281	163	256	149
Sunderland	66	15	66	15	92	77	88	73	421	—	384	—
Surrey	170	50	170	50	1,579	68	1,504	65	2,190	10	1,896	9
Sutton	388	360	388	360	310	185	295	176	219	35	200	32
Tameside	683	530	683	530	234	73	223	70	226	35	206	32
Trafford	691	60	691	60	668	40	636	38	509	—	464	—
Wakefield	293	155	292	155	215	125	205	119	380	120	346	109
Walsall	100	50	100	50	338	25	322	24	264	26	241	24
Waltham Forest	1,275	1,005	1,275	1,005	996	1,375	949	1,310	380	245	346	223
Warwickshire	395	110	395	110	445	245	424	233	268	19	244	17
West Sussex	959	263	959	263	813	270	774	257	609	334	555	304
Wigan	988	475	988	475	1,070	630	1,019	600	1,231	781	1,122	712
Wiltshire	40	12	40	12	68	62	65	59	148	29	135	26
Wirral	897	470	897	470	895	615	852	586	811	416	739	379
Wolverhampton	320	185	320	185	174	30	166	29	593	6	540	5
Total England	59,755	25,248	59,755	25,248	77,164	35,278	73,490	33,598	75,232	27,827	68,565	25,361

* The allocations shown are those announced before the start of the financial year in question and do not include subsequent revisions.
† Calculated at 1984-85 prices using the GDP deflator.
n/a=Not available.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 20 May 1986

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Schools (Resources)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what evidence he has linking resources available to schools with quality of work by staff and pupils; and if there is a statistical correlation between the two factors.

Mr. Dunn: The latest report by Her Majesty's inspectors on the effects of LEA expenditure policies on education, published in May 1985, showed that there was a statistically significant association between work judged satisfactory or better and satisfactory levels of appropriate resources. However, there was no direct causal link established.

Some evidence linking resources in schools to examination results is available from statistical analyses carried out by the Department and published in Statistical Bulletin 13/84. The analysis demonstrated a strong statistical association between examination results achieved by pupils at schools in each local authority and social background data for each authority. When these factors are taken into account, the analysis showed a slight positive but statistically significant correlation between some of the measures of examination results and expenditure on teaching.

Brixton Church of England Primary School, Plymouth

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now consider, in the light of current expenditure by way of capital allocation for voluntary aided schools, making a grant for Brixton Church of England primary school near Plymouth; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: The available resources for capital projects at aided and special agreement schools in 1986-87 are fully allocated.

Capital Expenditure

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what allocations of prescribed capital expenditure on equipment, plant and machinery for advanced and further education under part 8 of the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980 were made to local education authorities in England in respect of the 1985-86 and 1986-87 financial years.

Mr. Walden: The following table shows for each local education authority, whose bid distinguished advanced further education (AFE), the component for AFE equipment, plant and machinery included within the education allocations of prescribed capital expenditure in 1985-86 and 1986-87. The breakdown of allocations is informative rather than prescriptive since authorities are free under part VIII of the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 to apply their allocations as they see fit, taking account of local needs as they perceive them.

Table of AFE equipment allocations 1985-86 and 1986-87

£000s cash

Authority	*1985-86**	*1986-87†‡*
Barking	600	523
Barnet	1,145	1,350
Ealing	640	246
Harrow	—	157
Hounslow	12	50
Kingston-upon-Thames	240	865
Merton	—	20
Inner London	1,750	3,046
Birmingham	—	617
Coventry	1,021	1,135
Sandwell	22	23
Walsall	40	—
Wolverhampton	1,220	657
Liverpool	1,490	652
Bolton	95	128
Manchester	1,240	963
Salford	255	—
Sheffield	1,250	752
Bradford	—	144
Kirklees	950	774
Leeds	798	529
Wakefield	50	63
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	430	893
South Tyneside	163	56
Sunderland	416	662
Avon	525	603
Bedfordshire	—	101
Berkshire	157	215
Buckinghamshire	—	53
Cheshire	—	164
Cleveland	840	628
Cornwall	—	81
Cumbria	20	15
Derbyshire	100	245
Devon	1,159	649
Dorset	600	291
East Sussex	975	613
Essex	10	79
Gloucestershire	—	84
Hampshire	823	1,809
Hereford and Worcestershire	20	7
Hertfordshire	1,563	772
Humberside	210	297
Kent	—	111
Lancashire	910	872
Leicestershire	850	623
Northamptonshire	—	189
Nottinghamshire	609	505
Oxfordshire	1,036	580
Staffordshire	720	785
Surrey	—	152

* Includes supplementary allocations made in August 1985 to selected authorities.

† Includes a component for furniture and motor vehicles.

‡ Includes supplementary allocations made under the engineering and technology programme.

Mr. Fatchett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what prescribed capital expenditure on equipment, plant and machinery in institutions of further and higher education each local authority in England has incurred every financial year from 1979-80 until 1984-85 in *(a)* cash and *(b)* real terms, distinguishing in each case between polytechnics and other establishments.

Mr. Walden: The information given in the tables shows, for each authority, outturn expenditure on equipment, plant and machinery in polytechnics and other maintained establishments of further education.

Capital expenditure cash prices
Plant machinery and equipment

	1979-80		*1980-81*		*1981-82*	
	Polytechnics	*Other maintained establishments*	*Polytechnics*	*Other maintained establishments*	*Polytechnics*	*Other maintained establishments*
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barking	222,125	24,101	93,865	22,594	541,533	6,126
Barnet	438,497	19,138	634,344	14,288	1,173,965	56,402
Bexley	—	0	—	456	—	26,418
Brent	—	12,017	—	35,130	—	39,518
Bromley	—	57,289	—	101,841	—	38,938
Croydon	—	0	—	93,057	—	46,941
Ealing	—	88,921	—	201,007	—	96,753
Enfield	—	85,175	—	83,355	—	54,237
Haringey	—	56,649	—	71,400	—	57,429
Harrow	—	0	—	142,008	—	173
Havering	—	192	—	0	—	75,573
Hillingdon	—	19,738	—	2,867	—	19,755
Hounslow	—	62,070	—	0	—	77,065
Kingston-upon-Thames	234,179	37,572	831,545	0	183,049	0
Merton	—	46,521	—	57,246	—	0
Newham	—	222,828	—	224,645	—	76,213
Redbridge	—	54,795	—	57,752	—	56,367
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	6,022	—	31,957	—	98,780
Sutton	—	0	—	29,049	—	45,835
Waltham Forest	—	40,625	—	153,195	—	−56,475
ILEA	765,321	3,073,984	3,297,293	3,021,650	498,355	484,025
Birmingham	107,471	24,544	40,319	80,327	22,899	33,853
Coventry	600,425	54,663	925,568	114,650	578,189	45,288
Dudley	—	43,831	—	61,754	—	101,088
Sandwell	—	112,744	—	209,202	—	396,493
Solihull	—	0	—	0	—	0
Walsall	—	0	—	73,192	—	53,226
Wolverhampton	526,079	35,214	233,751	87,418	750,531	26,424
Knowsley	—	0	—	0	—	24,533
Liverpool	213,351	27,928	527,001	223,432	1,549,287	138,371
St. Helens	—	61,039	—	40,590	—	0
Sefton	—	0	—	0	—	38,916
Wirral	—	84,900	—	8,036	—	8,760
Bolton	—	123,353	—	150,849	—	176,956
Bury	—	0	—	18,300	—	15,065
Manchester	229,084	286,138	200,324	265,099	579,038	183,285
Oldham	—	3,771	—	11,160	—	33,557
Rochdale	—	11,877	—	16,768	—	0
Salford	—	1,980	17,680	—	53,164	
Stockport	—	27,520	—	2,690	—	128,297
Tameside	—	31,266	—	53,298	—	7,583
Trafford	—	29,531	—	99,679	—	93,962
Wigan	—	0	—	0	—	21,639
Barnsley	—	0	—	10,196	—	0
Doncaster	—	22,920	—	234,395	—	1,121
Rotherham	—	186,387	—	167,348	—	147,260
Sheffield	271,001	3,190	741,676	17,352	199,302	47,890
Bradford	—	12,665	—	700	—	4,275
Calderdale	—	38,885	—	46,949	—	24,311
Kirklees	771,236	166,147	764,152	258,571	1,288,060	427,382
Leeds	74,821	50,124	69,996	290,197	226,262	479,251
Wakefield	—	201,250	—	48,095	—	362,886
Gateshead	—	91,218	—	37,408	—	2,910
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	354,657	75,217	333,268	294,981	439,334	40,427
North Tyneside	—	0	—	43,814	—	1,291
South Tyneside	—	0	—	741,624	—	306,891
Sunderland	630,049	33,254	381,848	8,739	412,008	49,010
Isle of Scilly	—	0	—	0	—	0
Avon	70,574	10,764	504,373	82,830	837,603	545,717
Bedfordshire	—	111,142	—	193,674	—	256,143
Berkshire	—	678,495	—	801,221	—	773,707
Buckinghamshire	—	96,734	—	263,252	—	472,443
Cambridgeshire	—	542,509	—	549,476	—	516,251

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Cheshire	—	828,108	—	1,140,903	—	705,728
Cleveland	252,773	188,557	403,019	314,947	619,165	207,568
Cornwall	—	33,076	—	225,205	—	201,964
Cumbria	—	15,350	—	57,949	—	71,316
Derbyshire	—	336,856	—	462,111	—	500,224
Devon	280,207	193,172	420,917	336,457	302,203	503,314
Dorset	—	185,534	—	131,572	—	115,140
Durham	—	78,883	—	64,796	—	145,354
East Sussex	206,934	89,300	426,614	292,359	643,523	401,258
Essex	—	434,755	—	805,347	—	52,692
Gloucestershire	—	191,661	—	244,755	—	58,436
Hampshire	177,248	389,518	236,453	732,951	80,843	499,140
Hereford and Worecester	—	77,814	—	134,944	—	516,776
Hertfordshire	531,491	148,895	520,800	189,822	541,025	245,290
Humberside	—	247,243	—	781,704	—	523,360
Isle of Wight	—	87,354	—	112,611	—	119,994
Kent	—	1,029,753	—	1,142,031	—	509,415
Lancashire	555,416	672,242	849,084	1,089,586	883,374	875,082
Leicestershire	197,100	281,512	433,086	663,738	294,763	294,304
Lincolnshire	—	137,689	—	202,179	—	388,453
Norfolk	—	6,374	—	117,209	—	169,516
North Yorkshire	—	264,987	—	355,480	—	432,673
Northamptonshire	—	25,556	—	41,060	—	117,392
Northumberland	—	127,551	—	125,195	—	277,794
Nottinghamshire	756,625	483,330	892,643	702,681	1,431,579	1,514,241
Oxfordshire	393,927	134,102	519,567	252,115	541,836	488,224
Salop	—	337,173	—	26,508	—	88,863
Somerset	—	178,044	—	139,770	—	352,781
Staffordshire	320,240	485,693	461,397	727,779	541,114	1,302,737
Suffolk	—	20,291	—	55,502	—	181,752
Surrey	—	642,437	—	678,684	—	664,089
Warwickshire	—	35,104	—	140,113	—	29,595
West Sussex	—	159,834	—	179,566	—	277,930
Wiltshire	—	474,284	—	549,815	—	—

Capital expenditure cash prices Plant machinery and equipment

	1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barking	1,482,964	58,968	961,355	58,596	760,594	0
Barnet	2,362,393	228,549	620,432	162,070	900,105	184,795
Bexley	—	37,056	—	50,982	—	19,510
Brent	—	376,630	—	113,220	—	5,679
Bromley	—	107,225	—	14,259	—	98,873
Croydon	—	84,377	—	92,186	—	192,942
Ealing	—	113,999	—	273,672	—	220,449
Enfield	—	47,866	—	49,881	—	87,271
Haringey	—	186,742	—	290,948	—	57,743
Harrow	—	217,164	—	6,968	—	60,479
Havering	—	0	—	0	—	67
Hillingdon	—	71,740	—	95,397	—	34,963
Hounslow	—	89,328	—	180,062	—	96,245
Kingston-upon-Thames	354,943	104,498	735,441	59,979	369,547	61,742
Merton	—	0	—	—	—	—
Newham	—	90,688	—	9,978	—	—
Redbridge	—	29,274	—	56	—	19,888
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	93,714	—	31,535	—	21,743
Sutton	—	60,480	—	49,485	—	182
Waltham Forest	—	29,896	—	146,662	—	30,974
ILEA	1,582,024	2,624,636	1,229,935	1,100,924	1,825,766	607,067
Birmingham	1,348,223	741,548	1,518,369	509,848	79,314	19,538
Coventry	766,660	410,355	906,386	71,222	1,067,257	−5,451
Dudley	—	44,309	—	67,206	—	18,223
Sandwell	—	273,910	—	534,534	—	329,651
Solihull	—	96,516	—	42,437	—	50,585
Walsall	—	2,068	—	5,448	—	138,567
Wolverhampton	849,783	12,747	656,358	16,478	514,887	24,785
Knowsley	—	10,095	—	700	—	254,747

	1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Liverpool	3,197,659	79,154	861,533	26,878	—	—
St. Helens	—	121,312	—	46,031	—	9,106
Sefton	—	48,903	—	0	—	12,250
Wirral	—	558	—	0	—	0
Bolton	—	427,935	—	133,474	—	193,555
Bury	—	32,093	—	10,716	—	65,738
Manchester	954,050	462,624	580,594	72,141	702,713	329,727
Oldham	—	112,228	—	15,466	—	102,655
Rochdale	—	168	—	52,369	—	57,691
Salford	—	201,519	—	311,043	—	—
Stockport	—	200,340	—	214,152	—	301,979
Tameside	—	23,616	—	434	—	0
Trafford	—	103,262	—	107,697	—	11,270
Wigan	—	36,975	—	57,690	—	68,963
Barnsley	—	6,210	—	0	—	36,287
Doncaster	—	1,449	—	0	—	20,707
Rotherham	—	240,067	—	121,710	—	84,767
Sheffield	1,739,780	277,239	439,524	50,610	1,113,643	25,004
Bradford	—	469,653	—	268,502	—	305,573
Calderdale	—	11,472	—	17,114	—	8,627
Kirklees	1,630,081	316,755	1,354,981	276,364	1,457,436	263,422
Leeds	511,281	819,830	227,624	453,356	628,199	899,406
Wakefield	—	211,448	—	143,571	—	50,339
Gateshead	—	14,045	—	0	—	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	550,247	178,968	615,418	12,293	172,697	30,106
North Tyneside	—	603	—	1,399	—	—
South Tyneside	—	231,251	—	373,857	—	291,424
Sunderland	398,501	19,953	348,070	100,642	310,297	104,757
Isles of Scilly	—	0	—	0	—	0
Avon	656,659	344,498	208,882	316,336	718,320	425,112
Bedfordshire	—	223,670	—	259,943	—	732,224
Berkshire	—	1,440,047	—	1,097,634	—	1,762,166
Buckinghamshire	—	321,698	—	236,185	—	470,728
Cambridgeshire	—	803,593	—	1,274,311	—	403,690
Cheshire	—	1,071,949	—	1,193,504	—	1,415,089
Cleveland	1,527,555	557,211	615,695	439,586	596,744	530,331
Cornwall	—	237,125	—	230,750	—	302,845
Cumbria	—	93,174	—	114,738	—	251,929
Derbyshire	—	886,410	—	956,520	—	811,436
Devon	756,341	462,043	503,987	224,889	1,612,857	326,022
Dorset	—	530,713	—	450,848	—	707,782
Durham	—	177,026	—	249,637	—	212,576
East Sussex	427,033	471,094	465,004	336,254	332,836	334,378
Essex	—	251,862	—	662,810	—	692,436
Gloucestershire	—	402,757	—	168,546	—	230,698
Hampshire	81,087	879,166	161,872	1,195,368	130,235	1,137,428
Hereford and Worcester	—	773,251	—	919,822	—	135,493
Hertfordshire	435,672	404,438	697,538	613,084	727,489	632,936
Humberside	—	1,710,322	—	1,257,405	—	982,570
Isle of Wight	—	127,902	—	196,728	—	209,453
Kent	—	633,514	—	569,848	—	640,757
Lancashire	1,139,243	1,307,964	1,249,568	2,991,214	749,431	716,777
Leicestershire	472,246	608,402	385,387	195,541	663,844	216,979
Lincolnshire	—	235,878	—	266,999	—	151,840
Norfolk	—	292,598	—	184,987	—	321,137
North Yorkshire	—	445,574	—	522,940	—	637,017
Northamptonshire	—	203,188	—	299,905	—	617,835
Northumberland	—	164,007	—	66,269	—	70,691
Nottinghamshire	578,687	211,099	576,543	39,751	432,929	73,407
Oxfordshire	987,137	491,722	1,127,351	439,572	2,034,468	609,185
Salop	—	123,915	—	334,544	—	154,022
Somerset	—	79,784	—	16,198	—	—
Staffordshire	1,023,478	1,579,897	1,169,733	1,622,972	688,130	2,099,915
Suffolk	—	219,558	—	171,475	—	177,190
Surrey	—	1,259,436	—	1,247,559	—	1,466,496
Warwickshire	—	501	—	137,887	—	169,859
West Sussex	—	234,700	—	220,923	—	128,900
Wiltshire	—	—	—	836,610	—	814,408

Capital expenditure 1984-85 prices (using GDP deflator figures 19 March 1986) plant machinery and equipment

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82	
	Polytechnics	*Other maintained establishments*	*Polytechnics*	*Other maintained establishments*	*Polytechnics*	*Other maintained establishments*
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barking	338,347	36,711	120,386	28,978	631,503	7,144
Barnet	667,931	29,152	813,574	18,325	1,369,007	65,773
Bexley	—	0	—	585	—	30,807
Brent	—	18,305	—	45,056	—	46,084
Bromley	—	87,264	—	130,616	—	45,407
Croydon	—	0	—	119,350	—	54,740
Ealing	—	135,447	—	257,800	—	112,828
Enfield	—	129,741	—	106,907	—	63,248
Haringey	—	86,289	—	91,574	—	66,970
Harrow	—	0	—	182,132	—	202
Havering	—	292	—	0	—	88,129
Hillingdon	—	30,065	—	3,677	—	23,037
Hounslow	—	94,547	—	0	—	89,869
Kingston-upon-Thames	356,708	57,231	1,066,494	0	213,461	0
Merton	—	70,862	—	73,421	—	0
Newham	—	339,418	—	288,117	—	88,875
Redbridge	—	83,465	—	74,070	—	65,732
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	9,173	—	40,984	—	115,191
Sutton	—	0	—	37,257	—	53,450
Waltham Forest	—	61,881	—	196,479	—	65,858
ILEA	1,165,759	4,682,382	4,228,925	3,875,401	581,152	564,441
Birmingham	163,703	37,386	51,711	103,023	26,703	39,477
Coventry	914,585	83,264	1,187,082	147,044	674,249	52,812
Dudley	—	66,765	—	79,202	—	117,883
Sandwell	—	171,735	—	268,311	—	462,366
Solihull	—	0	—	0	—	0
Walsall	—	0	—	93,872	—	62,069
Wolverhampton	801,339	53,639	299,796	112,117	875,224	30,814
Knowsley	—	0	—	0	—	28,609
Liverpool	324,982	42,541	675,902	286,561	1,806,685	161,360
St. Helens	—	92,976	—	52,058	—	0
Sefton	—	0	—	0	—	45,382
Wirral	—	129,322	—	10,307	—	10,215
Bolton	—	187,895	—	193,471	—	206,355
Bury	—	0	—	23,471	—	17,568
Manchester	348,947	435,854	256,924	340,001	675,239	213,736
Oldham	—	5,744	—	14,313	—	39,132
Rochdale	—	18,091	—	21,506	—	0
Salford	—	3,016	—	22,675	—	61,997
Stockport	—	41,919	—	3,450	—	149,612
Tameside	—	47,625	—	68,357	—	8,843
Trafford	—	44,982	—	127,843	—	109,573
Wigan	—	0	—	0	—	25,234
Barnsley	—	0	—	13,077	—	0
Doncaster	—	34,912	—	300,622	—	1,307
Rotherham	—	283,910	—	214,631	—	171,726
Sheffield	412,797	4,859	951,233	22,255	232,414	55,846
Bradford	—	19,292	—	898	—	4,985
Calderdale	—	59,231	—	60,214	—	28,350
Kirklees	1,174,769	253,080	980,059	331,629	1,502,058	498,387
Leeds	113,970	76,350	89,773	372,191	263,853	558,874
Wakefield	—	306,550	—	61,684	—	423,176
Gateshead	—	138,946	—	47,977	—	3,393
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	540,224	114,573	427,431	378,326	512,325	47,144
North Tyneside	—	0	—	56,193	—	1,505
South Tyneside	—	0	—	951,166	—	357,878
Sunderland	959,709	50,653	489,737	11,208	480,459	57,153
Isles of Scilly	—	0	—	0	—	0
Avon	107,500	16,396	646,881	106,233	976,762	636,382
Bedfordshire	—	169,295	—	248,396	—	298,699
Berkshire	—	1,033,503	—	1,027,602	—	902,251
Buckinghamshire	—	147,348	—	337,632	—	550,935
Cambridgeshire	—	826,366	—	704,727	—	602,021
Cheshire	—	1,261,398	—	1,463,259	—	822,978
Cleveland	385,031	287,216	516,890	403,934	722,033	242,053
Cornwall	—	50,382	—	288,835	—	235,518
Cumbria	—	23,382	—	74,322	—	83,164
Derbyshire	—	513,109	—	592,678	—	583,331
Devon	426,819	294,245	539,845	431,521	352,411	586,935
Dorset	—	282,611	—	168,747	—	134,269
Durham	—	120,157	—	83,104	—	169,503
East Sussex	315,208	136,024	547,151	374,963	750,438	467,923

	1979-80		1980-81		1981-82	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Essex	—	662,232	—	1,032,893	—	61,448
Gloucestershire	—	291,944	—	313,909	—	68,145
Hampshire	269,989	593,325	303,262	940,042	94,274	582,067
Hereford and Worcester	—	118,529	—	173,072	—	602,633
Hertfordshire	809,583	226,801	667,949	243,455	630,911	286,042
Humberside	—	376,608	—	1,002,570	—	610,311
Isle of Wight	—	133,060	—	144,429	—	139,930
Kent	—	1,568,550	—	1,464,706	—	594,049
Lancashire	846,026	1,023,979	1,088,988	1,397,443	1,030,138	1,020,468
Leicestershire	300,228	428,807	555,452	851,274	343,735	343,200
Lincolnshire	—	209,732	—	259,304	—	452,991
Norfolk	—	9,709	—	150,326	—	197,679
North Yorkshire	—	403,636	—	455,919	—	504,557
Northamptonshire	—	38,928	—	52,661	—	136,896
Northumberland	—	194,289	—	160,568	—	323,947
Nottinghamshire	1,152,513	736,222	1,144,854	901,220	1,669,421	1,765,817
Oxfordshire	600,041	204,268	666,368	323,349	631,857	569,338
Salop	—	513,592	—	33,998	—	103,627
Somerset	—	271,202	—	179,261	—	411,392
Staffordshire	487,799	739,822	591,762	933,409	631,015	1,519,174
Suffolk	—	30,908	—	71,184	—	211,948
Surrey	—	978,579	—	870,442	—	774,421
Warwickshire	—	53,471	—	179,701	—	34,512
West Sussex	—	243,464	—	230,301	—	324,105
Wiltshire	—	722,443	—	705,162	—	—

Capital expenditure 1984-85 prices (using GDP deflator figures 19th March 1986) Plant machinery and equipment

	1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Barking	1,616,028	64,259	1,002,581	61,109	760,594	0
Barnet	2,574,366	2,490,056	647,038	169,020	900,105	184,795
Bexley	—	40,381	—	53,168	—	19,510
Brent	—	410,424	—	118,075	—	5,679
Bromley	—	116,846	—	14,870	—	98,873
Croydon	—	91,948	—	96,139	—	192,942
Ealing	—	124,228	—	285,408	—	220,449
Enfield	—	52,161	—	52,020	—	87,271
Haringey	—	203,498	—	303,425	—	57,743
Harrow	—	236,650	—	7,267	—	60,478
Havering	—	0	—	0	—	67
Hillingdon	—	78,177	—	99,488	—	34,963
Hounslow	—	97,343	—	187,784	—	96,245
Kingston-upon-Thames	386,791	113,874	766,979	62,551	369,547	61,742
Merton	—	0	—	—	—	—
Newham	—	98,825	—	10,406	—	—
Redbridge	—	31,901	—	58	—	19,888
Richmond-upon-Thames	—	102,123	—	32,887	—	21,743
Sutton	—	65,907	—	51,607	—	182
Waltham Forest	—	32,579	—	152,951	—	30,974
ILEA	1,723,976	2,860,140	1,282,679	1,148,135	1,825,766	607,067
Birmingham	1,469,197	808,086	1,583,482	531,712	79,314	19,538
Coventry	835,451	447,175	945,255	74,276	1,067,257	−5,451
Dudley	—	48,285	—	70,088	—	18,223
Sandwell	—	298,487	—	557,457	—	329,651
Solihull	—	105,176	—	44,257	—	50,585
Walsall	—	2,254	—	5,682	—	138,567
Wolverhampton	926,033	13,891	684,505	17,185	514,887	24,785
Knowsley	—	11,001	—	730	—	254,747
Liverpool	3,484,579	86,256	898,478	28,031	—	—
St. Helens	—	132,197	—	48,005	—	9,106
Sefton	—	53,291	—	0	—	12,250
Wirral	—	608	—	0	—	0
Bolton	—	466,333	—	139,198	—	193,555
Bury	—	34,973	—	11,176	—	65,738
Manchester	1,039,655	504,134	605,492	75,235	702,713	329,727
Oldham	—	122,298	—	16,129	—	102,655
Rochdale	—	183	—	54,615	—	57,691

	1982-83		1983-84		1984-85	
	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments	Polytechnics	Other maintained establishments
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Salford	—	219,601	—	324,382	—	—
Stockport	—	218,316	—	223,336	—	301,979
Tameside	—	25,735	—	453	—	0
Trafford	—	112,528	—	112,315	—	11,270
Wigan	—	40,293	—	60,164	—	68,963
Barnsley	—	6,767	—	0	—	36,287
Doncaster	—	1,579	—	0	—	20,707
Rotherham	—	262,196	—	126,929	—	84,767
Sheffield	1,917,682	302,115	458,372	52,780	1,131,643	25,004
Bradford	—	511,794	—	280,016	—	305,573
Calderdale	—	12,501	—	17,848	—	8,627
Kirklees	1,776,345	345,177	1,413,087	288,215	1,457,436	263,422
Leeds	557,157	893,392	237,385	472,797	628,199	899,406
Wakefield	—	230,421	—	149,728	—	50,339
Gateshead	—	15,305	—	0	—	0
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	599,620	195,026	641,809	12,820	172,697	30,106
North Tyneside	—	657	—	1,459	—	—
South Tyneside	—	252,001	—	389,889	—	291,424
Sunderland	434,258	21,743	362,996	104,958	310,297	104,757
Isles of Scilly	—	0	—	0	—	0
Avon	715,580	375,409	217,840	329,902	718,320	425,112
Bedfordshire	—	243,740	—	271,090	—	732,224
Berkshire	—	1,569,260	—	1,144,704	—	1,762,166
Buckinghamshire	—	350,563	—	246,313	—	470,728
Cambridgeshire	—	875,698	—	1,328,958	—	403,690
Cheshire	—	1,168,133	—	1,244,685	—	1,415,089
Cleveland	1,664,620	607,209	642,098	458,437	596,744	530,331
Cornwall	—	258,402	—	240,645	—	302,845
Cumbria	—	101,534	—	119,658	—	251,929
Derbyshire	—	965,946	—	997,539	—	811,436
Devon	824,206	503,501	525,600	234,533	1,612,857	326,022
Dorset	—	578,333	—	470,182	—	707,782
Durham	—	192,910	—	260,342	—	212,576
East Sussex	465,350	513,364	484,945	350,674	332,836	334,378
Essex	—	274,461	—	691,234	—	692,436
Gloucestershire	—	438,896	—	175,774	—	230,698
Hampshire	88,363	958,052	168,814	1,246,629	130,235	1,137,428
Hereford and Worcester	—	842,633	—	959,267	—	135,493
Hertfordshire	474,764	440,728	727,451	639,375	727,489	632,936
Humberside	—	1,863,786	—	1,311,327	—	982,570
Isle of Wight	—	139,378	—	205,164	—	209,453
Kent	—	690,358	—	594,285	—	640,757
Lancashire	1,241,465	1,425,325	1,303,154	3,119,487	749,431	716,777
Leicestershire	514,620	662,993	401,914	203,926	663,844	216,979
Lincolnshire	—	257,043	—	278,449	—	151,840
Norfolk	—	318,852	—	192,920	—	321,137
North Yorkshire	—	485,555	—	545,365	—	637,017
Northamptonshire	—	221,420	—	312,776	—	617,835
Northumberland	—	178,723	—	69,111	—	70,691
Nottinghamshire	630,612	230,041	601,267	41,456	432,929	73,407
Oxfordshire	1,075,711	535,843	1,175,696	458,422	2,034,468	609,185
Salop	—	135,034	—	348,890	—	154,022
Somerset	—	86,943	—	16,893	—	—
Staffordshire	1,115,313	1,721,658	1,219,895	1,692,570	688,130	2,099,915
Suffolk	—	239,259	—	178,828	—	177,190
Surrey	—	137,443	—	1,301,059	—	1,466,496
Warwickshire	—	546	—	143,800	—	169,859
West Sussex	—	255,759	—	230,397	—	128,900
Wiltshire	—	—	—	872,487	—	814,408

Barnsley College of Technology

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will ensure that consultations take place between the National Advisory Board for Public Sector Higher Education and the Barnsley metropolitan district council on the National Advisory Board's proposed cuts in high technology and advanced mining courses at the Barnsley college of technology before any decisions on cutbacks in these courses are taken.

Mr. Walden: The student number proposals for 1987-88 issued by the secretariat of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education (NAB) are for consultation. Comments on the proposals have been invited from the institutions affected and their maintaining authorities by 13 June 1986. It is open to Barnsley metropolitan district council and to Barnsley college of technology to respond to that invitation.

Mr. Mason asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) if he will call for the reports of Her Majesty's inspectors of education on the quality and successes of the high technology and advanced mining courses at the Barnsley college of technology in recent years for his personal examination before any decisions are taken on the proposed cuts of the National Advisory Board for Public Sector Higher Education;

(2) before he accepts the proposals for cuts of £378,000 by his National Advisory Board in the Barnsley college of technology's specialists courses, if he will take into account the numbers of job losses at the college, the inconvenience of transfers affecting Barnsley students, the loss of specialist college facilities to local business men and businesses and the lessening prospects of attracting high technology firms to Barnsley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The consultative student number proposals for 1987-88 issued at the beginning of April by the secretariat of the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education are one stage of a planning exercise which will culminate in the submission of advice by the National Advisory Body to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State. The NAB committee will not determine its advice about student numbers in the public sector and their disposition in 1987-88 until the funding available is announced in the autumn. At that juncture, and in the light of the circumstances then prevailing, the NAB committee has indicated that it will wish to reconsider the question of the overall level of intakes in 1987-88 as well as the implications for individual institutions. The NAB usually submits its final advice to my right hon. Friend in December. It is only then that my right hon. Friend becomes involved, normally announcing his decisions about planned student numbers and the distribution of the advanced further education pool before Christmas. In reaching his decisions my right hon. Friend will have regard to all the relevant factors.

Teacher Training

Mr. Hancock asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he held any consultations with the Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education before making his provisional allocation of initial teacher training intakes for 1987 to 1989.

Mr. Walden: Neither my right hon. Friend nor I have consulted or received advice from the council on this matter.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Corporal Peter Clark

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General (1) on what date the Director of Public Prosecutions' office decided that no criminal proceedings were appropriate in the case of Corporal Peter Clark;

(2) on what date the Director of Public Prosecutions' office informed the appropriate military authorities of its decision regarding Corporal Peter Clark.

The Attorney-General: At no time did the Director of Public Prosecutions consider that criminal proceedings in the civil courts were appropriate against Corporal Peter Clark, and notified this fact to the Minister of Defence on 11 April 1984.

Cyprus Secrets Trial

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General whether the Director of Public Prosecutions attempted to bring to the United Kingdom the Cypriot national alleged by the prosecution to be a KGB agent, to appear at the trial of service men from 9 Signals Regiment.

The Attorney-General: No.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Police Manpower

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his reviews of police manpower have been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: On 21 October I announced that I was setting in hand urgent work to assess where there were specific needs for increases in the establishment of the Metropolitan police. At the same time I asked Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary to conduct a parallel review of the manpower needs of provincial forces. These reviews have been completed, and I can now announce their outcome.

When this Government first took office in May 1979 the police service as a whole was about 7,500 below an establishment of 119,000 which was itself inadequate. The Metropolitan police was more than 16 per cent. below strength. My predecessors took vigorous action to put this right. The result is that total police strength in England and Wales at the end of March stood at 120,848—9,355 more than May 1979. Total strength, including civilians, has risen by 14,076 over the same period.

These substantial increases have been accompanied by a strong drive towards greater efficiency and effectiveness in line with our determination to secure better value for money throughout the public sector. We have emphasised the need to make the best use of the available manpower, for example through civilianisation, which resulted in the release of over 1,000 officers for operational duty in 1983-84 and 1984-85. This has been an essential part of our policy, and it will be maintained. The measures taken by chief officers have put their forces in a better position to cope with the increased demands which have been made on them.

But those demands—to deal with terrorism, drugs, crime and public order—have continued to increase. Accordingly, last autumn I decided that there should be a comprehensive look at police manpower, and set in hand the reviews which I announced on 21 October.

These reviews sought to assess the proven needs for additional police officers, and also the extent to which these needs could be met by civilianisation and other efficiency measures. As a result, we have decided that our objective should be further to increase police strength in England and Wales by about 3,200 and civilian manpower by around 2,000. This priority given to the police will be reflected in the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement.

I aim to approve total increases in the establishments of provincial forces of the order of 2,000. I am prepared to approve 430 of these additional posts in the current financial year. For the rest, I envisage a phased

programme of increases over the next few years. I shall be considering applications from police authorities on the basis of the proven needs of the force, and in the light of advice from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. In particular, I shall need to be satisfied that any additional manpower is to be used to meet specific, measurable objectives. Police authorities applying for increases must, of course, be ready to carry their share of the cost, and the precise timing of these increases will depend on levels of spending and provision for future years. My approval is not required for increases in civilian manpower in the provinces, but I expect to see phased increases of approximately 1,350. This will provide scope for substantial further civilianisation resulting, I hope, in the release of at least 650 police officers for operational duty. Altogether this will amount to an increase in operational strength of more than 2,600.

The Metropolitan police will receive an increase of up to 1,200 police officers, on top of the increase of 50 for drugs work to which I announced my agreement in principle last October. There will also be provision for increases of 600 in the civil staff ceiling to assist with further civilianisation, which should lead to the release of at least 400 officers for operational duty. A further 200 officers will be released by the Commissioner's reorganisation of the force. Altogether this will amount to an increase in operational strength of up to 1,850 officers.

As the first step in this programme, I have confirmed the increase of 50 in the police establishment previously agreed in principle, and authorised a further increase of 300 for 1986-87. I have also agreed to an increase of 107 in the civil staff ceiling for 1986-87, on top of the 43 agreed by my predecessor last June. The cost of these increases will be contained within the cash limit previously announced. For each of the next three years up to the end of 1989-90 I can indicate now as police authority for the metropolis that I shall be prepared to agree to further increases of up to 300 in the police establishment and 150 in the civil staff ceiling. Before doing so I shall need to be satisfied that earlier increases have been effectively used in accordance with the agreed objectives, and that satisfactory progress has been made with civilianisation and the force reorganisation. My officials will be keeping in close touch with the Metropolitan police to monitor the results of the increases.

The day-to-day deployment of this additional manpower will be for chief officers of police to determine, in the light of the objectives they will have identified. I know that many wish to increase the visible police presence on the streets. I therefore expect to see a steady increase in the number of officers on foot patrol, deterring the criminal and the hooligan and protecting and reassuring the citizen. This will help achieve our twin objectives of curbing crime and reducing fear of crime. I also hope that increased resources will enable chief officers to strengthen further their investment in crime prevention initiatives such as neighbourhood watch.

Some specialised police units will be reinforced. The Commissioner plans to strengthen his squads dealing with organised crime, drug trafficking, fraud and armed robbery. There will also be increases for the vital anti-terrorist work of the Metropolitan police special branch; and additional resources will be available for protection duties.

News International, Wapping

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total policing costs to date of the News International dispute at Wapping.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many arrests have taken place at Wapping, in connection with the print dispute, from 9 May to date.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Sixty-nine, up to 18 May.

Broadcasting (Political Bias)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) when he next proposes to meet the director general of the British Broadcasting Corporation to discuss its charter in respect of political bias; and if he will make a statement;

(2) when he next proposes to meet the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority to discuss political bias in programme content; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend has no plans to discuss this matter with either broadcasting authority. Parliament has given responsibility in this field direct to the broadcasting authorities, and not to the Government.

Television (All-night Programmes)

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, when he next meets the chairman of the Independent Broadcasting Authority, he will raise with him the social and environmental impact of the proposed introduction of all-night pop video television programmes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My right hon. Friend discussed this proposal with the chairman of the authority when he met him on 19 May. We understand that the plans are for an experiment on Yorkshire Television to guage the level of interest in all-night television services. All-night radio services have existed for many years, and the Government see no reason to believe that all-night television services will have any greater social or environmental impact.

Mr. Peter Harvey

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether Mr. Peter Harvey has been employed at any time in any capacity, by his office.

Mr. Hurd: Yes. Mr. Harvey has been employed as a lawyer in the Home Office legal adviser's branch from 15 July 1948 to 17 April 1977 and again since 1 October 1983.

Immigration Officers (Airports)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many immigration officers are allocated to each airport in the United Kingdom and on what basis these numbers are determined.

Mr. Waddington: The United Kingdom airports at which there is a permanent immigration officer complement are:

	Number
Aberdeen	5
Birmingham	23
Bristol	4
Cardiff	4
East Midlands	10
Edinburgh	5
Gatwick	137
Glasgow	16
Heathrow	564
Bournemouth/Hurn	3
Leeds/Bradford	7
Luton	20
Lydd	2
Manchester	29
Norwich	4
Prestwick	6
Southend	5
Stansted	8

These numbers are determined on the basis of the volume and type of traffic and the time over which passenger movements are spread.

Adults and Children (Sexual Contacts)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department is sponsoring any research into sexual contacts between adults and children; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Data in this area are kept constantly under review in the Department. An article on "Child homicide and child physical and sexual abuse" was published in the Home Office research and planning unit research bulletin No. 20 earlier this year. A study of rape offences (which will include offences against minors) is in the current programme of the research and planning unit.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Hurd: I visited Merseyside on 16 May. I visited the Department's computing and pay branch at Bootle where I discussed the work of the branch and met members of staff. After lunch with local business men and a visit to Albert dock, I visited the Merseyside police drug squad and had discussions with senior and operational officers about the scale of drug misuse in the area and the force's response in relation to drug misusers and to the activities of drug dealers and traffickers.

Prison Service (Garages)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many garages are owned by Her Majesty's prison service; how many of these are let to prison officers; and how many of these are let to members of the public.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *9-10*]: Approximately 6,600 prison officers occupy quarters, of whom about two thirds rent garages from the prison department. Very few garages are let to members of the public. Precise figures, and information on the total number of garages owned, could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his policy on letting garages belonging to Her Majesty's prison service to members of the public resident nearby.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *9-10*]: Only exceptionally are garages let to members of the public. When surplus to requirements, garages are normally sold.

PRIME MINISTER

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today. This evening I hope to have an audience of Her Majesty the Queen.

Housebuilding Statistics

Mr. McNamara asked the Prime Minister if, following her reply to the hon. Member for Heywood and Middleton (Mr. Callaghan), *Official Report*, 15 May, column *851*, she will indicate those areas in the United Kingdom where the 1·3 million new homes were built last year and whether this is a record number of new homes built in the United Kingdom in any one year.

The Prime Minister: The figure to which I referred applies to the whole of the period since 1979.

WALES

Children's ENT Hospital, Cardiff

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any plans to increase equipment and financial resources for the children's ear, nose and throat hospital in Cardiff, West; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The allocation of resources for the Children's ear, nose and throat hospital in Cardiff is a matter for South Glamorgan health authority to determine.

Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales on how many occasions during the year 1985-86 civil servants from his Department paid official visits to Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many appeals against refusals of planning permission by Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor were made to his Department during 1985-86; how many of these were upheld; how many rejected; how many withdrawn; and how many are still under consideration.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Since 1 January 1985 there have been 24 appeals against refusals of planning permission by Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor. Five were upheld (two with conditions), nine dismissed and three withdrawn. Seven are under consideration.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications for funds from the European Economic Community by Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor have been processed by his Department in each year since 1979; how many of these were successful; how much money was granted to Dwyfor in pursuance of each such application; and whether all the money has been taken up in each case.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor—(Dwyfor district council)—has made two applications, in respect of European regional development fund aid, since 1979, both of which were successful. The details are:

Year of Application	*Project*	*Commitment Approved* £	*Payments to date* £	*Claims yet to be made by Council* £
1979	Services to industrial estates	20,850	17,850	3,000
1982	Refuse Pulveriser	801,581	*nil	200,396

* A claim for payment of £601,185 is awaiting approval in Brussels.

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he has received from Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor for additional resources towards housing costs during the year 1985-86.

Mr. Mark Robinson: None.

Housing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many applications he received from district councils in Wales during 1985-86 for special permission to use capital resources arising from the sale of council houses, in order to purchase houses from the public sector to let to people on the local housing waiting list; and if he will list these authorities together with the number of dwellings involved in each application, the numbers approved for each authority, and the capital expenditure entailed in these approvals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Local authorities are not required to seek consent to acquire houses for addition to their permanent rented stock provided that the expenditure is funded from the prescribed proportion of their capital receipts. However, special approval is required if a local authority wishes to borrow in order to meet such expenditure. During 1985-86 Preseli Pembrokeshire was the only local authority to seek special consent; loan sanction for the purchase of three dwellings was sought and approved, of which two purchases were completed at a total cost of £43,500.

Enterprise Express

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what contributions he expects the Enterprise Express to make to youth employment in Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Enterprise Express was a valuable means of telling young people how to take advantage of the opportunities for employment, training and enterprise which are available to them.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what liaison is planned between industry and the Manpower Services Commission Enterprise Express to ensure that proper and relevant advice and training are given in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Close and continuous liaison with industry is an integral part of the MSC's operations at all levels and was reflected in the excellent advice and information provided on the Enterprise Express.

Visual Arts

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will estimate the cost of the suggested reappraisal of the presentation of the visual and related arts in Wales, involving alterations to the buildings at Cathays Park, and the move of all or part of the departments not concerned with art to St. Fagans.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The preliminary appraisal by the advisory group estimated the cost of its three shortlisted schemes affecting the National museum building at Cathays Park as:

Estimated Capital Cost

	£ million
(a) the relocation of all or part of the museum departments to St. Fagans leaving Cathays Park wholly or substantially as a national gallery without any substantial development of the courtyard;	14·9—21·5
(b) the relocation of the museum departments to St. Fagans with the development of a theatre in the courtyard;	28·5
(c) the retention of all departments at Cathays Park in an expanded building providing separation between the museum and national gallery and much better visitor circulation	14·4

I am now discussing these possibilities, together with the other recommendations in the report, with interested parties. A copy of the report was placed in the Library on 15 April.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps are being taken by his Department to improve the conditions of the beaches used for bathing in Wales following the report of the European Community Commission on the subject.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to paragraphs 2.2, 2.3 and 5.2 to 5.5 of the "Government

Response to the Committee on Welsh Affairs' Report on Coastal Sewage Pollution in Wales' a copy of which is in the Library.

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing the number of school leavers employed on YTS in each of the Welsh counties in each year since the scheme was introduced; and how many of these have found full-time employment on completing the scheme.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Available information relates to the number of entrants by Manpower Services Commission area office. The number of entrants were as follows:

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Gwent	3,927	3,933	4,152
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	5,185	5,535	5,601
Mid and South Glamorgan	7,160	8,409	8,143
Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys	5,388	5,732	5,799

Information at this level on those finding full-time employment is available only for 1985-86 when the 100 per cent. follow-up survey was introduced. The percentage of leavers between April and November 1985 finding full-time employment within three months of leaving were:

	Per cent.
Gwent	45
Dyfed and West Glamorgan	42
Mid and South Glamorgan	41
Clwyd, Gwynedd and Powys	52

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many school leavers were employed by British Rail in Wales as part of the YTS in 1985; and how many were later offered permanent positions with British Rail.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were 47 entrants to British Rail YTS schemes in Wales during 1985-86. The Manpower Services Commission does not hold information on numbers of trainees who are already employees or are offered permanent employment during or after their traineeship by specific employers.

Orion Electric

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people will be employed by the Japanese company Orion Electric, recently established in the Welsh Development Agency factory at Kenfig Hill.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I understand that the company has said that it intends to employ about 100 people within 12 months.

Hospital Beds

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if the Government's health care scheme will lead to a reduction in the number of hospital beds needed in Welsh hospitals.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Government's policies are aimed at providing appropriate, accessible and cost-effective health provision to a high standard. The Government's recent consultative paper "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion" explores ways in which the primary care services can be improved. The document is not directly concerned with hospital provision. However, improvements in primary care, including the promotion of good health and preventive medicine, have a bearing upon future hospital provision.

Production and Construction Industries

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures showing the output of production and construction industries in each of the Welsh counties since 1981.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Direct Government support for industry is provided through regional development grants and regional selective assistance. Only the latter is available to the construction industry. Figures for regional development grants approved under the arrangements operating before November 1984 are not available by county. The total expenditure in Wales since 1 April 1981 has been £488·81 million. Up to 31 March 1986, offers of regional development grant under post November 1984 arrangements have amounted to:

	£ million
Clwyd	8·57
Dyfed	2·02
Gwent	3·05
Gwynedd	0·38
Powys	0·03
Mid Glamorgan	11·27
West Glamorgan	3·32

Offers of regional selective assistance to production and construction industries which were accepted in the period 1 April 1981 to 30 March 1986 amounted to:

	£ million
Clwyd	34·174
Dyfed	5·726
Gwent	52·548
Gwynedd	1·710
Mid Glamorgan	39·455
Powys	2·065
South Glamorgan	15·755
West Glamorgan	14·200

This takes no account of the wide range of construction related expenditure undertaken by Government and Government agencies, and made possible by grants to local authorities.

Hospitals (United States Authorities)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales at which hospitals in Wales the United States authorities have the right to use facilities in the event of an emergency; and under what arrangements they have these rights.

Mr. Mark Robinson: United States casualties may be treated in NHS hospitals under the United Kingdom-United States lines of communication arrangement. No hospital in Wales is designated for exclusive use by United States authorities in an emergency.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Cincinnati Slaughter Pens

Mr. Richard Page asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the number of Cincinnati slaughter pens currently in use.

Mrs. Fenner: We are not aware of any Cincinnati pens in use in England and Wales.

Slaughterhouses

Mr. Richard Page asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is the total number of licensed slaughterhouses.

Mrs. Fenner: In England and Wales there are 112 licensed poultry slaughterhouses, and about 910 red meat slaughterhouses, including those operated by local authorities which are not subject to licensing requirements.

Radiation (Milk)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the date and time at which the first sample of milk was taken for analysis for caesium 137, the number of samples subsequently taken and the period which normally elapses between collection of a milk sample and completion of analysis for this radioisotope.

Mrs. Fenner: The first sample of milk for analysis for caesium 137 was taken on the morning of 29 April and over 600 samples have since been taken by my Department. Samples have also been taken by Welsh Office agriculture department, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland, Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland and the National Radiological Protection Board.

The great majority of results are available on the day following collection, but, if necessary, some have been made available within a few hours. The period which elapses between collection of a milk sample and completion of analysis would normally depend on the distance from the sampling point to the laboratory.

Farm Incomes

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, further to his answer of 1 May concerning net farm incomes, *Official Report*, columns *473-76*, whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing in terms of costs and prices the reason for the increase in real incomes on cropping farms between 1968-69 and 1983-84.

Mrs. Fenner: Detailed information on between-year movements in the costs and revenues of cropping farms is published in the annual reports of the "Farm Management Survey, Farm Incomes in England and Wales" for the years 1967-68 to 1970-71 (tables 30 and 36) and "Farm Incomes in England for the years 1979-80 to 1983-84" (tables 19 and 21 for 1979-80 to 1982-83; tables 21 and 23 for 1982-83 and 1983-84). Copies of these reports are available in the Library of the House.

Beer

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions have been placed by Germany on the import of British beer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Defective Housing

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if Leicester city council was eligible to submit a bid for additional funding for Boot houses under the Housing Defects Act;

(2) if he will publish a list in the *Official Report* of local authorities which have submitted bids for additional funding under the Housing Defects Act.

Sir George Young: My Department's circular 9/85 (dated 27 March 1985) gave local housing authorities the opportunity to bid for additional housing investment programme allocations if these were needed to meet expected statutory obligations in 1985-86 under the housing defects legislation. Leicester city council did not apply: the authorities which have done so are listed. Of these, 28 were notified, in August 1985, that they were likely to be eligible for assistance: a further six have now been notified on the basis of end December 1985 monitoring returns.

Northern Region
- Blyth Valley Borough Council
- Durham City Council
- Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council
- Newcastle-upon-Tyne City Council
- North Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sedgefield District Council

Yorkshire and Humberside Region
- Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- Boothferry Borough Council
- Bradford City Council
- Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
- Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
- Great Grimsby Borough Council
- Kingston-upon-Hull City Council
- Leeds City Council
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Sheffield City Council
- Wakefield City Council
- York City Council

East Midlands Region
- Bassetlaw District Council
- Chesterfield Borough Council
- Gedling Borough Council
- Kettering Borough Council
- Newark & Sherwood District Council
- Northampton Borough Council
- North East Derbyshire District Council
- North Kesteven District Council
- Rushcliffe Borough Council

Eastern Region
- Broxbourne Borough Council
- Chiltern District Council
- East Hertfordshire District Council
- Epping Forest District Council
- Hertsmere Borough Council
- Huntingdon District Council
- Luton Borough Council
- North Hertfordshire District Council
- Norwich City Council

St. Albans City Council
St. Edmundsbury Borough Council
South Bedfordshire District Council
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
Stevenage Borough Council
Tendring District Council
Three Rivers District Council
Thurrock Borough Council

Greater London Region
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
London Borough of Croydon
London Borough of Ealing
London Borough of Harrow
London Borough of Havering
London Borough of Merton
London Borough of Redbridge
London Borough of Richmond
London Borough of Sutton
London Borough of Waltham Forest

South East Region
Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Cherwell District Council
Eastbourne Borough Council
Eastleigh Borough Council
Hart District Council
Newbury District Council
Portsmouth City Council
Reading Borough Council
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Rochester upon Medway Borough Council
Slough Borough Council
Southampton City Council
Vale of White Horse District Council
Wokingham District Council

South West Region
Bath City Council
Bristol City Council
Carrick District Council
Cheltenham Borough Council
Christchurch Borough Council
Exeter City Council
Gloucester City Council
Kennet District Council
Kingswood District Council
Mid Devon District Council
North Cornwall District Council
North Wiltshire District Council
Plymouth City Council
Restomel Borough Council
Sedgemoor District Council
South Hams District Council
South Somerset District Council
Stroud District Council
Taunton Deane Borough Council
Teignbridge District Council
Tewkesbury Borough Council
Thamesdown Borough Council
Torbay Borough Council
Wansdyke District Council
West Dorset District Council
West Somerset District Council
West Wiltshire District Council
Weymouth and Portland Borough Council
Woodspring District Council

West Midlands Region
Birmingham City Council
Cannock Chase District Council
Coventry City Council
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
East Staffordshire District Council
Hereford City Council
North Warwickshire Borough Council
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
Redditch Borough Council
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Shrewsbury and Atcham Borough Council
Stafford Borough Council
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Wolverhampton Metropolitan Borough Council
Worcester City Council
Wychavon District Council
Wyre Forest District Council

North West Region
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council
Crewe and Nantwich Borough Council
Hyndburn Borough Council
Lancaster City Council
Preston Borough Council
St. Helens Borough Council
South Ribble Borough Council
Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
Vale Royal District Council
Warrington Borough Council
West Lancashire District Council
Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many repair systems to Smith houses that meet PRC Homes Ltd.'s rules have been registered; how many have been considered; and how many are under consideration.

Sir George Young: Though none has yet been submitted to PRC Homes Ltd., I hope appropriate repair methods for Smith houses will emerge in due course.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of *(a)* PRC Homes Ltd. and *(b)* the National House Builders Council; and what was discussed.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State met the National House Building Council on 14 January, for a general discussion. My officials attend all meetings of the PRC Homes Ltd. assessment committee: the most recent was on 13 May, at which repair systems for Airey, Cornish Unit, Stent and Unity houses were discussed. My officials also attend meetings of the NHBC executive committee: the latest was on 1 May. The repair of Smith houses was not discussed, but the NHBC had confirmed, in January, that the PRC Homes Ltd.'s approval and warranty scheme was being extended to include Smith houses.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement on the applicability to Smith houses of the criteria used by PRC Homes Ltd. for approving and registering repair systems for prefabricated reinforced concrete houses.

Sir George Young: The Smith house is not a prefabricated reinforced concrete house and I expect that the detailed design criteria used by PRC Homes Ltd. in appraising proposed repair systems will therefore differ from those for PRC houses, but its general criteria for the durability of the repaired house will no doubt remain the same.

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update the information in the answer of 13 January, *Official Report*, column *466*, in respect of approved repair schemes for houses designated under the Housing Defects Act.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: PRC Homes Ltd. has now approved 14 repair systems, covering the Airey, Cornish Unit, Unity and Woolaway

house types. Details of progress on the approval of repair systems (provided by PRC Homes Ltd.), are as follows for all designated types.

House type	*Number notified but not yet submitted*	*Number submitted but not yet approved*	*Number approved*
Airey	4	7	3
Boot	1	—	—
Cornish Unit	1	2	7
Dorran	1	—	—
Dyke	—	—	—
Gregory	—	—	—
Myton	1	—	—
Newland	1	—	—
Orlit	3	1	—
Parkinson	2	—	—
Reema Hollow Panel	—	1	—
Schindler and Hawkesley SGS	—	—	—
Smith	1	—	—
Stent	1	1	—
Stonecrete	—	—	—
Tarran	1	—	—
Underdown	—	—	—
Unity and Butterley	3	3	3
Waller	—	—	—
Wates	1	1	—
Wessex	—	—	—
Winget	—	—	—
Woolaway	2	3	1
TOTALS	23	19	14

Radiation (Public Inquiry Service)

Mr. Iain Mills asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the operation of the radiation public inquiry point service; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The public inquiry point service operated by my Department has handled over 3,000 calls up to 15 May. The information provided has been greatly appreciated.

Graphite Fires (Consultations)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, pursuant to his statement of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *31*, he will now state when he was informed that British scientists were consulted by Soviet scientists about graphite fires; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I was informed of this by the hon. Member on 6 May, who drew my attention to the report in *The Scotsman* dated 3 May. I now understand that a British scientist working at the International Atomic Energy Agency telephoned staff of the CEGB on 29 April 1986 to ascertain who would be able to advise on graphite fires.

Property Services Agency (Museums)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied with the service provided by the Property Services Agency to museums in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The national museums and galleries are housed for the most part in old, and often historic, buildings. These require extensive and expensive care and maintenance which, under present arrangements, is the responsibility of the Property Services Agency.

The agency is currently pursing a programme of planned maintenance and renovation within the limits of the finance that can be made available for this work. Following the eighth report of the Education, Science and Arts Committee, the Government are now engaged on a review of the relationship between the PSA and the national museums and galleries in England, with particular reference to the provision of works services.

Gloucestershire and Cheltenham (Rate Support Grant)

Mr. Irving asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of rate support grant for *(a)* Gloucestershire county council and *(b)* Cheltenham borough council in (i) 1984-85, (ii) 1985-86 and (iii) 1986-87, showing for 1986-87 what it was *(y)* before and *(z)* after the grant recycling.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to my reply given on 14 April 1986, at column *308*, about Gloucestershire county council's block grant entitlement in 1985-86 and 1986-87. The council's latest entitlement for 1984-85 is £71·041 million under the third supplementary report. For Cheltenham borough council the figure (i) for 1984-85 is £1·920 million, (ii) for 1985-86 is £1·882 million under the second supplementary report, and (iii) for 1986-87 is £2·456 million under the "Rate Support Grant Report (England) 1986".

As my right hon. Friend announced on 7 May, the total estimated grant underclaim is now about £628 million. This would be distributed to local authorities at the first supplementary report; on this basis Cheltenham's grant entitlement would increase by £220,000 and Gloucestershire's by £6·027 million. In the meantime, all the money is being paid to authorities as a single percentage enhancement of their grant entitlement.

NIREX

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he last met representatives of NIREX.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave on 11 March at columns 431-32, to my hon. Friend the Member for Brigg and Cleethorpes (Mr. Brown).

Labour Mobility

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proposals he has to assist in the mobility of labour.

Sir George Young: We proposed extending the assured tenancy scheme in the Housing and Planning Bill in order to stimulate the private rented sector to provide accommodation, thereby helping those who move for employment purposes. In the public rented sector, we have provided additional resources for the National Mobility Office, to promote the national mobility scheme for tenants wishing to move between local authority areas.

Sports Clubs and Premises (De-rating)

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to introduce legislation de-rating sports clubs and premises; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have no plans to do so, and I have received no representations on this matter.

Nuclear-free Zones

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Leicester, East of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *365*, if he will publish in the *Official Report* such information as is available to his Department about local authorities' nuclear-free zones activities; if he will take steps to collect detailed information on this subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 allows local authorities to incur expenditure which in their opinion is in the interests of their area, up to the product of a 2p rate. I believe that some authorities use this power to fund nuclear-free zones activities, but my right hon. Friend has no powers to require local authorities to give him information about their discretionary spending. The representations referred to in my previous reply do not provide information for publication.

Ealing (Housing)

Mr. Rooker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Ealing, Acton (Sir G. Young) has anything to add to his statement to the House of 22 April, *Official Report*, column 222, on the Labour party's housing policy for Ealing; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: In column 222 I referred to 21 lines of housing policy in Labour's manifesto in Ealing, based on 81 pages of documents which I had available at the time. I have subsequently discovered 10 pages of housing policy in a separate document, so the remark was inaccurate and I regret it.

While my remarks on the quantity of policy were inaccurate, my reservations about its quality remain unallayed.

Mansfield

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the Mansfield district council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to a proposal for a scheme in Mansfield which the district council has worked up in close consultation with my Department's urban housing renewal unit and our East Midlands regional office.

The estate which will benefit from today's decision is the Pleasley estate in Mansfield. This estate comprises 220 terraced houses built between 1890 and 1910. It is at present rundown, neglected, litter-strewn and in need of basic renovation and repairs. It is Mansfield's No. 1 priority for action.

The council intends to devote extra senior staff time to local housing management, focusing on the Pleasley surgery. A caretaker will also be appointed, with responsibility for general oversight, minor repairs, litter picking and help with rubbish removal. I regard efficient localised management as an essential part of the package in order for the council to sustain the improvements which we expect to see as a result of the other steps being taken.

One such step will be a one-year scheme to enable up to 20 long-term unemployed local people funded by the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services Commission's area manpower board, to carry out improvements to the environment and communal areas on their estate. Under the scheme dwellings will be redecorated internally, fences and walls will be rebuilt, and landscaping and planting of open spaces will be undertaken. Two part-time community workers will also be taken on to develop community groups and tenant participation, and to assist in the provision of welfare and financial budgeting advice.

I have also agreed to an additional capital allocation of up to £300,000 for UHRU's targetted housing investment programme resources in 1986-87 to enable the council to carry out urgently needed rewiring and a range of external works on the dwellings. Where necessary, doors, windows and rainwater goods will be replaced, and painting and re-roofing carried out.

This scheme is yet another example of the proposals being worked up through close co-operation between a local authority, my Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices. I now look forward to seeing these proposals being put into action for the benefit of the residents at Pleasley.

Blackburn

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the borough of Blackburn; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to a proposal for a scheme in Blackburn which the borough council has worked up in close consultation with my Department's urban housing renewal unit and our North West regional office.

The estate which will benefit from today's decision is the Green Lane estate in Blackburn. This estate, of traditional construction, consists of 175 houses and 16 flats built between 1923 and 1932 and 215 houses and 39 flats built between 1952 and 1956, a total of 445 dwellings.

The council intends to set up locally based management and repairs arrangements on the estate. An estate-based housing management office will be established and will provide a comprehensive housing service to residents. I regard this as an essential part of the package in order for the council to sustain the improvements which we expect to see as a result of the other steps being taken.

One such step will be a two-year community refurbishment scheme to enable local unemployed people funded jointly by my Department's urban programme and the Government's community programme, subject to consideration and support by the Manpower Services

Commission's area manpower board, to carry out improvements to the environment and communal areas on their estate and to improve energy efficiency and security. Resources of the order of £1,286,179 will be involved, including £665,279 of urban programme funding, which I am pleased to approve in principle.

I have also agreed to an additional capital allocation of £400,000 from UHRU's targeted housing investment programme resources in 1986-87 to enable the council to modernise 133 houses by renewing kitchens and bathrooms, installing central heating and insulation, re-wiring and renewing roofs, doors and windows where necessary. The council proposes to carry out similar work on 190 other houses out of its main HIP programme.

This scheme is yet another example of the proposals being worked up through close co-operation between a local authority, my Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices. I now look forward to seeing these proposals being put into action for the benefit of the residents at Green Lane, Blackburn.

Newham

Mr. Neil Thorne asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit by the London borough of Newham; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to three proposed schemes in Newham. These schemes, which are designed to improve housing conditions on the Rathbone estate and at James Sinclair and Dennison Points, have been worked up by the London borough of Newham in close consultation with the Department's urban housing renewal unit and Greater London regional office.

On all three estates the council will be taking steps to improve security for residents. The proposed works include the provision of door entry systems and improved lighting. In addition, James Sinclair Point and Dennison Point will benefit from improvements in management and environmental works and secondary glazing to reduce traffic noise will be provided at the Rathbone estate. I have agreed in principle to a targetted HIP allocation of £1,085,000 for all these works.

I look forward to seeing these proposals being put into action for the benefit of all the residents on these estates in Newham.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he intends to issue the document "Water Privatisation: Proposals for Water Companies" for public comment; and if he will make a statement;

(2) to whom he circulated the document "Water Privatisation: Proposals for Water Companies"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: The document, which sets out proposals for the detailed implementation of policies contained in paragraph 43 of the White Paper "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales" (Cmnd. 9734), was sent to the Water Companies' Association and the Water Authorities' Association, whose members it directly concerns.

I am arranging for copies to be placed in the Library of both Houses of Parliament.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the proportion by volume of low-level nuclear waste produced each year by reprocessing of British nuclear waste and by imported nuclear waste and his estimate of the amount by volume of low-level waste when the THORP is completed.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: Approximately 5 per cent. by volume of the current and anticipated waste arising from reprocessing Magnox fuel originates from reprocessing fuel from overseas.

Approximately 75 per cent. by volume of the estimated volumes of THORP wastes will arise from the reprocessing of overseas fuel.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the difference between the radiological risks of storing nuclear waste on nuclear power station sites and those for early disposal in nuclear dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to table 9, of the report on "Assessment of best practicable environmental options for management of low and intermediate level solid radioactive wastes", HMSO 1986 which sets out the impact of early disposal, and table 10, which summarises the impact of long-term storage at nuclear sites.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many of the letters protesting at the inclusion of Killingholme in the special development order on nuclear dumping he replied to before publishing it.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: Thirty-five. In addition, my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State and I responded to a number of letters requesting meetings with deputations by agreeing to such meetings.

Nuclear Energy

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps his Department takes to keep informed of the substance of contacts between British and Soviet scientists on nuclear energy matters.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: The scientists employed by my Department make every effort to keep themselves informed on nuclear energy matters by attending conferences and reading the literature. Such activities would naturally include British and Russian contacts.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information is given to his Department about discussions between British scientists and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: Formal contacts between the United Kingdom Government and the International Atomic Energy Agency are the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Energy. Through his Department my officials are kept fully informed of the activities of the IAEA which are relevant to their responsibilities for waste management and environmental protection.

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what guidance his Department gives to British scientists about the formality and substance of contacts they have with Eastern bloc scientists on nuclear energy matters.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: None in general, but special procedures govern meetings between British scientists employed by my Department and representatives of Eastern bloc countries.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Hong Kong

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied with the state of private and public housing in Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The provision of housing remains of priority commitment for the Hong Kong Government, whose aim is to ensure that every family eventually has a permanent, self-contained home, at a rent or price it can afford. To this end, about one third of its total annual capital expenditure and one tenth of recurrent expenditure is devoted to public housing. The Government-sponsored housing authority has a subsidised public housing programme which aims to produce annually over 40,000 flats (30,000 for rental and 10,000 for ownership). In 1985, they constructed a record 49,724 such flats. In addition to quantity, the authority places emphasis on steadily improving the quality of new public housing, and redeveloping existing stock. At present 2·6 million people, or about 47 per cent. of the population, live in public housing.

The private sector produced some 30,000 units of accommodation in 1985 and production of about 33,000 units is expected in 1986.

Demand for both public and private housing continues to exceed supply, and outstanding demand for public rental flats alone is estimated to be over 330,000 units. Assuming no untoward occurrences and maintenance of current production targets, the bulk of this rental demand should be met by the mid-1990s.

Petty Officer John Black

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he raised with Spanish Ministers or officials the case of the late Petty Officer John Black during the recent state visit of the King and Queen of Spain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: This case was not raised during the recent state visit. At that time we were aware that a reply from the Spanish judicial authorities was on its way to the Spanish Foreign Ministry, although we did not know its precise terms. A formal reply has now been received through Her Majesty's embassy in Madrid and its contents have been conveyed to my hon. Friend in writing.

EMPLOYMENT

Training Grants

4. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to increase the present weekly amount paid in training grants.

Mr. Trippier: There are no plans to increase the £25 per person per day payable under the local training grants to employers scheme.

ACAS (Code)

5. **Mr. Janner** asked the Paymaster General when he expects the revised Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service code to be laid before Parliament.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service has not set a precise timetable for publishing its revised code of practice on disciplinary and other procedures in employment. Comments on the draft code were requested by 28 February 1986 and the service is currently studying those received.

In due course, the draft code will be submitted to Ministers for approval, before being laid before Parliament.

Young Workers Scheme

11. **Mr. Corbyn** asked the Paymaster General what proportion of people employed under the young workers scheme have retained their job after 12 months.

Mr. Lang: A survey of the young workers scheme in 1985, conducted for my Department, suggested that employers expected at least 90 per cent. of young workers would continue in their current job beyond the period of eligibility for young workers scheme support. We recently commissioned further research in this area to test how many young people are actually retained.

Small Businesses

16. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to promote the use of flexible and distance learning to meet the training needs of the small business sector.

Mr. Trippier: I am anxious to encourage all forms of training to meet the needs of the small business sector, and the Manpower Services Commission, as an integral part of the adult training strategy, is exploring the use of flexible and distance learning in depth.

Already the MSC's open tech programme has commissioned open learning material specifically to meet the training needs of supervisors and managers in the small business sector whilst under its training for enterprise scheme it is currently investigating the potential of open learning as a medium for teaching skills necessary for the management of small businesses.

Greater London

17. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Paymaster General how many unemployed people there are under 25 years of age within Greater London.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unemployed persons aged under 25 years in Greater London was 142,469.

Employment Committee (Report)

18. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Paymaster General what practical measures he intends to pursue following the Government's response to the Employment Committee report on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed.

39. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Paymaster General what measures the Government are undertaking and planning to assist the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We shall be spending £1,200 million this year on specific measures to give practical help to long-term unemployed people. This includes the restart programme under which, from July, every long-term unemployed person will be offered individual positive help towards employment. The full range of measures to encourage employment, training and enterprise are described in our booklet "Action for Jobs —opening more doors."

21. **Mr. Leighton** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received concerning the Government response to the Employment Committee report on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: None.

40. **Mr. Eastham** asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received following the Government response to the Employment Committee report on special employment measures and the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: None.

Area Manpower Boards (Membership)

19. **Mr. Wainwright** asked the Paymaster General how many members of area manpower boards are registered unemployed; and how many registered unemployed currently serve on other bodies which advise him.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that the information requested is not available.

Tourist Industry

20. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the job prospects in the tourist industry, showing the annual employment figures for each of the last five years, the numbers of female workers and the number of part-time workers, respectively.

Mr. Trippier: Details on the total number of employees in the main tourism-related industries in hotels, catering and leisure services are published in table 8.1 of labour market data in *Employment Gazette* for May 1986. A copy of which is in the Library.

The following table shows the available separate details for female and part-time employees in the main tourism-related industries covered in table 8.1 referred to above.

Thousands in June

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Female employees	709	728	707	748	773
Of which: Part-time employees	475	492	499	537	555

Notes:
(1) Groups 661 to 663, 665, 667, 977 and 979 of Standard Industrial Classification, 1980
(2) Annual estimates of part-time male employees are not available.

Labour Statistics

22. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently registered as unemployed within the east midlands area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the east midlands region was 205,847.

The Government's economic strategy is providing the climate of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible way to secure real jobs in the east midlands and elsewhere. The east midlands will also benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise. Boost opportunities for the young, and help the long-term unemployed find work.

23. **Mr. Parry** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the latest unemployment figures.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom was 3,325,058.

27. **Mr. Pike** asked the Paymaster General how many persons aged under 25 years have been unemployed for more than 12 months at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, the number of unemployed claimants in the United Kingdom aged under 25 years who have been unemployed for more than 12 months was 349,586.

29. **Mr. Sean Hughes** asked the Paymaster General what percentage of the total number of persons aged under 25 years and unemployed have been unemployed for more than 12 months.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age and duration is available, 28 per cent. of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in the United Kingdom had been unemployed for more than 12 months.

33. **Mr. Deakins** asked the Postmaster General how many workers were in *(a)* full-time employment and *(b)* part-time employment in 1979, 1983 and at the latest available date.

Mr. Lang: Estimates of the numbers of self-employed persons and of male employees are not separately available for full and part-time workers. The available figures are as follows:

Civilian employed labour force in Great Britain

December of each year	*Males and full-time female employees*	*Part-time female employees*	*Self employed persons*
1979	18,792,000	3,880,000	1,896,000
1983	16,635,000	4,081,000	2,298,000
1985*	16,665,000	4,407,000	2,604,000

* The latest date for which an estimate is available.

36. **Mr. Strang** asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed for more than 12 months at the latest available date; and what was the comparable figure five years ago.

Mr. Lang: On 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available, the number of claimants in the United Kingdom who had been

unemployed for over 12 months was 1,371,632. The corresponding number of unemployed registrants as at 15 January 1981 was 455,402. The figures are not strictly comparable because of changes in the way the figures are collected.

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the level of youth unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the latest date; what was the comparable figure for May 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what was the level of youth unemployment on Merseyside at the latest date; what were the figures for May 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what was the level of youth unemployment in England and Wales at the latest date; what were the figures in May 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(4) what was the level of youth unemployment in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency at the latest date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the numbers of unemployed claimants aged under 25 years in England and Wales, Merseyside metropolitan area, the Liverpool travel-to-work area and the Liverpool, Riverside parliamentary constituency as at 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by age is available.

Comparisons of unemployment over the period specified are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. The table also shows the numbers of unemployed registrants aged under 25 years in England and Wales, and for the jobcentre areas which closely correspond to the Merseyside metropolitan area and the travel-to-work area as defined in 1978, in April 1979 (not available for May 1979.

Unemployed aged under 25 years

	Number of claimants
Unemployed claimants—January 1986	
England and Wales	1,052,984
Merseyside metropolitan area	54,875
Liverpool travel-to-work area	42,239
Liverpool Riverside parliamentary constituency	4,740
Unemployed registrants—April 1979	
England and Wales	361,058
Merseyside	31,567
Former Liverpool travel-to-work area	23,400

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General (1) what was the level of long-term unemployment in the Liverpool, Riverside constituency at the latest date; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will list the number of long-term unemployed on Merseyside at the latest date and the comparative figures for May 1979;

(3) if he will list the number of long-term unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the latest date and the comparable figures for May 1979;

(4) what is the number of long-term unemployed in England and Wales at the latest date and the comparable figures for May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table gives the numbers of unemployed claimants in England and Wales, Merseyside metropolitan area, the Liverpool travel-to-work area and the Liverpool, Riverside parliamentary constituency who had been unemployed for over 12 months as at 9 January 1986, the latest date for which an analysis of unemployment by duration is available.

Comparisons of unemployment over the period specified are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. The table also shows the numbers of registrants who had been unemployed for over 12 months in April 1979 (not available for May 1979) in England and Wales, and for the jobcentre areas which closely correspond to the Merseyside metropolitan area and the travel-to-work area as defined in 1978.

Unemployed over 12 months

	Number of claimants
Unemployed claimants—January 1986	
England and Wales	1,164,339
Merseyside Metropolitan area	72,522
Liverpool travel-to-work area	55,814
Liverpool Riverside parliamentary constituency	7,363
Unemployed registrants—April 1979	
England and Wales	301,217
Merseyside	30,088
Former Liverpool travel-to-work area	22,782

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to reduce long-term unemployment in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: We shall be spending £1,200 million this year on specific measures to give practical help to long-term unemployed people. This includes the restart programme under which, from July, every long-term unemployed person will be offered individual positive help towards employment. The full range of measures to encourage employment, training and enterprise are described in our booklet "Action for Jobs — opening more doors."

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to reduce youth unemployment in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A reduction in youth unemployment in England and Wales depends on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

Our employment and training measures such as two-year YTS and the recently announced new workers scheme will particularly help the employment prospects of young people.

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General what plans he has to reduce youth unemployment in the Liverpool travel-to-work area; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: A reduction in youth unemployment in Liverpool depends on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

Our employment and training measures such as two-year YTS and the recently announced new workers scheme will particularly help the employment prospects of young people.

The Government are directing special help to particularly hard hit areas such as Liverpool. Since May 1979 Liverpool has received over £170 million in regional assistance.

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General (1) how many job vacancies there were on Merseyside at the latest date; and what was the figure for May 1979;

(2) how many job vacancies there were in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the latest date; and what was the figure for May 1979.

Mr. Lang: On 4 April 1986 there were 3,098 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres and 80 unfilled vacancies at careers offices closely corresponding to the Merseyside metropolitan area, and 2,429 and 80 unfilled vacancies respectively at offices corresponding to the Liverpool travel-to-work area (including self-employed vacancies and excluding vacancies handled by professional and executive recruitment). Comparisons with May 1979 are difficult to make because of changes in the method of compilation of the data. However, the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres and careers offices corresponding to the Merseyside metropolitan area in May 1979 were 3,916 and 151, respectively. On the same date there were 2,406 unfilled vacancies at jobcentres and 71 unfilled vacancies at careers offices corresponding to the Liverpool travel-to-work area as defined in 1978 (excluding self-employed vacancies and including vacancies handled by professional and executive recruitment).

Mr. Parry asked the Paymaster General (1) how many people were unemployed in the Liverpool travel-to-work area at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1979;

(2) how many persons were unemployed on Merseyside at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 10 April 1986 the numbers of unemployed claimants in the Liverpool travel-to-work area and the Merseyside metropolitan area were 106,432 and 140,371, respectively. Comparisons with May 1979 are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data. However, in May 1979, the number of unemployed registrants in jobcentre areas closely corresponding to the Liverpool travel-to-work area, as defined in 1978, and the Merseyside metropolitan area were 57,060 and 79,644, respectively.

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Paymaster General, further to his answer on 6 May, *Official Report*, column *34*, regarding the errors made by Central Regional council in submitting its returns for the 1981 census of employment, if he will list the effects on all the relevant travel-to-work areas of the published unemployment figures.

Mr. Lang [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *504*]: The following table shows the effect on the unemployment rates in the relevant travel-to-work areas for 10 April 1986.

	Published rate using revised denominator	*Rate using uncorrected denominator*	*Difference*
Stirling			
male	18·4	16·2	+2·2
female	10·0	7·7	+2·3
total	14·2	11·7	+2·5
Falkirk			
male	19·2	20·1	−0·9
female	13·8	16·0	−2·2
total	17·0	18·6	−1·6
Alloa			
male	20·9	21·8	−0·9
female	13·3	16·0	−2·7
total	18·0	19·8	−1·8

The effects of the revision on the unemployment rates will vary over time.

Merseyside

24. **Mr. Wareing** asked the Paymaster General how many people are currently unemployed on Merseyside; and if will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: On 10 April 1986, the number of unemployed claimants in the Merseyside metropolitan area was 140,371.

The Government's economic strategy is providing the climant of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible way to secure real jobs on Merseyside and elsewhere.

Furthermore, Merseyside will benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise, boost employment opportunities for the young and help the long-term unemployed find work.

Local Enterprise Agencies

25. **Mr. Cash** asked the Paymaster General how many local enterprise agencies have been set up; and what future development of this network is anticipated.

Mr. Trippier: There are currently 336 local enterprise agencies throughout the United Kingdom, of which 246 are approved under the terms of the Finance Act 1982, which allows business sector sponsors tax relief on their contributions to such bodies. The main future development in this sector is expected to be a strengthening of the existing agencies and, in particular, of their role as a focus for local networks of support to small businesses. This is a major objective of the Government's local enterprise agency grant scheme.

Workfare Schemes

26. **Mr. Colvin** asked the Paymaster General when he will introduce workfare schemes for the unemployed.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme for the long-term unemployed, which is to be launched in July, will include a number of elements which feature in workfare programmes for unemployed welfare claimants in the United States of America, in particular job clubs to help and encourage the unemployed to seek work.

Youth Training Scheme

28. **Mr. Boyes** asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss the implementing of the two-year YTS.

Mr. Trippier: I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss a range of issues amongst which is the implementation of two-year YTS.

Suffolk

30. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Paymaster General what recent steps have been taken to promote employment in Suffolk.

Mr. Lang: The Government's economic strategy is providing the climate of low inflation and sustained growth which is the only sensible way to secure real jobs in Suffolk and elsewhere. Suffolk will also benefit from the new package of measures announced in the Budget to accelerate the growth of enterprise, boost opportunities for the young, and help the long-term unemployed find work.

Self-Employment

31. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Paymaster General if he will make a statement on the current volume of self-employment in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: In December 1985, the lastest date for which figures are available, the number of self-employed people in the United Kingdom was provisionally estimated to be 2,665,000. The increase in the number of self-employed since 1979 has been very encouraging.

American Tourists

32. **Mr. David Atkinson** asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of tourists from the United States of America visiting the United Kingdom so far in 1986.

Mr. Trippier: There were about 330,000 visits to the United Kingdom by north American residents in the first two months of 1986. Separate figures for United States residents are not yet available.

Wage Levels

34. **Ms. Clare Short** asked the Paymaster General what has been the comparable change in wage levels of the highest and lowest decile since 1979.

Mr. Lang: Between April 1979 and April 1985 the gross weekly earnings of full-time adult employees at the highest decile increased by 103 per cent. for males and by 135 per cent. for females. Over the same period, the corresponding increases at the lowest decile were 76 per cent. for males and 85 per cent. for females.

YTS (Civil Service)

35. **Mr. Lawler** asked the Paymaster General what steps the Manpower Services Commission is taking to seek to increase the number of YTS places in the Civil Service.

Mr. Trippier: The Manpower Services Commission is engaged in continuing discussions with my Department and with the Management and Personnel Office which aim to establish how best to carry forward the development of YTS in the Civil Service.

Unemployment Count

37. **Mr. Roy Hughes** asked the Paymaster General if he is satisfied with the arrangements for counting the number of people out of work.

Mr. Lang: I am satisfied that the monthly unemployment count is an accurate record of those claiming benefits. Less frequent estimates of those without jobs seeking work are available from surveys. Preliminary results of the labour force survey conducted in spring 1985 showed some 1,080,000 people included in the monthly count who either had a job or were not seeking work, while 760,000 people without jobs and seeking work were excluded from the claimant total.

38. **Mr. Tony Banks** asked the Paymaster General how many changes have been made since 1979 in the way in which the unemployment figures are counted.

Mr. Lang: Since 1979 there have been six changes which have had a discernible effect on the unemployment count, and three of these have been minor.

Manufacturing and Construction Industries (Accident Figures)

41. **Mr. Prescott** asked the Paymaster General what were the major accident and death figures for the manufacturing and construction industries for 1981 and 1984.

Mr. Trippier: The table gives the information requested.

Year and industry	*Reported deaths*	*Reported major injuries*
1981		
Manufacturing	119	4,139
Construction	129	1,766
1984		
Manufacturing	132	4,736
Construction	124	2,434

The figures are of occupational deaths and major injuries to employees and others, reported under the Notification of Accidents and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (NADOR) 1980 to authorities responsible for enforcing the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. Major injuries are as defined under NADOR.

Unemployment Benefit

Mr. Holt asked the Paymaster General how many actors, musicians or other semi self-employed persons are drawing unemployment benefit; and if there are any in the above categories resident in Cleveland.

Mr. Lang: The information is not available in the form requested. According to analysis of the labour force survey, there were about 17,000 claimants included in the monthly unemployment count in Great Britain in spring 1985 who said they were currently self-employed but not with a permanent job. The information is not available for Cleveland because of the sampling errors that would be involved.

Long-term Unemployment

Dr. McDonald asked the Paymaster General if he will publish the latest number of long-term unemployed

interviewed under the restart scheme in each of the pilot areas, together with a breakdown of the results of these interviews, showing the numbers placed into jobs, the community programme, and other measures, and how many long-term unemployed have had their benefits reduced under section 20(1) of the Social Security Act 1975 following a restart interview.

Mr. Lang: The information requested for the period from 6 January to 9 May (the latest date for which figures are available) is given in the table.

The figures in the table relate only to placings which have resulted directly from the restart interview. It is not known how many of those interviewed go on to find jobs or other positions themselves as a result of being remotivated by restart, although a total of some 2,200 long-term unemployed people have ceased to claim unemployment benefit after being interviewed.

Thirty-seven people's benefit has been suspended or reduced for refusing suitable employment or training at a restart interview, pending a decision on their case by an adjudication officer. Five have subsequently had their benefit restored.

	Number of interviews	*Jobs (including Community Programme)*	*Jobclubs*	*Number placed into:* **Enterprise Allowance Scheme*	**Training*	*†Restart Courses*	**Voluntary Projects Programme*
Billingham	955	28	10	2	8	177	0
Crawley	674	71	0	11	12	70	0
Dundee	3,203	107	22	0	42	205	0
Ealing	1,972	78	42	10	12	164	2
Huddersfield	2,122	181	10	1	3	143	16
Plymouth	2,355	57	24	2	5	257	2
Port Talbot	1,989	276	31	4	77	114	0
Preston	2,269	128	34	2	14	192	0
Stoke	3,573	191	12	—	13	177	12
TOTAL	19,112	1,117	185	32	186	1,499	32

* No figures available before 3 March.
† Figures relate to those attending courses in the period up to 2 May.

Adult Training

Mr. Sheerman asked the Paymaster General when he will next meet the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss adult training.

Mr. Trippier: I have regular meetings with the chairman of the Manpower Services Commission to discuss a variety of issues including adult training.

School Leavers

Mr. Wigley asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing the average number of school leavers claiming unemployment benefit or social security in each of the Welsh counties in each year since 1981.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The table shows, for each county of Wales, the average numbers of school leavers under 18 years of age claiming unemployment benefit, supplementary benefit or national insurance credits at unemployment benefit offices in 1984 and 1985. Comparable figures for years prior to 1984 are not available because of the change to a ward-based system of allocating claimants to localities. Also, prior to October 1982, the statistics related to registrants at jobcentres rather than claimants.

Unemployed school leavers aged under 18 years

	Average number *1984*	*1985*
Clwyd	979	950
Dyfed	587	581
Gwent	1,220	1,192
Gwynedd	380	440
Mid Glamorgan	1,575	1,624
Powys	121	120
South Glamorgan	905	869
West Glamorgan	1,001	980

SCOTLAND

Youth Training Scheme

43. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many young people are currently participating in youth training schemes operated by local authorities and health boards in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Precise information is not available. However, information compiled between 1 March and 13 May 1986 suggests that around 9,550 young people in Scotland are participating in YTS programmes operated by local authorities and some 180 in those operated by health boards. The support of YTS by these bodies is greatly appreciated.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the level of youth unemployment in Scotland at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available for May 1979, but in April 1979 the number of unemployed people under the age of 25 years was 67,844. In January 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the corresponding figure was 146,209. The figures are not comparable due to changes in the compilation of stasistics over the period.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of long-time unemployed in Scotland at the latest date and the comparable figure for May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The information is not available for May 1979, but in April 1979 the number of registered unemployed people in Scotland who had been unemployed for 12 months or more was 45,578. In January 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number of unemployed people claiming benefit who had been unemployed for 12 months or more was 146,976. The figures are not directly comparable because of various changes over the period in the compilation of unemployment statistics.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of job vacancies in Scotland at the latest date; and what was the figure in May 1979.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in Scotland in May 1979 was 23,855. In April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, the number was 19,296. The figures are not comparable, however, because of changes in the basis of the statistical compilation. The number of vacancies notified to jobcentres is estimated overall to be only about one third of the total of vacanices available at any time.

Job Creation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reduce long-term unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to him on 3 July 1985 at column *155*. As my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General has indicated in his reply today to the hon. Member for Jarrow (Mr. Dixon), the Government are spending £1·2 billion in the current year on help for long-term unemployed people throughout Great Britain.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what plans he has to reduce youth unemployment in Scotland.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Member to the answer which my right hon. and learned Friend the Paymaster General gave him today. The key to improved employment prospects for all unemployed people, in Scotland as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, lies in the better economic performance and increased industrial competitiveness which the Government's policies are designed to secure.

In the meantime, the full range of the Government's special employment and training measures is available to young people in Scotland, who will benefit from the expansion of these measures announced in the Budget statement.

NHS (General Management)

Mr. Corrie asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he will undertake further consultation on the development of general management at unit level in the Scottish Health Service.

Mr. Rifkind: The Scottish Home and Health Department has issued a draft circular and a copy of the report by Coopers and Lybrand Associates on general management at unit level in the Scottish Health Service for consultation. Copies of both documents have been placed in the Library. Comments on them have been requested by Friday 18 July 1986.

In my reply to my hon. Friend on 6 February 1986, at columns *233-34*, I said that the full report of the Coopers and Lybrand study would not be an appropriate document for public consultation as it was likely to contain material confidential to the boards participating in the study. Having now seen the report, I am satisfied that it does not contain confidential material and, in the interests of informing the debate as far as possible, I am happy to authorise the wide dissemination of this useful report and the draft guidance based on it.

As I indicated in my reply of Thursday 6 February, Ministers will consider the results of this further consultation in the course of the summer and final guidance on general management at unit level will be issued in time for health boards to plan implementation following the holiday period.

ENERGY

Energy Efficiency

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Energy how big a part of the 20 per cent. saving in energy costs sought by the end of this Parliament has been achieved by the latest date for which figures are available; and if he still expects to achieve all of the saving originally sought.

Mr. David Hunt: The Government believe that they have set in motion an energy efficiency programme which will not only ensure that over the lifetime of this Parliament our rate of improvement exceeds that of our

international competitors, but by the 1990s will bring about the achievement in full of the savings they have identified.

NCB (Subsidiaries)

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he intends that the National Coal Board should sell its interest in British Fuel, and dispose of its subsidiaries, Southern Depots Ltd. and National Fuel Distributors Ltd.

Mr. David Hunt: This is a matter for the National Coal Board to decide.

Magnox Reactors

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the details of the 20-year safety reviews on Magnox stations will be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Her Majesty's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive will in future publish its conclusions on each long-term safety review, following discussion of those conclusions with the licensee.

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all the Magnox reactors at present being operated within the United Kingdom and, in each case, give the date of commissioning.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

Station	*Number of magnox reactors*	*Date of first commissioning*
Calder Hall	4	1956
Chapelcross	4	1958
Berkeley	2	1962
Bradwell	2	1962
Dungeness A	2	1965
Hinkley Point A	2	1965
Hunterston A	2	1964
Oldbury on Severn	2	1967
Sizewell A	2	1966
Trawsfynydd	2	1965
Wylfa	2	1971

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will adopt a timetable for the phasing out of all Magnox reactors within the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: No.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research Her Majesty's Government have done into the siting of nuclear power stations underground; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The possibility of siting nuclear power stations underground has been examined from time to time. However, all reactors are designed to prevent emissions of radiation and radioactive materials. The best combination of excavation and building structures for that purpose will depend on individual site characteristics. No potential advantage in cost or effectiveness has been identified which would require specific research into underground siting.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what research has been carried out into the practicality of de-commissioning existing nuclear power stations and converting their source to fossil fuel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Research and experimental work in the United Kingdom on the decommissioning of nuclear reactors is carried out by the Atomic Energy Authority. I am not aware of any studies of the conversion of nuclear power stations to fossil-fuel burning.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the total installed capacity of nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: At the end of 1985, output capacity of nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom was 7,064 MW.

Power Stations

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the current unused capacity of fossil fuel powered electric power stations in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: Generation at individual CEGB power stations depends on a number of factors including the demand for electricity, the cost of generation at each unit, fuel prices and supplies, and the availability of more economical plant elsewhere. At any one time a particular unit on the system may not be needed to meet demand, although it will be a part of the essential margin of capacity required to ensure that an uninterrupted supply of electricity is available.

Electricity in Scotland is a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Power Stations (Emissions)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his latest estimate of the proportion of the capital cost of coal-fired power stations that would be required to provide these stations with equipment for the removal of sulphur dioxide from the emissions made by these stations.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been advised by the CEGB that the installation of equipment for a substantial reduction in the sulphur dioxide emissions from a 2,000 MW coal-fired power station would result in an increase of approximately 15 per cent. in the total capital cost.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Africa

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list by country the current levels of British aid to African countries; and how much of it is targeted to famine relief.

Mr. Raison: In 1985 gross bilateral aid disbursements to Africa totalled £306 million; this includes £31 million of disaster relief aid and £25 million of food aid (not all directly famine-related). The amounts to individual countries are as shown. In addition, substantial British aid funds are channelled through multilateral aid agencies and the European Community to support long-term development and disaster relief in Africa; figures for 1985 by individual countries are not yet available.

Gross bilateral aid to Africa 1985

	(£'000)
Algeria	96
Angola	164
Benin	187
Botswana	8,775
Burkina Faso	276
Burundi	81
Cameroon	7,460
Cape Verde Islands	27
Central African Republic	38
Chad	1,448
Congo	120
Egypt	19,101
Ethiopia	28,058
Gabon	14
Gambia	3,613
Ghana	11,555
Guinea	296
Ivory Coast	2,615
Kenya	34,438
Lesotho	2,382
Liberia	1,055
Madagascar	469
Malawi	13,825
Mali	744
Mauritania	888
Mauritius	2,187
Morocco	91
Mozambique	8,366
Namibia	605
Niger	331
Nigeria	6,240
Rwanda	94
Senegal	1,025
Seychelles	1,136
Sierra Leone	3,626
Somalia	1,737
St. Helena and dependencies	9,354
Sudan	42,296
Swaziland	3,376
Tanzania	17,967
Togo	112
Tunisia	1,380
Uganda	9,171
Zaire	738
Zambia	25,579
Zimbabwe	23,636
Africa-unallocable by country	512
Regional East Africa Community	8,964
South of Sahara-unallocable by country	95
	306,343

Ethiopia

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what protest or other representations he has made to the Ethiopian Government concerning the impounding by the Ethiopian authorities of 51 tons of emergency medical supplies, blankets and bedding and food due for the Eritrean Relief Association from the "Band Aid Star" vessel at the port of Assab.

Mr. Raison: None. But I am concerned by press reports of the Ethiopian Government's action and have asked our ambassador for information.

TRANSPORT

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many letters he has now received *(a)* in support of and *(b)* against the move of the month of the year identifier prefix for vehicle registration.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We have received five letters from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders and major vehicle manufacturers in support of the move of the month to change the vehicle age identification letter to October and 650 letters mainly on behalf of individual motor dealers in opposition to it.

Private Railway Sidings (Grants)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the applications under section 8 of the Transport Act for financial assistance, showing whether the applications were met in part or in full, or refused in any convenient period during the last 12 months.

Mr. David Mitchell: In the period 30 April 1985 to 30 April 1986 decisions were taken on 19 applications for grant made under section 8 of the Railways Act 1974. Of these, six were awarded at the level of grant sought, 10 at a reduced level and three were rejected. The full list is as follows:

Name of applicant	*Decision*
W. & M. Thompson (Quarries) Ltd.	Met in full
Allen Rowland & Co. Ltd.	Met in full
George Cohen Ltd.	Met in full
Pedigree Petfoods	Joint application
Harris Warehousing and Distribution	Joint application
Railease Ltd.	Met in part
Arthur Guinness Son & Co. (Park Royal) Ltd.	Met in part
Ready Mixed Concrete Ltd.	Met in part
Cobra Railfreight Ltd.	Met in full
Car Transport Ltd.	Rejected
Procor Ltd. (Wagons for Sheerness Steel Company plc)	Met in part
Amey Roadstone Corporation Ltd.	Met in part
Barking Rail Handling Services	Met in full
British Industrial Sand Ltd.	Joint application
Co-operative Wholesale Society	Met in part
Cawoods Marine Terminals Ltd.*	Rejected
Felixstowe Dock & Railway Company	Met in part
Firmin Coates Group of Companies	Rejected
RH Roadstone Ltd.	Met in full

* Case dealt with by Secretary of State for Wales.

The 10 offers of grant at a reduced level than that sought were all accepted by the companies concerned.

Roads (Leicester)

Sir John Farr asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to announce whether the eastern district distributor road will be included in the approved structure plan for the county of Leicester.

Mr. Tracey: I have been asked to reply.

The proposed Leicester eastern district distributor road was one of the matters considered at the examination in public held last November. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State expects to receive the report of the panel which held the examination within the next few days. Following his consideration of that report, my right hon. Friend will publish within the next few months any

modifications which he proposes to make to the submitted alterations to the plan. After publication of the proposed modifications, there will be a further opportunity for representations to be made on them to my right hon. Friend before he makes his final decision on the plan.

M40 (Traffic Count)

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for Transport why no count of traffic on the M40 between the M25 and Beaconsfield has been undertaken since March 1984; what steps he has taken to assess the reliability of the figures given in the reply to the hon. Member for Beaconsfield of 10 April, *Official Report*, columns *160-2*; if he will take steps to install automatic counting equipment on the section of the M40 to the west of the M25; if he will now arrange for an immediate traffic count to be undertaken on this section of the M40; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The basis of my answer on 10 April was an estimate of traffic flows for December 1985, before the remaining parts of M4-M25 interchange were opened.

A count took place on 12 May. Current flows are now significantly higher. The revised figures are given in the table:

Current Flow (average two-way 24-hour flow over 7-days)	*Forecasts for the year 2000 (average two-way 24-hour flow over 5 days)*	
Vehicles per day	*Without M40 extension Vehicles per day*	*With M40 extension Vehicles per day*
61,000	77,000-90,000	91,200-107,200

Flows on the adjoining section from Beaconsfield to Wycombe East are likely to have increased similarly.

The detector loops of the Buckinghamshire county council's automatic count equipment at Hedgerley are no longer reliable. The Department will install new loops soon.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Palace of Westminster (Cleaning)

Mr. Harrison asked the Lord Privy Seal who provides the services for cleaning the Members' rooms in the Palace of Westminster; how many personnel are involved; what percentage is directly employed; and what percentage is privately employed.

Mr. Biffen: Members' Desk Rooms in the House of Commons are cleaned by part-time cleaners of the Serjeant at Arms Department. Thirty six cleaners are involved in cleaning these and other rooms, all of whom are directly employed.

Heating System

Mr. Lilley asked the Lord Privy Seal on how many sitting days in 1986 the temperature outside the Palace of Westminster has risen above that at which the heating is turned off; what is the external temperature reading at which the heating is cut off; and at what internal temperature reading the heating may be cut off.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that the heating has been turned off. In the absence of a defined external temperature below which heating must be provided, it is turned off, by agreement with the Serjeant at Arms, when outside temperatures are judged to have settled to a reasonably stable summer level.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

EC (Industrial Advantages)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what advantages will be available to United Kingdom industry when the European Economic Community market is completed; and to what extent he envisages that United Kingdom industry may derive relatively greater benefits than industry in other European Economic Community countries.

Mr. Butcher: Completion of a unified liberal internal market in the Community will benefit British industry through the removal of barriers to trade with other member states; and is one important condition for the creation of a European industrial capability which can compete effectively on world markets. The precise balance of advantage may of course vary from sector to sector, depending on the United Kingdom's competitive position in each, but we believe that there should be clear net benefits for United Kingdom business as a whole.

EC (Trade Statistics)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to the reply of 14 May, *Official Report*, column *473*, he will provide the figures on trade deficits and surpluses in manufacturing with the European Economic Community and the rest of the world on the overseas trade statistics basis.

Mr. Butcher: In the 12 months ending March 1986 there was a crude deficit on trade in manufactures with the European Community of £10·0 billion and a crude surplus of £4·0 billion with the rest of the world.

Shipbuilding

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what percentage of merchant shipbuilding orders have been placed by British shipowners in *(a)* Britain, *(b)* other EC countries and *(c)* other countries in each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following table shows the percentage of new orders in compensated gross tonnes for merchant ships placed in United Kingdom, other EC and non-EC yards that are destined for the United Kingdom flag. The information as requested is not available.

	United Kingdom	*Other EC*	*Non EC*
1979	39	7	54
1980	38	18	44
1981	36	18	46
1982	56	2	42
1983	54	2	44
1984	81	15	4
1985	61	37	2

Source: DTI.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent information he has on the numbers employed in merchant shipbuilding in each of the countries of the EC.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the most recent comparable information:

Employment in EC Merchant Shipbuilding in 1984

	Numbers
Belgium	4,060
Denmark	10,300
France	16,940
Germany	22,189
Greece	2,000
Ireland	—
Italy	12,800
Netherlands	7,530
United Kingdom	14,655

Source: EC Commission and OECD.

Spain and Portugal joined the EC in 1985. In 1984, 23,900 were employed in merchant shipbuilding in Spain. Figures for Portugal are not separately recorded.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the most recent information he has on the tonnage of new orders won by each EC country, Japan and South Korea in 1985 and the first month of 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the most recent information.

Thousands of compensated gross tonnes

	1985	*January 1986*
Belgium	31	—
Denmark	85	2
France	302	1
Federal Republic of Germany	925	9
Greece	29	—
Ireland	—	—
Italy	360	—
Netherlands	335	14
United Kingdom	293	6
Portugal	1	—
Spain	273	5
Japan	4,548	334
South Korea	833	n/a

Sources:
OECD.
Lloyds Register of Shipping.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many employees there were in merchant shipbuilding in (i) Britain and (ii) other European Economic Community countries in *(a)* 1979 and *(b)* the most recent year for which figures are available.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: The information is as follows:

Employment in shipbuilding in the Community

	1979	*1984*
Belgium	6,258	4,060
Denmark	9,900	10,300
France	23,000	16,940
Germany	27,369	22,189
Greece	—	2,000
Ireland	750	—
Italy	19,000	12,800
Netherlands	14,540	7,530
United Kingdom	31,200	14,655

Source: EC.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what proportion of new world orders for merchant ships were won by British Shipbuilders in each year since 1979; and what is the latest figure for 1986.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: British Shipbuilders' percentage share of world new merchant ship orders was as follows:

	Percentage
1979	1·8
1980	2·1
1981	2·3
1982	1·9
1983	1·2
1984	0·8
1985	1·5

There is no world order figures yet for 1986.

Uranium

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much uranium, tonnes of ore concentrates, was imported into Britain during 1985 for British customers.

Mr. Butcher: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my hon. Friend gave him on 25 March 1986, at column 397.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many people have been unable to enter residential care due to the new board and lodging limits.

Mr. Newton: The supplementary benefit board and lodging limits allow reasonable charges for residential care homes to be met, and cover the charges in a large number of homes. In addition, local authorities have power to provide or pay for residential accommodation under the National Assistance Act 1948 and the National Health Service Act 1977, and in certain cases to "top up" the amount available from supplementary benefit. There is therefore no reason to attribute to the limits the effect implied in my hon. Friend's question.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what plans he has for introducing further categories of claimants under the new board and lodging arrangements for those people in residential care;

(2) if he intends to introduce new regional limits under the board and lodging arrangements for top people in residential care.

Mr. Newton: We are currently carrying out a review of the limits for all types of supplementary benefit board and lodging allowances, and will announce our conclusions in due course.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received on the board and lodging arrangements for people in residential care.

Mr. Newton: Since April last year, when new arrangments were introduced, we have received representations on the supplementary benefit limits for people in residential care from the main bodies with an interest in residential care in both the voluntary and private sectors, the local authority associations, individual local authorities and a large number of interested individuals.

Attendance and Mobility Allowances

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average time taken to process claims for renewal of attendance and mobility allowance, respectively.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available as renewal claims are not included in routine analyses of clearance times. However, procedures for dealing with renewal claims are such that their average clearance time is likely to be broadly the same as for new claims which are successful at the initial stage. Currently this is eight and a half weeks for attendance allowance and seven and a half weeks for mobility allowance. Renewal claims are invited four months (attendance allowance) and three months (mobility allowance) before the expiry of the existing award so that payments to claimants whose claims are successful should continue without interruption.

War Pensions

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he proposes to bring war pensions available to war widows in the period before 1973 into line with the levels of pension paid since that date; how much it would cost to increase all pre-1973 level pensions by £5 per week; how much it cost to pay war widows' pensions for the last five years for which figures are available; and how many persons are in receipt of war pensions in the area served by the Galashiels ILO in the Scottish Borders.

Mr. Major: Under the war pensions scheme, widows' pansions are paid at the same rate regardless of the date of the service man's death or of when he served. The precise number widowed before 1973 is not known, but the estimated cost of the increase suggested would be in the region of £16 million per year. The Department's expenditure on war widows' pensions was as follows:

Year	*£ million*
1980-81	146
1981-82	166
1982-83	174
1983-84	177
1984-85	184

The remaining information requested is not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Hospital Projects, Cleveland

Mr. Holt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much has been spent on hospital capital projects each year since Cleveland was formed.

Mr. Hayhoe: Total capital expenditure by health authorities in the Cleveland area and (from 1982-83) the Hartlepool, North Tees and South Tees districts, as shown in the authorities' accounts, was:

	£'000s
1974-75	2,093
1975-76	1,559
1976-77	3,269
1977-78	5,582
1978-79	6,026
1979-80	6,985
1980-81	5,323
1981-82	6,821
1982-83	7,417
1983-84	7,429
1984-85	8,767

The figures include capital expenditure on both hospital and community health services, as full information on the breakdown between the two is not held centrally. They include capital expenditure by the Northern regional health authority on the former area health authority and the district health authorities which succeeded it.

Maternity Benefits

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the total public expenditure savings from the abolition of maternity grant.

Mr. Newton: Annual expenditure on maternity grant is currently estimated at £18·5 million. As the hon. Lady is aware, however, the proposal to abolish this provision is associated with other proposals to introduce maternity payments for low-income families at a significantly higher level than the present universal grant, and extending beyond those who might currently qualify for a supplementary benefit single payment for maternity needs. It is not yet possible to make a firm estimate of the overall effect on public expenditure.

Mrs. Beckett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what are the public expenditure savings from the loss of entitlement to maternity allowance;

(2) what are the total savings to public expenditure from the changes in maternity benefits.

Mr. Newton: As regards maternity grant and the proposed maternity payments, I refer the hon. Lady to my other answer to her today.

As regards our proposals for weekly maternity benefits, the effects on public expenditure are shown by the items marked with an asterisk in the following table giving the overall effect on the public sector borrowing requirement, which is estimated to be a net reduction of £13 million in 1987-88 and £23 million in 1988-89.

	1987-88 £ million	*1988-89 £ million*
PSBR reductions		
Reduced expenditure on maternity allowance	*124	*158
Reduced expenditure on maternity pay	*70	*80
Savings on administration	*4	*4
Saving on maternity pay (see note)	*1	*1
Additional tax and national insurance contributions	15	20
	214	263
PSBR increases		

	1987-88 £ million	1988-89 £ million
Reimbursement of statutory maternity pay (flat-rate element) to employers	112	137
Reimbursement of statutory maternity pay (earnings-related element) to employers	70	80
Increased sickness benefit and supplementary benefit	*19	*23
	201	240

Note:

Maternity pay is at present reduced by the standard rate of maternity allowance. These savings arise because of the proposed rate of the flat-rate element of the new statutory maternity pay is higher than the existing maternity allowance.

Within these figures, the net reduction in public expenditure attributable to women failing to qualify for benefit which they would have received under existing provisions — almost entirely those who had given up work before their pregnancies began—is estimated to be £29 million in 1988-89, the first year of the scheme not subject to transitional provision. At the same time, there will be additional expenditure on maternity allowance, or extra revenue forgone in reimbursement of statutory maternity pay, of some £11 million to women who would not have qualified under existing provisions.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how widely the leaflet "Primary Health Care: The Government's Proposals for Discussion on Health Services Outside Hospital" has been distributed.

Mr. Hayhoe: Copies of the leaflet have been distributed in England to family practitioner committees, district health authorities, local authorities and local authority social services departments, community health councils, and main libraries. Copies are also being sent to every general medical practitioner, general dental practitioner, community pharmacist and optician in contract with a family practitioner committee.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will consider making copies of his Department's Green Paper on primary health care available free to libraries, community health councils, and similar bodies, for consultation by members of the public.

Mr. Hayhoe: Copies of the discussion document have been distributed to community health councils and to numerous voluntary and consumer bodies in England. Copies of the summary leaflet have been distributed to main libraries.

Age Concern England (Exhibition)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the work of Age Concern England to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Major: I understand that under procedures agreed by the Services Committee arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from Monday 16 June to Friday 20 June 1986.

Local Authority Finance

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what increase there has been in the total sum received by local authorities from the Exchequer in the form of rent and rate rebates and housing benefit between the years 1982-83 and 1985-86.

Mr. Major: The total sum received by local authorities from the Exchequer in respect of expenditure on rent and rate rebates, rent allowance and housing benefit, either in the form of direct subsidy or taken into account in calculating entitlement to block grant, was for 1982-83 £1,523 million and for 1985-86 £4,521 million.

Severe Weather Payments

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the amounts of exceptionally severe weather payments paid by each local office in Scotland in 1986 to date; and if he will provide an estimate of the average payment made.

Mr. Newton: The information requested is not available and I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 19 May.

"Bridges Over Troubled Waters"

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what representations he has received about the Health Advisory Services' Report "Bridges Over Troubled Waters"; and whether he will make a statement;

(2) whether he is satisfied with the national provision for the treatment of disturbed adolescents; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: We have received several representations about the Report's references to the Bethlem and Maudsley hospitals, but none about the wider issues which the report addresses.

"Bridges Over Troubled Waters" highlights shortcomings in the services provided by the various authorities concerned with the care and treatment of disturbed adolescents. It contains over 100 recommendations for improvements. The majority of the recommendations are for action which can be taken at local level to improve the co-ordination and effectiveness of services. We shall this week be issuing a health notice inviting health and social services authorities to consider, in the light of these recommendations, what measures they can take to secure a more effective service.

Bethlem Royal and Maudsley Hospitals

Mr. Simon Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for High Wycombe (Mr. Whitney), received about the future of the Bethlem Royal hospital and the Maudsley hospital on his visit to the Maudsley hospital on 15 May; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I greatly appreciated the opportunity of meeting staff and patients and seeing something of the work of the joint hospitals during my visit last week. During my visit I received representations for additional funding, but these must be considered both against the increase of 5·9 per cent. in the budget granted over last

year and in the light of other additional demands on the Health Service. I have agreed to meet representatives of the special health authority in order to discuss their proposals further, early next month.

Member's Correspondence

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate time it takes his Department to reply to a letter from an hon. Member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Drugs (Expenditure)

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will set out in a table the latest expenditure in pounds sterling per head on drugs in those EEC countries for which figures are readily available.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 18 April 1986 c. *531*]: The table contains the information requested by my hon. Friend. Expenditure figures for drugs in other countries of the European Community which have been obtained from the Organisation of Economic Corporation and Development, include the cost of drugs dispensed to consumers by pharmacies, and the cost of remunerating pharmacists. Expenditure on drugs by hospitals is excluded. The expenditure figures have been converted into sterling by means of general purchasing power parity exchange rates for 1982. Since the expenditure figures for the United Kingdom do not correspond exactly with the expenditure figures for other members of the European Community, comparisons of underlying expenditure levels can by only approximate.

*Expenditure on Pharmaceutical Goods per Head of Population 1982**

	£
Belgium	63·20
Denmark	20·20
France	84·30
Germany	96·60
Italy	51·10
Netherlands	45·60
United Kingdom†	37·50

* Information from OECD sources is generally not available after 1982. Information for the United Kingdom is mainly derived from expenditure information for 1982-83.

† The United Kingdom expenditure figures include both the cost of the supply of drugs by Family Practitioner Services and the cost of remunerating pharmacists and dispensing doctors. An estimate for over-the-counter purchases of medicines, which was derived from national accounts sources was also included. The expenditure figures exclude the cost of drugs used by National Health Service hospitals and the cost of drugs used by private health services. Including the cost of drugs dispensed in NHS hospitals, the United Kingdom spent £42·70 on drugs per head of population in 1982.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail changes in the housing benefit scheme since its inception, together with planned future changes, giving the number of claimants subject to changes to all or part of their entitlement, the average value of each the changes and the net savings to public expenditure; and if he will express each of these changes to public expenditure as a percentage of the total cost of the scheme.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 March 1986, c. *229*]: The principal changes made to the housing benefit scheme since its inception in April 1983 are as follows:

April 1984

Rent rebate taper above needs allowance increased 5 per cent. to 26 per cent.

Rate rebate taper above needs allowance increased 2 per cent. to 9 per cent.

18-20 year old non-dependant deductions incorporated into the adult rate and increased to £6·15 for rents and £2·05 rates, and deductions for 18-20 year olds on supplementary benefit on Youth Training Scheme abolished.

November 1984

Rent rebate taper above needs allowance increased 3 per cent. to 29 per cent.

Minimum payments above needs allowance increased to 50 pence.

Non-dependant deductions for 16-17 year olds not on supplementary benefit, Youth Training Scheme or non contributory invalidity pension introduced at the lower rate.

50 pence real improvement to dependant child's needs allowance.

April 1985

High rent scheme thresholds raised to 130 per cent. of average rents.

November 1985

Rate rebate taper above the needs allowance increased 4 per cent. to 13 per cent.

95 pence real improvement to dependant child's needs allowance.

The numbers affected by these changes and the net savings are given in the table. Estimates of the average effect of each change are not available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Planned adjustments to students' entitlement, non-dependent deductions for 21 to 24-year-olds, and entitlement of part III residents are subject to final consideration following consultation with the Social Security Advisory Committee and the Local Authority Associations. The details of planned changes for April 1988, together with illustrations of the possible effects, are outlined in the White Paper "Reform of Social Security" (Cmnd. 9691).

*Estimated Expenditure Effects and Numbers of Households Affected by Changes to the Housing Benefit Scheme**
Great Britain

Date of Change	*Net saving† at time of change £ million*	*Numbers affected at time of change (millions)*	*Saving as a proportion of total benefit expenditure in year of change (per cent)*
April and November 1984	‡171	‖2·3	4·1
April 1985	6	0·09	0·1
November 1985	45	2·0	1·0

* It is not possible to aggregate the effects of the changes because they will overlap and in part be offset by the effects of upratings and other changes.

† Full-year figures, including rate rebate savings which are not classified as public expenditure.

‡ Estimated full-year cost in November 1984 of restoring the November 1983 tapers, minima and equivalent levels for non-dependent deductions and dependent child's needs allowance.

‖ Excludes those whose benefit increased.

National Insurance Contributions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the gain to the National Insurance

Fund or the Exchequer of removing the upper earnings limit from national insurance payments for the self-employed *(a)* with present tax relief and *(b)* without it.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *78*]: If the upper profits limit for class 4 national insurance contributions for the self-employed were removed from 6 April 1986 the full year effect on the national insurance fund including treasury supplement and interest, is estimated to be a gain of £205 million. (This figure is calculated on the same basis as the Report by the Government Actuary on the draft of the Social Security (Contributions, Re-rating) Order 1985, (Cmnd 9672).).

The hon. Gentleman's question contains alternative assumptions about tax relief on the additional class 4 contributions that would be raised if the upper profits limit were abolished. Tax relief has no effect on the class 4 receipts to the national insurance fund, but does, of course, affect the tax receipts to the Exchequer. If, on the one assumption, tax relief was available on 50 per cent. of the additional class 4 contributions collected above the upper profit limit, the tax forgone would be in the order of £40 million. If, on the other assumption, tax relief was removed entirely, the extra tax collected in respect of 50 per cent. of class 4 contributions below the upper profit limit (currently eligible for relief) would be about £60 million.

Mobility Allowance

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will give the number of applications for mobility allowance in each quarter of the last five years; and if he will give a percentage that are successful for each quarter;

(2) how many people applied for mobility allowance; and what percentage were successful in each quarter for the last five years.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1986, c. *588*]: Information is not available in the precise form requested. The table shows the number of initial claims decided, and the percentage of those that were successful, in each of the specified quarters.

Year	*Quarter*	*Number of claims decided*	*Percentage successful*
1981	1	14,300	67
	2	14,200	66
	3	17,900	67
	4	14,400	69
1982	1	19,800	70
	2	20,100	67
	3	27,000	66
	4	21,100	66
1983	1	23,300	68
	2	25,100	66
	3	25,600	66
	4	32,800	65
1984	1	26,700	69
	2	24,400	69
	3	29,400	69
	4	27,600	70
1985	1	29,500	70
	2	28,000	68
	3	35,100	64
	4	37,200	63
1986	1	35,200	66

Benefits

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the amount of money saved by his Department each year by the failure of people to claim benefits for which they would be eligible.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: No estimates are available for unemployment benefit. For supplementary benefit payable to the unemployed (including appropriate housing costs) it is estimated, on 1981 family expenditure survey data, that £410 million was unclaimed throughout the year.

Surrogate Mothers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce legislation to amend the Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 so as to make payments to surrogate mothers for the keeping of a diary during their pregnancy a specific criminal offence; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: I understand the recently reported case involving surrogate mothers receiving payments for keeping a diary is the subject of police investigation under the Surrogacy Arrangements Act. I shall keep the need for amending legislation under review.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Profit-sharing Schemes

44. **Mr. Freeman** asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received since the Budget on the Government's initial proposals for encouraging profit-sharing schemes.

Mr. Brooke: The preliminary discussions with employers and others referred to in my right hon. Friend's Budget speech are under way. There has been a discussion in the National Economic Development Council. In addition, a small number of letters from members of the public has been received.

European Community Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to his answer of 7 May, *Official Report*, column *137*, concerning the appropriations under the European Economic Community budget, he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the principal items of non-agricultural expenditure for 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Brooke: The information is as follows:

mecu

	1985	*1986**	*1986†*
Agricultural Structures	688	769	+100

	1985	1986*	1986†
Common Fisheries and Marine Policy	112	186	
Regional Development and Transport sectors	1,698	2,278	+150
Social Sector	1,626	1,886	+500
Energy, Industry, Research and Market sectors	707	748	—
Co-operation with Developing and non Member Countries	1,044	1,100	—
Repayments and Reserves	1,272	3,108	+145
Administration	1,332	1,599	
Total	8,478‡	11,674	895

Source: Official Journal of the European Communities – general budgets for 1985 and 1986.

* 1986 main budget. Excludes the elements added by the European Parliament to the Council's second reading budget.

† 1986 draft supplementary budget. Details contained in Commission press release of 30 April.

‡ Because of rounding, this figure does not equal exactly the sum of the items.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the operation of the financial guidelines for the EC budget on the same basis as the answer of 14 May 1985, *Official Report*, columns *84-85*, to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby.

Mr. Brooke: The financial guidelines for EC agricultural spending in 1986 was subsequently reduced to 20,619 million ecu for the Community of Ten. There has been no further change. The EC Commission has proposed a supplementary budget in excess of the guideline, on the ground that expenditure requirements have been increased by exogenous factors, such as the fall in the value of the US dollar against the ecu. These matters will be for consideration by the Council of Budget Ministers.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the forecast contribution to the European Economic Community budget this year, including supplementaries, as a percentage of the contribution in 1979 in terms of sterling, *(b)* the corresponding increase in expenditure by the United Kingdom Government and *(c)* the increase in the retail prices index.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986]: The Government's latest forecast of the United Kingdom's net payments to the Community budget is that published in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). This does not take account of this year's supplementary budget. The comparison between the White Paper forecast for 1986-87 and the outturn for 1979-80, together with the change in the public expenditure planning total for the same period, is as follows. Details of the retail price index for 1986 are not available; however, the growth in the index between 1979 and 1985 is also shown.

	1979-80 £ million	*1986-87* £ million	*Percentage increase decrease*
Net payments to EC budget	884	796	−10·0
Public expenditure planning total*	77,600	139,100	+79·3

Source: Relevant Public Expenditure White Papers.

* Rounded to the nearest £100 million.

Growth in retail price index (1975 = 100)

1979	*1985*	*Percentage increase*
165·8	276·8	+66·9

Source: "Economic Trends", March 1986.

European Monetary System

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has about the role of central banks in European Economic Community states which are full members of the European monetary system in respect of participation within the European monetary system; and how this role compares with the present role of the Bank of England.

Mr. Ian Stewart: This is a matter for the member states concerned, but I have no reason to suppose that participation in the exchange rate mechanism has led to constitutional changes in the role of central banks in those member states.

IMF Adjustment Programme

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make it his policy to put forward proposals at the International Monetary Fund for a full study of the effects on children and the poor of the proposed International Monetary Fund adjustment programme before it is approved.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The provision of financial assistance by the IMF in support of agreed adjustment programmes is intended to enable countries with balance of payments difficulties to achieve the necessary adjustment over a longer time and at a lower social and economic cost than would otherwise be possible. Within this framework it is the responsibility of the debtor countries themselves to decide domestic priorities. In co-operation with the World Bank the IMF also seeks to encourage the countries concerned to implement economic reforms which will promote higher growth and employment in the longer term.

The IMF recognises the particular difficulties faced by the poorest countries in carrying out economic reforms and has recently agreed to set up a new structural adjustment facility totalling SDR 2·7 bn. This will provide loans at highly concessional rates to 60 of the poorest countries undertaking medium-term structural adjustment programmes.

Income Tax and National Insurance

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give the total revenue obtained from income tax plus national insurance contributions together in each year since 1978-79 at current and at constant 1978-79 prices.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *564*.]: The information requested is as follows:

£ million

	Current prices	*At 1978-79 prices**
1978-79	29,166	29,166
1979-80	32,934	28,187
1980-81	39,327	28,374

	Current prices	At 1978-79 prices*
1981-82	45,050	29,532
1982-83	49,177	30,115
1983-84	52,600	30,854
1984-85	55,219	31,086

* Using the GDP deflator.

The figures comprise taxes paid by persons (net of tax credits), and national insurance, national health, redundancy fund and maternity fund contributions paid by employees and employers.

The figures are on a national accounts accruals basis.

DEFENCE

RAF Mount Pleasant

42. **Mr. Speed** asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the move from RAF Stanley to RAF Mount Pleasant has now been completed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Yes. The new international airport at Mount Pleasant, which will be used by both Service and civil aircraft, became fully operational on 1 May 1986. All concerned in this project, particularly the Property Services Agency and the construction consortium of Laing, Mowlem and Amey Roadstone, can be justifiably proud of their achievement in completing an international airport on a green field site 8,500 miles from Britain in less that two and a half years.

Chemical Weapons (NATO)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will seek to ensure that the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation gives a public commitment to no first use of chemical weapons; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: All the members of NATO are parties to the 1925 Geneva protocol which prohibits the use of chemical weapons, although some countries have reserved the right to retaliate with chemical weapons against states which first use chemical weapons against them. All NATO countries are therefore in effect committed to no first use of chemical weapons.

United States Military Interests (Wales)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence at which military establishments in Wales United States military interests are represented.

Mr. Stanley: The United States armed forces are represented in Wales by a permanent presence at RAF Brawdy in Dyfed and RAF Caerwent in Gwent.

Army Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will now make it his policy to publish the names of the countries invited to the British Army equipment exhibition;

(2) whether countries with records of human rights violations and countries involved in armed conflict will be invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

Falkland Islands Exclusion Zone (Harassment)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the harassment of shipping within the Falkland Islands exclusion zone by an Argentine vessel; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The garrison's task is to monitor activity in the Falkland Islands protection zone and take such action as may be necessary. Our information is that the Japanese vessel the Chidori Maru was arrested by an Argentine vessel on May 10 outside the zone. No threat was posed to the Falkland Islands.

Turkey (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence which arms manufacturers are accompanying the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in his delegation to Turkey commencing on 21 May.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall answer shortly.

United States Air Force (Military Aircraft)

Mr. Donald Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any civil airports in Scotland have been authorised for use by United States Air Force fighter planes or bombers.

Mr. Stanley [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *546*]: United States Air Force combat aircraft were authorised to use Edinburgh airport for transit purposes as part of a routine NATO exercise which took place from 3 March to 16 March 1986. No other civil airport in Scotland has been authorised recently for actual use by United States combat aircraft. Contingency plans for transition to war envisage the use of a number of civil airports in Scotland by the United States Air Force, as well as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, but the details are classified.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 21 May 1986

NORTHERN IRELAND

Anglo-Irish Agreement

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what recent representations he has received regarding the future of the Anglo-Irish agreement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tom King: Over recent weeks I have received a number of letters from members of the public about the future of the Anglo-Irish agreement. The majority expressed concern about its impact in Northern Ireland. I have also had discussions with representatives from a cross-section of the community in Northern Ireland, some of whom are in favour of the agreement while others have expressed reservations about it. The Government remain convinced that the agreement has the potential to offer considerable benefits to all sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

Navan Fort (Quarrying)

Mr. Mallon asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he is yet in a position to announce the decision on the planning application to continue quarrying on land adjacent to Navan fort.

Mr. Needham: The Department of the Environment has today issued a decision refusing planning permission for the proposed development.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Property Disposal (Estate Agents)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners if the Commissioners maintain a list of approved estate agents for the sale and disposal of property for which the Commissioners are responsible; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: The Commissioners do not maintain an approved list. The bulk of the Commissioners' property is managed by five firms of chartered surveyors, individual partners within each firm being appointed as agents of the Commissioners. These firms are Messrs Chestertons; Messrs Cluttons; Messrs Donaldsons; Messrs Hillier Parker May and Rowden; and Messrs Smiths Gore. The sale and disposal of any property is usually handled by the agents previously responsible for its management, although in a few cases other firms may be asked to act as joint agents. The same principle applies to those few properties which for various reasons are managed by other agents.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Convictions (Forensic Evidence)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in his *Official Report* all those cases in the past 20 years where persons have been convicted of offences on the basis of forensic evidence and where that conviction has subsequently been overturned because of doubt about the validity of that forensic evidence; and if he will indicate in which of these cases compensation has been paid for wrongful imprisonment.

Mr. Mellor: We have information on cases where the Home Secretary has made an ex gratia payment in respect of a wrongful conviction, but information regarding the grounds on which convictions are quashed is not recorded centrally.

Institute of Criminology, Cambridge University

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what Government funds are made available to the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The Institute of Criminology is part of the University of Cambridge and hence receives Government funds through the University Grants Committee. Additional funds are provided from Government sources for specific research or training initiatives. The Home Office research and planning unit made research grants to the institute totalling £68,000 in the financial year 1985-86, for studies concerning neighbourhood watch and the development of delinquency. I understand that the institute also received research grants from DHSS for work on intermediate treatment, and from the ESRC (Economic and Social Research Council), as part of its initiative on crime and criminal justice. The institute receives further funds from a variety of sources for specific training and seminar initiatives, including during 1985-86 £6,000 from the Home Office research and planning unit.

Questionnaires (Sexual Experiences)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to make Uit an offence to circulate questionnaires seeking to discover past sexual experiences of individual members of the public; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to introduce such legislation. It is of course open to members of the public to decline to complete questionnaires which seek information about previous sexual experiences.

Passports

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the average delay being experienced at present by applicants for *(a)* new and *(b)* renewed British passports.

Mr. Waddington: Because of industrial action earlier this year and an increase in demand, passport applications are taking longer to process than is normal at this time of year. Non-urgent applications for both new passports and other services are taking between five and six weeks to

process. Priority is being given to applications which indicate an early date of travel and every effort is being made to reduce the backlog as quickly as possible.

Prisoners (Disciplinary Proceedings)

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners in Wandsworth and Featherstone prisons, respectively, were disciplined for *(a)* assaults on prison officers and *(b)* assaults on other prisoners in each of the last five years.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to my reply*, 8 May 1986, c. *206*]: The information available centrally relates to the number of offences punished and is given in the table. Data for 1985 are not yet available.

Offences of violence against officers and inmates punished at Featherstone and Wandsworth prisons, 1980-84*

Number of offences†‡

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Gross personal violence to officer					
Featherstone	—	—	—	1	—
Wandsworth	2	10	2	3	8
Assault on officer					
Featherstone	3	1	2	2	1
Wandsworth	59	58	157	123	135
Gross personal violence to inmate					
Featherstone	2	1	—	—	—
Wandsworth	—	—	1	2	—
Assault on inmate					
Featherstone	1	2	1	2	—
Wandsworth	16	22	27	40	31

* Including suspended and activated suspended awards
† Including attempted offences
‡ The figures are those recorded centrally: detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost

PRIME MINISTER

Pollution Inspectorate

Mr. Ottaway asked the Prime Minister what was the outcome of the Cabinet Office review of the pollution inspectorate; and if she will publish its report.

The Prime Minister: The report of the scrutiny team has been received and set out options for further study, which is now in hand. When Ministers have received the results of this further work, I will consider whether and if so in what form the scrutiny team's report might be published.

Nuclear Reactors (Ministerial Responsibility)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Prime Minister which Secretary of State has responsibility for the specific operating cycle for the Calder hall and Chapelcross nuclear reactors.

The Prime Minister: British Nuclear Fuels plc is responsible for these reactors, which it operates in accordance with its commitments to its customers.

Famine Relief

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister if she will make it the policy of Her Majesty's Government to increase the funds they provide for famine relief by an amount equal to the estimated value added tax revenue received in connection with the fund-raising activities of Sport Aid; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I applaud the Sports Aid initiative and the remarkable effort which has been put in to it by thousands of people throughout the world. I hope to meet Mr. Omar Khalifa, the Sudanese athlete, in connection with Sports Aid at the weekend. Successive Governments have, however, taken the view that to allow special VAT relief or matching refunds for charitable fund raising events is not the right way to help in such circumstances. Nevertheless, our contribution to famine relief in Africa has been very considerable: it amounted to £81·4 million in 1984, £96·5 million in 1985, and £27 million in the first quarter of 1986 alone. We shall continue to play our part in the international relief effort.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

UGC (Allocations)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will announce the recurrent grants allocated to universities for the academic year 1986-87 by the University Grants Committee.

Mr. Walden: As my right hon. Friend told the House yesterday, the University Grants Committee has announced universities' recurrent grants for 1986-87. These are shown in the table. Copies of the general letter of guidance that the chairman of the UGC has sent to all universities have been placed in the Library of the House. The general letter will be followed in about a week's time by an institutional annex relating to the student numbers by subject and research funding of each university. These annexes will also be placed in the Library.

University Recurrent Grants Academic Year 1986-87

University or College	*Recurrent Grant 1986-87 £ million*
Aston	15·21
Bath	13·61
Birmingham	38·39

University or College	Recurrent Grant 1986-87 £ million
Bradford	15·06
Bristol	29·90
Brunel	13·13
Cambridge	44·30
City	11·64
Durham	17·59
East Anglia	15·01
Essex	8·84
Exeter	15·66
Hull	14·52
Keele	8·50
Kent	11·0
Lancaster	13·86
Leeds	43·03
Leicester	18·27
Liverpool	37·87
London Business School	1·88
London University	238·59
(of which Imperial College)	31·51
Loughborough	19·01
Manchester Business School	1·11
Manchester	48·52
UMIST	16·90
Newcastle	32·29
Nottingham	28·04
Oxford	44·79
Reading	19·06
Salford	13·61
Sheffield	32·32
Southampton	26·07
Surrey	13·24
Sussex	14·54
Warwick	19·14
York	11·76
Total England	966·26
Aberystwyth U.C.	10·18
Bangor U.C.	11·09
Cardiff U.C.	17·14
St. David's Lampeter	1·97
Swansea U.C.	13·79
UWCM	6·82
UWIST	8·05
Welsh Registry	2·20
Total Wales	71·84
Aberdeen	22·27
Dundee	14·93
Edinburgh	46·03
Glasgow	44·80
Heriot-Watt	11·01
St. Andrews	11·37
Stirling	8·24
Strathclyde	24·15
Total Scotland	182·80
Total Great Britain	1,220·90

The total grant distributed by the UGC as announced above does not include items for which provision is allocated separately, such as local authority rates and the overseas research student awards scheme, nor the committee's small central reserve out of the total recurrent grant available to it of £1,340 million.

Boarders (Costs)

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the average cost per annum of each pupil with a boarding place at a maintained sector secondary school.

Mr. Dunn: Information to provide an answer to this question is not collected routinely. However, a special exercise carried out some years ago by a departmental working group indicated that the average gross cost of a maintained sector boarding place was £1,805 in 1977-78.

School Population

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list *(a)* for the Christchurch constituency, *(b)* for Dorset and *(c)* for England the total number of schools and the population therein for the last 10 years and the total population for each of those years.

Mr. Dunn: The number of maintained primary, secondary and nursery schools in Dorset and in England in the years 1976 to 1985, the number of pupils attending those schools and the total resident population are as follows. Comparable figures for Christchurch are not available centrally.

	England			Dorset		
	Schools	Pupils	Population	Schools	Pupils	Population
1976	26,686	8,522,118	46,659,900	285	86,800	577,400
1977	26,727	8,533,518	46,639,800	283	87,509	581,200
1978	26,676	8,453,517	46,638,200	286	87,508	584,700
1979	26,596	8,348,055	46,698,100	284	86,981	588,600
1980	26,518	8,183,072	46,787,200	284	86,330	593,200
1981	26,260	7,969,727	46,820,800	278	85,824	598,600
1982	25,854	7,752,137	46,794,800	273	84,084	604,400
1983	25,512	7,524,547	46,845,900	269	82,159	609,100
1984	25,029	7,345,086	46,956,400	265	81,214	617,800
1985	24,677	7,201,567	47,111,700	264	80,658	n/a

Student Awards

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much of a student's income is disregarded in respect of scholarship or sponsorship income and earnings from tutoring and demonstrating in the calculation of awards to postgraduate research students by the British Academy and each of the research councils.

Sir Keith Joseph: The Economic and Social Research Council currently disregards £1,280 of a student's income from those sources. The British Academy and the other

four research councils each generally disregard £1,230. In the case of some studentships funded jointly by the Agriculture and Food Research Council and industry a higher disregard of £1,655 is applicable. The first £425 of any other income is also disregarded. University or college prizes or gifts are not treated as income and are totally disregarded.

Grange Hill Anti-drug Abuse Video

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what officials from his Department were present at the launch of the Grange Hill anti-drug abuse video "Just Say No", and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: I attended the launch of the Grange Hill anti-drug video "Just Say No" with two officials. The BBC is to be congratulated on producing the "Just Say No" campaign against drug misuse by the young. This initiative is both timely and useful and will certainly arouse interest in the local education authorities.

Part-time Students (Member's Correspondence)

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he intends to respond to the letter from the hon. Member for Stretford, dated 11 February 1986, concerning weighting given to part-time students as full-time equivalents at polytechnics.

Mr. Walden: In order to give a full reply it has been necessary to seek advice outside the Department. This has recently been received and I shall write to the right hon. Member as soon as possible.

Photosensitivity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what research has been and is being funded by the Medical Research Council into the causes, prevention and treatment of photosensitivity.

Mr. Walden: I understand that in the financial year 1984-1985 the Medical Research Council spent £227,000 on projects which have relevance to the causes, prevention and treatment of photosensitivity. I have asked the council to write to the right hon. Member with details.

Nursery Education

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is the proportion of under-fives in nursery education in the United Kingdom; and what information he has about the equivalent figures for France, Japan and the United States of America.

Mr. Dunn [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *460*]: The figure in column 4 of the table in respect of the United States was incorrectly printed in the *Official Report*.

There is no standard definition of "nursery education". The forms of pre-school provision vary between and within countries, as does practice in the age and times of year at which children are admitted to compulsory education. The table shows the latest available comparative information on all forms of grouped provision for young children. Rates for both three and four, and three to five-year-olds are shown, as in the other countries compulsory schooling starts at age 6.

Percentage of age group: 1982

	Three to five-year-olds		*Three and four-year-olds*	
	Education	*Day Care* [1]	*Education*	*Day Care* [1]
United Kingdom	[2] 61	27	43	40
France	97	–	95	–
Japan	44	[3] 27	33	26
United States	52	–	36	4

.. Not available
– Not applicable
[1] Includes day nurseries, playgroups, kindergartens and other grouped provision where these occur. Excludes care supervised by a childminder or relative.
[2] Includes nursery schools, and all pupils aged up to five in primary schools.
[3] 1979

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

United Kingdom Provident

Mr. Viggers asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) if he will make a statement on his Department's involvement with United Kingdom Provident;

(2) on what date his Department gave advice to United Kingdom Provident that it should reduce its future rates of bonus;

(3) to what extent his Department made inquiries into the free reserves of United Kingdom Provident.

Mr. Howard: Under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 the Secretary of State may exercise certain powers if he considers that a company may be unable to meet its liabilities or to fulfil the reasonable expectations of the insurance policy holders. In February the Government Actuary's Department, which examines for my Department the statistical returns of life insurance companies, reported that it had been in touch with the actuaries of the United Kingdom Provident Institution and that the company might be in financial difficulties. My officials met representatives of the company, who undertook to prepare urgently a detailed assessment of its solvency position as at the end of 1985 and to retain a firm of consulting actuaries to assist in this work.

Officials of the Government Actuary's Department, after discussing the company's assessment of its solvency position with the company's own actuaries and the actuarial consultants, were satisfied that the company could honour its liabilities, including bonuses already allotted, and had sufficient free reserves to meet the required margin of solvency.

The company was questioned in February about its ability to continue paying bonuses at the rates then in force. Neither my Department nor the Government Actuary's Department formally advised the company to reduce its rates because the company's actuaries, after making their own assessment, accepted the need for a reduction.

On 10 March I reviewed with representatives of United Kingdom Provident the alternative courses of action open to the company. They mentioned the possibility of a merger with Friends Provident Life Office. I encouraged them to pursue this option and also made my views known to Friends Provident. Agreement between the two companies on a merger of their operations was announced on 8 April. My Department continues to be in frequent contact with the new management about progress.

None of the powers of intervention under the Insurance Companies Act 1982 have been exercised in this case, because the remedial action taken by the company has been considered satisfactory.

Communications Industry (Employees)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed on 1 January in each year since 1979 in *(a)* the postal service and *(b)* the telephone and other telecommunications services in the public sector.

Mr. Butcher: The following is the information requested, at 31 March each year, according to information published by the Post Office and British Telecom in annual reports available in the Library of the House:

	*Postal business**	*Telecommunications business*
1979	173,981	233,447
1980	178,406	240,056
1981	181,310	246,725
1982	177,778	245,882
1983	176,158	245,976
1984	175,287	241,124
1985	177,381	‡nil

* Part-time staff counted as half.
† Part-time staff counted as half until 1982, thereafter as one.
‡ British Telecom no longer in the public sector but on 31 March 1985 employed 235,178 people.

Man-made Fibres (Imports)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has concerning anti-dumping procedures recently taken by the European Commission concerning polyester staple fibre imports from the German Democratic Republic, Rumania, Turkey and Yugoslavia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No formal anti-dumping investigation into these imports has yet been initiated; but the European Commission is prepared to take such action once it is presented with a well-founded complaint that dumping is taking place which is damaging the Community industry.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects the European Commission to take action in response to the complaint lodged last year by the International Rayon and Synthetic Fibres Committee about unfair imports of acrylic fibres.

Mr. Butcher: The European Commission has almost completed its investigation into these imports and the result is likely to be announced in the next few weeks.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what has been the percentage of total imports of man-made fibres and man-made fibre products represented by such imports in each of the last five years from *(a)* East Germany, *(b)* Rumania, *(c)* Turkey and *(d)* Yugoslavia;

(2) what information he has concerning the volume and value of imports of synthetic fibres and synthetic fibre products from the following countries in each of the last five years for which figures are available: *(a)* East Germany, *(b)* Rumania, *(c)* Turkey and *(d)* Yugoslavia.

Mr. Butcher: Figures for synthetic and other man-made fibre products are not available as they are not separately identified in the trade statistics. Information on fibres and yarns is as follows:

(a) United Kingdom imports of synthetic fibres and yarns
Quantity—Metric Tonnes
Value—£ (millions)

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
East Germany					
Quantity	449	822	1,401	777	738
Value	0·3	0·6	1·0	0·7	0·7
Rumania					
Quantity	259	44	129	133	166
Value	0·2	0·0	0·1	0·1	0·2
Turkey					
Quantity	23	139	1,872	3,183	3,283
Value	0·1	0·1	1·8	3·1	4·2
Yugoslavia					
Quantity	–	6	—	89	236
Value	–	0·0	—	0·1	0·5

Note: 0·0=less than £0·05 million.
Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Sub-groups 266.5, 266.6, 266.7 and 651.4 (less 651.48) in the UK Overseas Trade Statistics.

(b) United Kingdom Imports of Man-made Fibres and Yarns

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Total man-made fibre imports (value: £ millions)	230	345	401	433	482
Of which imported from:			*per cent.*		
East Germany	0·4	0·3	0·4	0·6	0·9
Rumania	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·0	0·1
Turkey	0·0	0·0	0·4	0·7	0·9
Yugoslavia	0·1	0·0	0·0	0·1	0·2

Note: 0·0=less than 0·05 per cent.
Imports are valued cif.
Source: Data corresponding to SITC/R2 Sub-groups 266.5, 266.6, 266.7 and 651.4 (less 651.48), plus Group 267 (less 267.21 (part)) and Items 651.71, 651.72, 651.73 and 651.78 in the UK Overseas Trade Statistics.

British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how the sums of money announced on 14 May, *Official Report*, column *705*, for British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd. will be allocated between the different areas affected by recent redundancies in the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Peter Morrison: British Shipbuilders is pressing ahead with the arrangements for British Shipbuilders Enterprise Ltd., including the appointment of a board and recruitment of key personnel. It will be for the new company to determine how the moneys should be allocated, though clearly the pattern of spend will be influenced by that of the redundancies the new company is charged to help.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Building Societies

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the ability of building societies to make preparations for the new legislation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A number of representations have been received about whether building societies have the power to do preparatory work before Royal Assent for their new powers under the Bill. In the light of these concerns, and for the avoidance of doubt, I am proposing that the Building Societies Bill should contain appropriate provisions.

It is clearly sensible for a building society to be able to do preparatory work, provided that its scale is reasonable and takes account of the possibility that the Bill might not be enacted in precisely its present form or that the members might not pass the special resolution necessary for the adoption of a particular power. Many societies have done preparatory work in good faith on the correct presumption that the provisions already in the Bill against anticipation of powers are intended to catch the provision of services to the public, not such preparatory work.

I have accordingly tabled an amendment to schedule 16 to the Bill which treats societies as having had powers to do such preparatory work since 19 December 1985, the date of Second Reading of the Bill. A new clause provides that societies will have a similar preparatory power in respect of additional powers conferred in future by a statutory instrument under the Bill, in the case of a resolution requiring approval in draft from the date of an affirmative resolution by either House, and in other cases from the date of laying.

HMSO Publications

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if documents published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in London are published simultaneously in Cardiff.

Mr. Brooke: Major items particularly those of Welsh interest, are published simultaneously in Cardiff and London whenever feasible. However, the tight time scales laid down for the publication of most parliamentary papers and Government reports inevitably result in them being available at the HMSO London bookshop a day earlier than elsewhere.

Share Option Schemes

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many savings-related share option schemes have been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1980; and how many employees are covered by the savings-related share option schemes set up in each year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *91*]: The information requested in as follows:

Tax Year	*Finance Act 1980 Schemes approved*	*Number of directors and employees granted options under all approved Finance Act 1980 schemes*
1980-81[1]	22	10,600
1981-82	115	88,600
1982-83	78	95,000
1983-84	73	105,000
1984-85	115	245,000
1985-86	111	n.a.
1986-87[2]	9	n.a.
	523	

[1] The start date for the schemes was 15 November 1980.
[2] Up to 30 April.
[3] Provisional estimate.
The number of employees benefiting under approved savings-related share option schemes to date cannot be calculated by aggregating the annual totals since the same employee may be granted options in successive years.
n.a. Figures not yet available.

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many approved share option schemes have been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1984; and how many employees are covered by the approved share option schemes set up in each year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *91*]: The information requested is as follows:

Tax year	*Finance Act 1984 Schemes approved*	*Number of directors and employees granted options under all approved Finance Act 1984 schemes*
1984-85	202	65,000
1985-86	1,251	n.a.
1986-87[1]	75	n.a.
	1,528	

[1] To 30 April.
[2] Provisional estimate. The figure includes options granted in 1984-85 under 907 schemes submitted to the Inland Revenue for approval on or before 31 December 1984. Such schemes were able (by virtue of paragraph 1(5) of Schedule 10 to the Finance Act 1984) to grant options in advance of formal approval and in many cases approval was not received until the next year.
n.a. Figures not yet available.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will bring up to date the table published in the *Official Report* on 3 April 1984, columns 451-52, giving details of the United Kingdom contribution to the European Economic Community budget; and if he will add an estimate for this year and the forecast for next.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *88*]: The information is as follows. The Government's latest forecast of the United Kingdom's gross payments to and receipts from the 1986 and 1987 Community budgets is contained in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). The forecast in the White Paper does not take

account of the supplementary budget for 1986 and was made before details of the 1987 preliminary draft budget were available. On the basis of the figures for United Kingdom contributions in the 1986 budget and the 1986 supplementary budget, and those likely to be contained in the 1987 preliminary draft budget, our gross contribution in 1986 will be 6796 mecu before abatement, and, in 1987, 7328 mecu. The budgets do not contain estimates of United Kingdom receipts.

A—Net Payments

£ million

	1984	*1985*
Gross Payments	3,201	3,940
Receipts other than refunds abatements	2,017	1,853
Negotiated refunds	528	*61
VAT Abatement	—	†166
Net payments	656	1,860

Source: Departmental records.

* Negotiated refunds. In the first quarter of 1985 the United Kingdom received £61 million in respect of its excessive net contribution to the 1983 Community budget.

† VAT abatements. In 1985 the United Kingdom received only 275 mecu of the 1000 mecu payable in respect of its excessive net contribution to the 1984 Community budget. The balance, of 725 mecu (£439 million) was paid in the first few days of 1986.

B—Gross Contributions

£ million

	1984	*1985*
Customs Duties	*1,276	1,291
Agricultural Levies	*202	134
Sugar and Isoglucose Levies	58	55
VAT Payments	1,665	2,091
IGA	—	†369
Total	3,201	3,940

Source: Departmental records.

* The figures include a total of £39·9 million (£12·9 million for customs duties and £27 million for agricultural levies) in respect of an earlier underpayment arising from the civil service industrial action in 1981.

† The United Kingdom contributed to two IGAs in 1985. It paid £119 million in respect of the 1984 IGA, and £250 million in respect of the 1985 IGA.

Mr. Gould asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will bring up to date the figure for gross receipts from, and gross payments to, the European Economic Community budget given in his reply of 7 July 1983; if he will provide an estimate for 1986, including forecast supplementaries, together with a forecast for next year; and how the figure for refunds is made up.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *88*]: The information for the years 1983 to 1985 is set out in the table. The Government's latest forecast of our net payments to the European Economic Community budget for the years 1986 and 1987 remains as set out in the public expenditure White Paper (Cmnd. 9702). The White Paper does not take account of this year's supplementary budget and was prepared before details of the preliminary draft budget for 1987 were available. On the basis of the figures for United Kingdom contributions in the 1986 budget and the 1986 supplementary budget, and the figures likely to be included in the 1987 preliminary draft budget, the United Kingdom's gross contributions in 1986 will be 6795 mecu (before abatement), and, in 1987, 7328 mecu. The budgets do not give information on United Kingdom receipts. I refer the hon. Member to the reply I gave the hon. Member for Great Grimsby (Mr. Mitchell) on 14 May 1986, at columns 487-88, concering the formula for calculating the United Kingdom's rebates.

	1983 *£ million*	*1984* *£ million*	*1985* *£ million*
Gross payments	2,976	3,201	3,940
Receipts other than refunds	1,522	2,017	1,853
Negotiated refunds	807	528	*61
VAT abatements	—	—	†166
Net payment	647	656	1,860

Source: Departmental records.

* Negotiated refunds. In the first quarter of 1985 the United Kingdom received £61 million in respect of its excessive net contribution to the 1983 Community budget.

† VAT abatements. In 1985 the United Kingdom received only 275 mecu of the 1,000 mecu payable in respect of its excessive net contribution to the 1984 Community budget. The balance of 725 mecu (£439 million) was paid in the first few days of 1986.

Share Trusts

Mr. Terry Davis asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many approved deferred share trusts have been set up in each year since the passage of the Finance Act 1978; and how many employees are covered by the approved deferred share trusts set up in each year.

Mr. Moore [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *91*]: The information requested is as follows:

Tax Year	*Finance Act 1978 Schemes approved*	*Number of directors and employees‖ granted options under all approved Finance Act 1978 schemes*
1979-80	117	145,000
1980-81	93	271,600
1981-82	68	219,000
1982-83	66	285,000
1983-84	48	300,000
1984-85	70	†580,000
1985-86	70	‡
1986-87*	8	‡
	540	

* Up to 30 April.

† Provisional estimate.

‡ Figures not yet available.

‖ The number of employees benefiting under approved profit sharing schemes to date cannot be calculated by aggregating the annual totals since the same employee may have received shares in successive years.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 8 April to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby, *Official Report*, column 29, what progress NIREX has reached in consideration of compensation for home owners and local authorities for blight on value and development following the laying of the special development order.

Mr. Waldegrave: Since 8 April NIREX has announced that where there is written evidence that house sales, which had been agreed prior to the sites' announcement on 25 February, have fallen through as a

result of the announcement, it will purchase the properties at the price agreed between the vendor and purchaser before the sale was called off. This applies to houses within the immediate areas of the four sites. This is in addition to NIREX's previous announcement that it intends to provide compensation for householders within one mile of the boundary of any eventually selected site, should that be necessary.

Water Authorities (Privatisation)

15. **Mr. Pike** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he proposes meeting the local authority associations to discuss proposals to privatise the water authorities in England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I have no plans to do so at present.

41. **Mr. Cartwright** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received on his White Paper: "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales."

Mr. John Patten: My Department has received 237 letters from organisations and others interested following publication of the White Paper.

43. **Mrs. Clwyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many responses he had received by 16 May to the White Paper: "Privatisation of the Water Authorities in England and Wales."

Mr. John Patten: My Department had received by 16 May, 227 letters from organisations and others interested following publication of the White Paper.

Green Belt

16. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the area of green belt land in *(a)* the London area and *(b)* the London borough of Ealing; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: There are some 1·2 million acres of green belt in London and the home counties, but I have no recent estimate of how much of that is within London itself. In the Ealing borough plan, which has just been adopted, there are 682 acres of green belt within the London borough of Ealing.

Housing (Liverpool)

17. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to meet leaders of Liverpool city council to discuss Government financial support for its housing programme.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has offered to meet a small deputation of councillors during his visit to Merseyside on 23 May. In doing so he has made clear that they should expect no treatment beyond what would be available to other similar authorities.

Voluntary Organisations

18. **Mr. Park** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next proposes meeting representatives of voluntary organisations in Greater London and the metropolitan areas to discuss funding arrangements for 1986-87 and 1987-88.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Rhondda (Mr. Rogers).

Housing Investment Programmes

19. **Mr. Nicholas Brown** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what factors he will take into account when deciding on funding for local authority housing investment programmes for the coming financial year.

Mr. John Patten: Decisions on the method of making housing investment programme allocations for 1987-88 will be taken later in the year, when the Government have fixed the total to be allocated and after consultation with the local authority associations.

Business Rates

20. **Mr. Fallon** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the average rate poundage paid by businesses in *(a)* the north-east and *(b)* the south-east.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average non-domestic rate poundage in 1986-87 is 287p in the north-east and 190p in the south-east.

36. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has had from the business community regarding the Government's proposals for reform of business rating contained in the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: We have received about 50 written representations, together with many more informal representations.

It is too early do draw any conclusions from these.

Radiation

21. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make a statement as to the latest information on damage to the environment arising from the most recent discharges of radioactivity.

Mr. Waldegrave: Preliminary estimates suggest that the levels of radioactivity experienced in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl accident are transient and have already considerably declined. However statistical models predict that small traces of radionuclides will be detectable for many years.

38. **Mr. Viggers** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he is satisfied that the results of radiological monitoring are accessible to and comprehensible by members of the public.

Mrs. Rumbold: I am aware of the difficulty of presenting these technical issues in a simple way. However I believe that statements like that contained within the bulletin prepared by my Department on 9 May 1986 present the results of radiological monitoring in a way that is comprehensible and available to the public through news media.

42. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a further statement on the latest levels of radiation following the Chernobyl disaster; and what trend is indicated by the relevant data.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to the daily bulletins prepared by my Department which are in the Library of the House. Further statements will be issued if and when necessary.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the calibre of atomic weapons, in TNT equivalent, that would be likely to produce the equivalent amount of radioactive material as that released by the accident at Chernobyl.

Mr. Waldegrave: It is not possible to make this calculation until the Russian authorities supply information on the amount of material released from the core of the Chernobyl reactor.

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now make it his policy to make public information on all incidents involving the release of radioactive materials from where they are intended to be ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Canterbury (Mr. Crouch) on 15 May at column *554*.

Chernobyl Nuclear Station

22. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he was first informed that British scientists were talking to their Russian counterparts in Chernobyl.

Mr. Waldegrave: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on Tuesday 20 May.

Housing Waiting Lists

23. **Mr. Ron Davies** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the size of the waiting list for accommodaion by local housing authorities in England and Wales at the latest available date; and what was the comparable figure for 1979.

Mr. John Patten: I do not have this information. Local authorities only report the number of households on their waiting lists which are in certain categories of housing need, for example overcrowding.

Enterprise Zones

24. **Mr. Tony Lloyd** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the outcome of his most recent assessment of enterprise zones.

Mr. John Patten: My Department's most recent assessment was published in "Enterprise Zone Information 1983-84", a copy of which is in the Library. A further assessment is in progress.

Sefton (Rates and Services)

25. **Mr. Allan Roberts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information his Department has about the level of services and rate levels in Sefton in relation to the level of employment in the area over the past seven years.

Mrs. Rumbold: Of the five Merseyside district councils, Sefton provides major services at the least cost per head, has consistently levied the lowest local rate poundage, and has the lowest level of unemployment.

Homeless Persons

26. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many homeless households applied to local authorities in England in 1985; how many were accepted; how many were accommodated in bed-and-breakfast hotels at the end of December 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the statistics published quarterly by my Department, copies of which are in the Library.

32. **Mr. Pavitt** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will now investigate the reason for the rise in the number of homeless families in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) on 30 January. Further information is expected to emerge from various projects in the Department's current research programme.

Rate Support Grant

27. **Mr. Clelland** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any plans to call a special meeting of the consultative council on local government finance to discuss the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement.

Mrs. Rumbold: My right hon. Friend has no plans to hold a special meeting of the consultative council on local government finance. As usual there will be two further meetings of the consultative council this year, which among other things, will discuss the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement.

34. **Mr. Barron** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he intends announcing provisional details of the 1987-88 rate support grant settlement before the end of July; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I expect to announce the aggregates of provision and grant in July.

Coal-fired Power Stations

29. **Mr. Heathcoat-Amory** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he is taking to monitor emissions from coal-fired power stations.

Mrs. Rumbold: Her Majesty's air pollution inspectorate requires power station emissions of smoke and fine particulates and, where practicable, grit and dust, to be monitored continuously.

Emissions of sulphur dioxide (SO_2), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and Hydrocarbons (HC) from power stations are calculated on a national basis by reference to the sulphur and nitrogen content of fuel used and, in the case of NOx and HC, by reference to the combustion conditions at plants. Individual plant emissions can be calculated if necessary. My Department has recently asked the Department of Trade and Industry's Warren Spring laboratory to measure some power station emissions of SO_2, NOx and HC in order to verify the calculations currently used.

Agricultural Buildings

30. **Mr. McCrindle** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he has taken to bring to the attention of local planning authorities his statement of 30 April, *Official Report*, column 414, of the circumstances in which planning permission might be granted for a change of use of redundant agricultural buildings in green belts; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: My Department issued a news release containing the text of the statement and copies were sent to the local authority associations and to other planning bodies.

Rates

31. **Mr. Nicholls** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received in the last six months on the reform of the system of rates; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Nearly 300 written representations on this subject have been received in response to the Government's Green Paper "Paying for Local Government", which was published on 28 January. The consultation period continues until 31 October.

Defective Housing (Basildon)

33. **Mr. Amess** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what recent representations he has received about defective housing in Basildon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Since my hon. Friend's Adjournment debate on 9 April and my reply on 23 April to my hon. Friend's similar question at column *169*. I have received a further letter from my hon. Friend on the question of Lindsay Parkinson HSSB houses at Vange, Basildon, and seen the remarks he made about these houses in the debate on the spring Adjournment on 12 May at column 524. My Department has also received a number of letters direct from owners of these houses. We are carefully considering possible ways of dealing with the problems facing these owners, and a decision will be taken as soon as possible.

Superstores

35. **Mr. Watts** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many planning applications for superstore developments in the past two years have been determined on appeal; and how many such appeals have been upheld.

Mr. Tracey: In the two years to 31 December 1985, 39 planning applications for superstore developments of 50,000 sq. ft. or more were determined on appeal by the Secretary of State. Of these, 18 were allowed.

Radioactive Waste (West Lindsey)

37. **Mr. Leigh** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the latest representations received from West Lindsey district council on the disposal of nuclear waste.

Mr. Rumbold: My hon. Friend the Minister for the Environment, Countryside and Local Government wrote to the chairman of the council on 14 May in response to the representations received.

Central Council for Physical Recreation and Sports Council

39. **Mr. Pendry** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next plans to meet the chairmen of the Central Council for Physical Recreation and the Sports Council to discuss the future of those bodies in the light of the report of the Environment Committee.

Mr. Tracey: My plans and proposals in the light of the Select Committee's report will be set out in my Department's formal response.

London Marathon

40. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many representations he has received over the past year about the future arrangements for the London marathon; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: I have had a number of contacts with the race director. I have received 17 letters and have answered two parliamentary questions on this subject. The Government will continue to give support and encouragement to the London Marathon, as it has this year and in previous years.

Private Rented Accommodation

44. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the proportion of households which live in privately rented accommodation.

Sir George Young: About 8½ per cent. of the Dwellings in England at December 1985 were rented from landlords other than local authorities, new towns and housing associations.

Local Authorities (Capital Receipts)

45. **Mr. Nicholas Winterton** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from Macclesfield borough council on the controls on the spending of local authority capital receipts; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Macclesfield borough council's response to the proposals in the consultation paper on the review of the local authority capital expenditure control system, including the use of new and accumulated capital receipts, was sent to the Department on 10 April. My right hon. Friend is considering this, along with the other responses that have been sent to us, before deciding how best to proceed.

South Bank

28. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what planning responsibility he has for the south bank of the Thames in central London.

Mr. Tracey: My right hon. Friend has no special planning responsibilities for the south bank.

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will define the very small quantities of alpha emitters and small amounts of trace elements

mentioned in his reply of 3 May to the report of the Environment Committee on nuclear waste; and if he will specify what quantities of each can cause human harm.

Mr. Waldegrave: The Government have stated their intention that only wastes which are broadly classed as low level wastes should go into a near surface facility. Detailed control over the type of waste disposed of would be exercised through the site authorisation issued under the RSA 60, together with the nuclear site licence issued by the NII.

Any site authorisation would take careful account of the characteristics of the chosen site. It is therefore premature to define precisely what levels of alpha emitters and trace elements would be appropriate.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what assessment he has made of the health risk arising from nuclear waste in nuclear waste dumps; and on what basis these figures are calculated.

Mr. Waldegrave: The risk assessment methodology used by the Department is described in research report DOE/RW/86.076, and in an article published in the journal of the British Nuclear Energy Society (London, 1984). A copy of this article has been placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will refund the rail fares of those delegates invited to London to give their arguments for the exclusion of Killingholme from the special development order on nuclear dumping.

Mr. Waldegrave: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received the letter of 7 April 1985 from Mr. J. W. Saville of 61 Yarrow road, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear dump site at Killingholme; and if he has replied to this letter.

Mr. Waldegrave: Mr. Saville's letter was received on 9 April. A reply was sent on 15 May.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what stage he will make available to local authorities the technical site selection criteria used in the choice of the four possible nuclear dumps.

Mr. Waldegrave: NIREX has already sent copies of its brochure explaining its site selection procedures to all county councils in England and Wales and regional councils in Scotland.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, at the time of the laying of the Town and County Planning (Nirex) Special Development Order *(a)* how many letters protesting at the proposals for nuclear dumping he had not answered, *(b)* how many requests from deputations for a meeting he had not answered and *(c)* how many of the four proposed sites he had visited.

Mr. Waldegrave: I and my colleagues met Members and delegations from all the areas in which a site is located before the SDO was laid. In addition, I was able to visit three of the four sites concerned and I visited the remaining site on 15 May. I have yet to reply to a request from Britain Against Nuclear Dumping for a meeting.

It has not been possible so far to reply to 600 of the letters received, but the points made have been considered.

Parish, Town and Community Councils

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has any proposals to extend the Rates Act 1984 to parish, town and community councils.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has had any correspondence with county associations of parish or town councils or the National Association of Local Councils regarding the budgets of parish, town and community councils.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have had no such correspondence about the budgets of parish, town or community councils.

Palace of Westminster (Roller Towels)

Mr. Harrison asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many roller towel points are available in the Palace of Westminster for toilet facilities; how many are non-functional; and who is responsible for the maintenance of such facilities.

Sir George Young: There are 209 towel cabinets in the Palace of Westminster of which 170 are in the House of Commons. The towel service is supplied under a PSA contract, renewed at three-yearly intervals, providing for maintenance of the cabinets and replacement of roller towels as necessary. Replacement of faulty towel cabinets is arranged by the authorities of both Houses direct with the contractor.

Local Government Finance

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) whether he has any plans to bring forward proposals to change the basis of current expenditure controls on local authorities in England;

(2) whether he intends to instigate a review of the present basis of current expenditure controls on local authorities in England; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Green Paper, "Paying for Local Government", reviews the present system of local government finance and makes proposals for reform. These aim to make local accountability the main determinant of expenditure and priorities in local services.

Norman Shaw South (Drinking Water)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many new drinking water taps have been installed in the Norman Shaw South building since the contamination of tap water on 4 June 1985; and how many of these have not yet been connected to the drinking water supply.

Sir George Young: Six new drinking water taps have been installed. All have now been connected to the drinking water supply. I regret that the work took longer than anticipated.

Redundant Churches

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many applications he has received for urban development grant in respect of the conversion of redundant churches in England.

Sir George Young: One. This was for the conversion of the redundant church of St. Michael and All Angels, Tower Hamlets into flats. Urban development grant of £350,000 was approved in January 1985.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what percentage of sites of special scientific interest in England and Wales have been re-notified in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and when he expects completion of the re-notification programme.

Mr. Waldegrave: I am advised by the Nature Conservancy Council that by 31 March 1986, 45 per cent. of SSSIs in England notified under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, and 71 per cent. in Wales, had been re-notified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The re-notification of sites to owners and occupiers is expected to be substantially complete, in Wales by the end of this year, and in England and Scotland, (because of unforeseen technical and legal difficulties which have been overcome), shortly after.

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many proposed sites of special scientific interest have been notified to him by the Nature Conservancy Council since the coming into force of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and what percentage of those have since been notified as sites of special scientific interest in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Waldegrave: By 31 March 1986, 841 new SSSIs and 1,972 SSSIs previously notified to local authorities under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 had been notified by the Nature Conservancy Council to the Secretary of State, local authorities and owners and occupiers. The NCC does not give advance notice of proposed SSSIs to the Secretary of State.

Acid Deposition

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money the Government have spent in each of the last three years on research into the causes and prevention on acid deposition.

Mrs. Rumbold: Total spent by Departments other than the Meteorological Office was:

	£ million
1983-84	2·02
1984-85	2·73
1985-86	3·97

In addition, the Meteorological Office spend about £0·5 million a year on research into meteorological problems relevant to atmospheric transportation of pollutants and acid rain; more precise figures are not available as the work is not readily separable from that on other issues.

Farming and Wildlife Advisory Groups

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much money the Government have spent, whether through the Countryside Commission or otherwise, on supporting farming and wildlife advisory groups in each of the years 1984 and 1985; and how the 1986 figures are expected to compare in real terms with the 1985 figures in actual and percentage terms.

Mr. Waldegrave: The total amounts paid by, or likely to be available from, the Countryside Commissions (for Scotland and for England and Wales), the Forestry Commission, the Nature Conservancy Council, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, and the Welsh Office are set out below. These figures include grant aid for the employment of conservation advisers, most of whom are employed directly by farming and wildlife advisory groups but some by county councils in pursuit of the same objectives.

Financial year	*Total payments provision* £
1983-84	20,000
1984-85	92,000
1985-86	c. 160,000
1986-87	c. 250,000

The provision for 1985-86 is equivalent to £166,000 in 1986-87 terms, representing a real increase of £84,000, or 51 per cent. in 1986-87.

Radioactivity

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to why dosage emergency reference levels differ, for iodene-131 in milk, in the countries of western Europe and of the extent to which they differ; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the levels of the actinides and strontium 90 in the environment and food at the present time.

Mr. Waldegrave: A collation of environmental monitoring data in the United Kingdom following the Chernobyl incident has been placed in the Library of the House. A more comprehensive listing of strontium-90 and actinide levels in the environment will be published when they are available.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the dosage emergency reference levels used by the National Radiological Protection Board take into account the fact that fission products, namely, iodine 131, caesium 137, strontium 90, and so on, will not normally appear individually in the environment.

Mr. Waldegrave: Yes.

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish for the north-west region *(a)* the highest recorded radioactivity of a litre of milk, *(b)*the highest recorded level of radioactivity in rain-water and *(c)* the highest hypothetical dose received.

Mr. Waldegrave: Representative peak values for radioactivity in milk and rain-water are given in information bulletin No. 5, published by the Department on 11 May 1986. Preliminary dose estimates for the United Kingdom were published in *Nature* on 15 May 1986: these estimates will be refined in due course.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, further to his answer of 15 May 1985, *Official Report*, column 554-5, if he will specify the criteria given to the radiochemical inspectorate on the basis of which they will report incidents of release of radioactivity from nuclear power stations to him, and the time scale on which these are to be reported.

Mr. Waldegrave: The radiochemical inspectorate has been instructed to report all incidents involving the release of radioactivity from nuclear power stations; and to do so as soon as it receives the relevant information.

Environmental Monitoring Data

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will initiate measures for the establishing of one organisation which would both collate and disseminate environmental monitoring data to the public in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Waldegrave: Overall responsibility for initiating and co-ordinating environmental monitoring lies with the Department of the Environment. Nuclear site operators, as part of their authorisation, carry out environmental monitoring and publish their results annually. Following the Chernobyl incident, the Department will be reviewing procedures for the collation and dissemination of monitoring data.

Nuclear Waste Dump, South Killingholme

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he received a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Plasnett of Cross Coates road, Grimsby, with regard to the proposed nuclear waste dump at South Killingholme; and when he intends to reply.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department has no record of a letter from Mr. and Mrs. Plasnett. If a copy can be forwarded to me I shall arrange for a reply to be sent as soon as possible.

Steel-Framed Houses

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the first report of the Building Research Establishment's investigation of steel-framed houses will be published.

Mr. John Patten: The Building Research Establishment's first report, which looks at the most numerous steel-framed house type, the British Iron and Steel Federation house, is published today. The report is reassuring. It confirms that, although BISF houses are now 30-40 years old, the majority are structurally sound and that where corrosion has occurred this can be relatively simply repaired.

The main elements of the house, the way they are assembled and the points where deterioration may occur are identified in clear and simple drawings. I hope that this feature of the report will be particularly helpful to building societies and their surveyors when considering lending on properties of this type. I believe that local authorities and other owners will find the report equally helpful when approaching the repair and maintenance of these houses.

Copies of this report are being sent today to local authorities in England which own BISF houses, and my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales are taking similar action. Copies are also being made available to the Building Societies Association for distribution to its members. A copy has been placed in the Library.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he next expects to meet the chairman of the London Residuary Body to discuss matters relating to the consequences of the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: My noble Friend, and I expect to meet all the chairmen of the residuary bodies on 30 May to discuss matters relating to the consequences of abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils.

Home Improvements

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he monitors the effectiveness with which his Department's policy on home improvement is implemented; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: The five-yearly English house condition survey measures changes in the overall condition of the stock; the next survey starts this autumn. In addition, we use regular returns from local authorities on the action they have taken to secure improvements and also commission research where appropriate.

TRANSPORT

Disabled Persons (Parking)

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make it his policy to arrange for local authorities to issue temporary disabled parking discs to those who are temporarily disabled; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: No. Parliament approved the present Orange Badge scheme only after wide consultations. In order to maintain its value and effective operation, it is restricted to permanently disabled people as those most in need of its benefits.

Buses (Deregulation)

Mr. Robert Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Transport how much has been spent by the Transport and Road Research Laboratory on investigating the impact of bus deregulation, both in direct research and in commissioned work by outside bodies; and how much is budgetted for future spending.

Mr. Ridley: Transport and Road Research Laboratory expenditure on monitoring the impact of bus deregulation up to 31 March 1986 was: direct research—£226,000; commissioned work by outside bodies—£72,000.

Estimated expenditures for the financial year 1986-87 are: direct research—£300,000; commissioned work—£360,000. Similar amounts are anticipated for 1987-88; the programme for subsequent years is yet to be determined.

Shipping (Immersion Suits)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what regulations govern the carriage of immersion suits aboard British registered merchant ships.

Mr. Ridley: There are no regulations governing the carriage of immersion suits on board British registered ships at present, but I shall shortly be laying draft regulations before the House requiring the carriage of immersion suits on certain new United Kingdom registered ships. These are intended to come into effect on 1 July. Further regulations, extending this requirement to existing ships, will be introduced by 1991 to give effect to amendments to the 1974 SOLAS convention.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what information his Department has about whether other European Community countries require immersion suits to be carried on fishing vessels registered in those countries.

Mr. Ridley: Belgium, Denmark, Holland and West Germany have no such requirements for fishing vessels under 100m in length. French regulations, however, require the carriage of immersion suits for all on board fishing vessels over 15m in length which go more than 30 miles to sea. I have no information about other EC countries.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Transport what consultations he has now had with the fishing industry about the compulsory carriage of immersion suits aboard fishing vessels.

Mr. Ridley: None, but the industry will be consulted shortly in the current review of the Fishing Vessels (Safety Provisions) Rules 1975.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 8 April, *Official Report*, columns 1 and 2, if he has yet received the views of British Rail about suggestions for improvements in the rail network in the regions leading to the proposed Channel fixed link and on other matters; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport, wrote to the chairman of the North of England Regional Consortium on 19 May with British Rail's views on the consortium's suggestions. He has sent a copy of his letter to the right hon. Member.

National Bus Company

Mr. Neil Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he expects to reach a decision on the National Bus Company's disposal programme.

Mr. Ridley: I have approved, without modification, the disposal programme submitted to me by the National Bus Company on 15 May in accordance with section 47 of the Transport Act 1985. Copies of the programme have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

The programme provides for the disposal of NBC's 65 or so subsidiaries as individual units, as quickly as possible. NBC will continue to advertise and stimulate interest among potential purchasers to create a wider market for its subsidiaries. However, where broadly comparable bids are received from management or employee groups and from third parties, NBC will give preference to the management or employee group, but they will not expect this preference to exceed 5 per cent.

Negotiations are now well under way for the sale of a number of subsidiaries. It is clear that NBC and the many management and employee groups who have expressed an interest in mounting buy-outs are as determined as I am to achieve speedy privatisation. I wish them every success.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Sahara (Refugees)

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he has any plans to make United Kingdom aid available to the refugees from the war in the western Sahara, now lodged in camps in Algeria; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: Assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees's general programme, to which Britain is contributing £3·5 million from the aid programme, already includes projects in Algeria. At a cost of £2·4 million these projects are helping to meet the immediate needs of 2,000 Sahrawi refugees.

Gibraltar

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will make a statement on the funds so far paid to Gibraltar, under the agreement of July 1983, to meet the initial costs of commercialisation of the naval dockyard; and what changes have taken place in working practices since, in accordance with the agreement.

Mr. Raison: Out of the £28 million promised, a sum of £26·286 million has been spent meeting the cost of capital equipment, civil engineering work, relocation, refurbishment and start-up expenses, and local operating costs. Most of the balance is in the process of being spent, for example, bills in the pipeline. The agreement called for new commercial working practices. It is understood from the company that progress has been made towards a higher level of flexibility, bringing about some improvement in productivity, since it commenced its operations on 1 January 1985. Recent differences in approach between management and the union are the subject of current discussions and it is hoped these will very quickly be resolved.

Commonwealth Development Corporation

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when the 1985 annual report and accounts of the Commonwealth Development Corporation will be published.

Mr. Raison: The report and accounts will be published on 22 May. Copies will be laid before Parliament on that day and placed in the Libraries of both houses.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Library

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Lord Privy Seal what is the estimated number of books currently held in the

Library; what is the policy of the Library towards accepting complimentary copies of books; what was the cost of purchasing new books in 1985-86; what has been the number of books purchased in each of the last five years; if there are any plans to expand the area of the Library; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: Books held in the House of Commons Library amount currently to approximately 150,000 volumes. The Library is not offered many complimentary copies of books, but is happy to accept those books that may be useful to Members and the Library. In financial year 1985-86 the cost of purchasing new books and pamphlets was £59,965. In each of the last five years the number of books (excluding pamplets) purchased by the Library has been:

	Numbers
1981-82	3,886
1982-83	1,860
1983-84	2,529
1984-85	2,568
1985-86	2,279

There are no plans to expand the area of the Members' Library. However, a substantial part of the Library's services will be moved to the northern section (Nos. 45, 46 and 47) of the new building in Parliament Street, which is planned for completion in 1990. The Members' Library will remain unchanged, but the Library will vacate most of its existing premises in the Norman Shaw buildings and some of its office accommodation in the Palace when this move to the new building takes place. The recommendations of the Services Committee in this respect are contained in paragraphs 8-13 and in appendix II of their third report of 1983-84 (HC571).

In accordance with the recommendation of the Informal Joint Committee on Library and Record Office Storage Accommodation (HC309, 1984-85), it is hoped that some basement storage accommodation under the new conference centre in Broad Sanctuary will be made available to the Library at a future date. The Library is meanwhile following another recommendation of the Informal Joint Committee for continuous systematic weeding and disposal of its out-of-date material.

Self-sealing Envelopes

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Lord Privy Seal what steps he is taking to provide hon. Members with self-sealing envelopes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I understand that the Accommodation and Administration Sub-Committee of the Services Committee approved the permanent introduction of three types of self-seal white post paid envelopes at their meeting on 19 May. An order has been sent to Her Majesty's Stationery Office and deliveries are expected within eight weeks.

ENERGY

Nuclear Waste

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will state the destinations, excluding sea dumping, of the intermediate radioactive wastes that have been transported from nuclear plants; if he will provide a list of all registered sources of nuclear activity in the United Kingdom from which such shipments have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: Most intermediate level waste is stored on the sites where it arises, pending the availability of disposal facilities. However, some ILWs have been transported from nuclear licensed sites to Harwell and Sellafield for storage, and small volumes of ILW have also been disposed of at Drigg in accordance with the terms of the authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act, 1960.

A complete list of all sources in the United Kingdom from which shipments of ILW have been made would have to include nuclear power stations, other nuclear installations, hospitals, laboratories, and industrial users.

Nuclear Materials

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply, *Official Report*, 1 May, column *460*, to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy if he will list the reactors of origin from which nuclear material which have been withdrawn from safeguards since 1978.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power Production

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is the present production of nuclear power in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Goodlad: In the year to December 1985, 53,766 gigawatt hours of electricity were sent out from nuclear power stations in the United Kingdom.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make it his policy to give a direction that no further contracts for advanced gas-cooled reactor spent fuel be entered into until all options for nuclear waste disposal have been further considered.

Mr. Goodlad: No. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment said in his first stage response to the Environment Committee's report on radioactive waste, his Department has already published an analysis of the best practicable environmental options for the disposal of low level and intermediate level waste. A principal conclusion of this study was that there are practicable and financially realistic options for the storage and disposal of radioactive waste which also satisfy regulatory constraints in relation to safety and environmental protection. The Environment Committee has also concluded that safe disposal routes are available to the United Kingdom.

WALES

Cervical Cytology

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish figures for the average time between the taking of a specimen for cervical cytology and

the availability of the result of such an investigation to the family medical practitioners carrying out the test in each of the health authorities in Wales.

Mr. Mark Robinson: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply I gave to the hon. Member for Neath (Mr. Coleman) on 10 February at column 320.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many additional cervical cytology pathology officers have been employed by each of the health authorities in Wales in each of the past three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The table gives information on the whole-time staff equivalents employed on cervical cytology laboratory work in the health authorities in Wales 1982 to 1984.

Pathologists and other medically qualified staff	*1982**	*1983**	*1984**
Clwyd	1·4	0·4	0·4
East Dyfed	0·2	1·2	1·2
Gwent	2·0	1·1	1·1
Gwynedd	0·2	0·2	0·2
Mid Glamorgan	0·8	0·8	0·8
South Glamorgan	0·3	0·3	0·3
West Glamorgan	1·2	0·4	0·4

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers, Scientific Officers and laboratory cytology screeners	*1982**	*1983**	*1984**
Clwyd	4·0	4·5	7·0
East Dyfed	2·8	1·8	2·3
Gwent	7·8	8·3	9·1
Gwynedd	2·0	4·0	4·0
Mid Glamorgan	7·5	7·3	8·3
South Glamorgan	8·0	7·0	6·0
West Glamorgan	4·0	3·5	3·5

* As at 31 December.

WALES

Cervical Cytology

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many cervical cytology smear tests carried out by family medical practitioners in each of the Welsh health authorities fall outside the Department of Health and Social Services guidelines covering payment per item of service; and what percentage such examinations represent of the total, for the last 12 months for which figures are available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Information is not collated on the number of smear tests carried out by family medical practitioners which are outside the guidelines covering payment.

Employment Schemes

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing for each district council in Wales for 1985-86 how many persons were sponsored to work under *(a)* the community industry scheme and *(b)* Manpower Services Commission schemes.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: Comprehensive information on community industry and schemes run by the MSC is not available broken down to district council level.

What is available is information on community industry schemes where district councils contribute to funding and YTS and the community programme schemes where district councils are sponsors.

This information is shown in the following table:

Table A

Community Industry Schemes where district councils contribute towards funding

Community Industry Area	*1985-86 Places*	*1985-86 Entrants*	*Contributing Local Authority*
Crumlin, Gwent	145	189	Gwent CC, Blaenau Gwent BC, Islwyn BC
Gwynedd	100	107	Gwynedd CC, Aberconwy BC, Arfon BC, Dwyfor DC, Meriionnydd DC, Ynys Mon BC
Mid Glamorgan East	120	131	Mid Glamorgan CC, Merthyr Tydfil BC
Newport, Gwent	145	186	Gwent CC, Newport CC, Torfaen BC

Table B

District Councils Act as sponsors

	Youth Training Scheme approved places 1985-86	*Community programme participants as at 31 March 1986*
Gwent		
Blaenau Gwent BC	165	438
Islwyn BC	50	303
Monmouth DC	85	193
Newport BC	80	196
Torfaen BC	40	282
	420	1,412
Dyfed		
Carmarthen DC	50	49
Ceredigion DC	—	76
Dinefwr BC	50	140
Llanelli BC	130	413
Preseli DC	50	97
South Pembrokeshire DC	—	112
	280	887
West Glamorgan		
Port Talbot BC	70	235
LLiw Valley BC	40	61
Neath BC	205	22
Swansea City Council	185	360
	500	678
Mid Glamorgan		
Cynon Valley BC	87	433
Merthyr Tydfil BC	—	110
Ogwr BC	24	52
Rhondda BC	65	136
Rhymney Valley BC	190	89
Taff Ely BC	39	190
	405	1,010
South Glamorgan		
Cardiff City Council	—	556
Vale of Glamorgan BC	—	100
	—	656
Gwynedd		
Aberconwy BC	—	—
Arfon BC	50	85
Dwyfor DC	—	—
Meirionnydd DC	—	30
Ynys Mon BC	55	52
	105	167
Clwyd		
Alyn and Deeside DC	—	27
Colwyn BC	—	74
Delyn BC	—	65
Glyndwr DC	—	10
Rhuddlan BC	—	6
Wrexham Maelor BC	50	111
	50	293

Bills

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list all the Bills of which Ministers in the Welsh Office have been sponsors in each Session since 1979-80.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

St. David's Hospital, Cardiff

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he plans to increase the number of doctors, nurses and ancillary staff at St. David's hospital in Cardiff; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Staffing levels at individual hospitals are operational matters for the health authority concerned. It is for the South Glamorgan health authority to determine the staffing requirements at St. David's hospital, Cardiff.

Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many letters he received from Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor during the year 1985-86, addressed to him; and of these how many related to *(a)* responsibilities vested in district councils and *(b)* other extraneous matters.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have received 16 letters from Dwyfor district council since January 1985. Of these, eight related to responsibilities vested in local authorities and eight related to extraneous matters.

Housing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what proportion of the present *(a)* total housing stock and *(b)* public sector housing stock in each district authority area in Wales the houses sold from the public sector, since the enacting of the Housing Act 1980, comprise.

Mr, Mark Robinson: The information is given in the following table:

Public sector dwellings sold in Wales*

District	*Housing sales as a percentage of total housing stock†*	*Housing sales as a percentage of public sector stock†*
Alyn and Deeside	2·3	10·3
Colwyn	1·6	11·3
Delyn	3·9	17·9
Glyndwr	4·3	21·3
Rhuddlan	2·1	15·3
Wrexham Maelor	3·3	8·3
Carmarthen	3·6	19·7
Ceredigion	2·8	18·2
Dinefwr	2·8	14·4
Llanelli	6·9	26·2
Preseli	4·4	19·6
South Pembrokeshire	2·8	14·4
Blaenau Gwent	3·2	8·7
Islwyn	9·5	33·0
Monmouth	3·5	16·8
Newport	4·3	14·4
Torfaen/Cwmbran	12·7	28·8
Aberconwy	4·3	27·0
Arfon	3·5	14·4
Dwyfor	1·8	15·2
Meirionnydd	3·4	23·6
Ynys Mon	2·7	12·2
Cynon Valley	3·1	12·7
Merthyr Tydfil	4·7	12·6
Ogwr	5·1	21·7
Rhondda	0·9	5·3
Rhymney Valley	5·5	18·2
Taff-Ely	5·3	19·1
Brecknock	5·2	25·4
Montgomery/ Newtown	4·5	19·3
Radnor	4·0	25·9
Cardiff	3·5	14·2
Vale of Glamorgan	3·9	19·5
Afan/Port Talbot	8·9	22·9
Lliw Valley	4·2	17·9
Neath	5·1	19·3
Swansea	1·9	6·5
WALES	4·2	16·5

* Local authority and new town dwellings sold between October 1980 and December 1985.
† At 1 April 1985.

Labour Statistics

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the latest figures for male unemployment, males in part-time employment and males in full-time employment in each of the Welsh counties; and what were the corresponding figures for each of the previous five years.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The latest figures for male unemployment are for April 1986. Comparable figures for years before 1984 are not available. Figures for 1984 and 1985, although not strictly comparable due to changes in compilation made earlier this year to remove overcounting, are provided in the following table.

County	*April 1984*	*April 1985*	*April 1986*
Clwyd	16,132	16,539	16,766
Dyfed	12,427	13,552	14,138
Gwent	19,615	20,694	21,497
Gwynedd	9,335	10,249	10,711
Mid Glamorgan	24,722	25,729	26,692
Powys	2,907	3,229	3,089
South Glamorgan	18,619	19,511	19,358
West Glamorgan	17,941	18,550	18,009

Source: Department of Employment.

Figures for male full and part-time employment are available for counties from census of employment, the latest results for which relate to September 1981. These are given in the following table:

Employees in employment—September 1981

County	*Male full-time*	*Male part-time*
Clwyd	62,151	3,793
Dyfed	57,552	3,594
Gwent	86,573	3,151
Gwynedd	36,139	2,491
Mid Glamorgan	93,036	3,003
Powys	15,311	1,551
South Glamorgan	86,391	4,022
West Glamorgan	79,259	3,626

Source: Department of Employment.

Salmon Poaching

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what losses have been caused to the rightful owners by salmon poaching in Wales in each year since 1979.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: It is impossible to quantify the effect of illegal fishing for salmon.

Shell Oil (Small Business Scheme)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what assistance his Department has offered to Shell Oil to implement its proposed £500,000 investment programme in small businesses established and run by young people in Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department's assistance is not required. The fund is an important, very welcome, wholly private sector initiative established by Shell (UK) Ltd. and run independently by local enterprise agencies, including Cardiff and Vale Enterprise.

Bathing Beaches

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what will be the cost of cleaning bathing beaches on the Welsh coast to the European Economic Community standards.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Welsh water authority has embarked upon a 15-year programme of remedial works, estimated to cost £200 million, to improve the bathing waters around the Welsh coast to enable all identified waters to meet the conditions specified in the EC directive (76/160 EEC).

Gresford-Pulford Bypass

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has had any contact with Clwyd county council regarding the Rossett interchange section of the proposed Gresford to Pulford bypass since receiving the local inquiry inspector's report; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: For any trunk road schemes in preparation there is on-going contact with the design agents preparing the proposals. This has been the case with our agents, Clwyd county council, over the continued preparation of the Gresford-Pulford scheme.

The county council was not consulted about the content of the inspector's report following its receipt or prior to the announcement of our decision on the Rossett interchange proposals on 16 May 1986.

Snowdon (Land Disposal)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether he is considering any proposals relating to the disposal of the land at the summit of Snowdon which is currently in his ownership.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: Following an approach by the Snowdonia National Park Authority, and having considered the matter very carefully, we have concluded that it could be beneficial for the authority to have a more direct responsibility for the summit area. This would allow it further to develop its strategy for the management of a crucial area which is, in many ways, the focal point of the whole park. We have, therefore, instructed officials to open negotiations with the national park authority with a view to granting it a lease on the land. Any leasehold agreement would, of course, contain provisions to secure and safeguard public access.

Women's Refuges

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) how many women at present living in women's refuges in Wales have been living there for 10 weeks or more, in each of the local authority areas in Wales;

(2) how many women live in women's refuges in Wales at present; and what was the figure for each year since 1979.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *35*]: This information is not held centrally.

Battered Women (Rehousing)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are his Department's guidelines to local authorities in Wales for rehousing women who have left home due to domestic violence, and who are living in temporary accommodation.

Mr. Mark Robinson [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *35*]: The Department's code of guidance to local authorities on their responsibilities under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977, a copy of which is in the Library, advises local authorities to accept as homeless and in priority need for accommodation those who are at risk from domestic violence. The code recognises the value of women's refuges as a source of temporary accommodation, but it points out that authorities remain under a duty to secure permanent accommodation for women temporarily accommodated in refuges.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

European Parliament (Premises)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government have given their agreement to the proposals of the European Parliament to purchase permanent premises at 2 Queen Anne's gate, London, at what stage the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is given an opportunity to express its opinion on such a proposal within the Community institutions; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The building at present is leased by the European Parliament. It is for the Parliament to decide how to allocate its expenditure within the limits set by the EC Budget agreed annually by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

Wilton Park

Dr. Hampson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the present function of Wilton park.

Mr. Eggar: Wilton park aims to bring people together from different countries and different walks of life to exchange views on subjects of international concern, to build friendship and remove misunderstandings. Wilton park is free to choose its own subjects for discussion and

to invite the speakers and participants it wishes. Academic independence and integrity are guaranteed by an international advisory council of the OECD ambassadors and high commissioners in London, and by an academic council of distinguished Britons. Wilton park is largely financed by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, though it also raises its own funds from conferences. All discussion is off-the-record. Wilton park conferences are sometimes co-sponsored by other institutions in Britain or abroad, and grants and donations are accepted for specific purposes from foundations and business.

Falkland Islands (Shipping Harassment)

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what reports he has received about harassment of shipping within the Falkland Islands protection zone.

Mr. Eggar: Reports are still being assessed. I have nothing at present to add to what my right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Armed Forces said yesterday, but can confirm that there was no threat to the Falkland Islands.

EMPLOYMENT

Labour Statistics

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Paymaster General, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North of 28 April, *Official Report*, column *340* what is his latest estimate of the percentage of the 775,000 people who have a second job who are included twice in the monthly figures of employed persons.

Mr. Lang: The quarterly estimates of the employed labour force include twice some people who have a second job as an employee. There are no direct estimates of the numbers of people who are in this way counted twice in the quarterly estimates of the employed labour force. However, out of the 775,000 people identified in the preliminary results of the 1985 labour force survey as having two jobs, two-thirds reported working as an employee in their second job.

Community Programme

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General (1) whether he will list the agencies employing long-term unemployed people under the community programme for the east London area; and what is the amount of running costs per participant given to each of the agencies (excluding contributions towards office premises);

(2) whether he will list for each agency employing long-term unemployed people under the community programme for the east London area the amount of money received from the Government in connection with the cost of office premises.

Mr. Lang: Under the community programme agents are reimbursed up to £440 per year to cover running costs, including premises costs, in respect of each authorised place for workers other than managers and supervisors. When applying for support, agents must set out what they propose to spend under various running costs headings, including rent and rates. Agents are required to maintain detailed records of expenditure but it is not necessary for each head to be separately identified in their accounts. The amount received by each agency in the last year for which final audited accounts have been rendered is shown in the table, and information on office premises is provided where it is known.

Agency Title	*Running Costs received (excluding office premises)*	*Running Costs received for office premises*	*Total Running Costs*
	£	£	£
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	n/a	n/a	14,021
London Borough of Havering	n/a	n/a	77,776
London Borough of Waltham Forest	n/a	n/a	29,649
Forest Projects	51,500	4,830	56,330
Interface	73,303	9,548	82,851
Newstart	24,298	2,542	26,840
Redbridge Community Care	37,061	4,708	41,769
Globetown	7,754	863	8,617
Disablement Income Group	n/a	n/a	1,277

n/a—not available
Note: Some Agencies have not yet rendered accounts

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General whether he will list for each agency employing long-term unemployed people under the community programme for the east London area the numbers of *(a)* women, *(b)* men full-time, *(c)* women and *(d)* men part-time workers employed on a permanent basis, together with their job titles.

Mr. Lang: The community programme provides temporary jobs for long-term unemployed people. None of the workers employed on the programme are employed on a permanent basis. The normal period of employment is up to 52 weeks, but a small proportion of managers, supervisors and key workers are employed for longer.

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General how many long-term unemployed are involved in the community programme in east London for each of the agencies operating in that area; and what are the projected figures for the next two years.

Mr. Lang: At the end of April, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of people employed on the community programme by agencies operating in the east London area was as follows:

Title of Agency	Filled places at 30 April 1986
Forest Projects	310
Globe Town	60
London Borough of Havering	769
Interface	295
London Union of Youth Clubs	14
MENCAP	15
Mutual Aid (East)	258
Mutual Aid (North)	186
NACRO	20
Newstart	108
Redbridge Community Care	177
Tower Hamlets Area Health Authority	87
Age Concern	0
Association of Island Communities	42
London Borough of Barking and Dagenham	109
Community Developments	24
Community Roots Trust	64
CTF	218
Docklands Community Development	24
Energy Concern	278
Tonybee Hall	61
London Borough of Waltham Forest	495
Task Undertaking	4

The allocation of places to the area from October onwards is 3,723 places. Individual agencies are subject to annual renewal, and it is not possible to give projected figures for them.

Technical and Vocational Education Initiative

Mr. Freud asked the Paymaster General what information is available to his Department, in respect of the participation of pupils with special educational needs, in the technical and vocational education initiative scheme *(a)* in total, *(b)* as a proportion of the total numbers involved in the technical and vocational education initiative and *(c)* as compared with the percentage of the secondary school population designated as having special educational needs; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Trippier: The national criteria for the technical and vocational education initiative require that projects consider accommodating some students with special educational needs. So far over half of the 74 projects currently operating have done so, but no figures of the number of pupils involved are available.

Mr. Freud asked the Paymaster General what proportion of participants in technical vocational and education initiative schemes were girls; and how this compares with the overall secondary school population at the latest available date.

Mr. Trippier: Across the 74 projects in Great Britain currently operating under the technical and vocational education initiative, 43 per cent. of students starting projects were girls. This compares with 49 per cent. for the population in maintained secondary schools as at January 1985.

Mr. Freud asked the Paymaster General whether he will list in the *Official Report* for each local education authority in England *(a)* the sum received for technical and vocational education initiative projects, *(b)* the sum received for technical and vocational education initiative projects expressed as a percentage of the education budget, *(c)* the number of pupils engaged on technical and vocational education initiative projects, *(d)* the number of such pupils expressed as a percentage of the total in secondary education, *(e)* the number of secondary schools involved in the technical and vocational education initiative, *(f)* the percentage of secondary schools involved in technical and vocational education initiative, and *(g)* the percentage of pupils in participating schools engaged in technical and vocational education initiative projects in each case (i) during the pilot scheme and (ii) under the proposed expansion of the scheme.

Mr. Trippier: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Shipbuilding Areas (Financial Assistance)

Dr. Godman asked the Paymaster General how much of the money announced on 14 May, *Official Report*, column *705*, for the Manpower Services Commission following the recent redundancies in the shipbuilding industry will be allocated to each of the areas affected.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Manpower Services Commission will provide a further £1 million for the retraining of those made redundant from British Shipbuilders. It will not be allocated on a geographical basis but according to where the need arises.

Wages Councils

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General how many wages inspectors and other wages council staff were employed in each wages inspectorate division in each year since 1975.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *50*]: The information requested is given in the tables:

Wages inspectorate staff in post at September 1975-77

Region	1975		1976		1977	
	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff
South East	41	45	40	44	46	42
South West	9	11	9	11	9	12½
Midlands	20	18½	20	17½	20	16½
North West	16	12	16	10	16	14
Yorks and Humberside	12	12	12	12	12	12
Northern	9	6	9	6	10	6
Scotland	14	12	14	12	15	12
Wales	7	6	7	6	7	6
Great Britain	128	122½	127	118½	135	121

Wages inspectorate staff in post at September 1978-1985

Division	1978		1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985	
	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff	Inspectors	Other staff
London (East)	9	15	13	12	13½	15	9½	12	9	12½	8	9	8	12	6	2
London (West)	9	8	13	9	14	8	12	4	12	5	11	4	7	2	8	12
South East	13	10	11	10	13	8½	11	8½	9	9½	10	6½	10	6½	9	5½
Southern	8	7	11	7	10	7	8	6	7	7	7	6	7	6½	7	6½
Eastern	8	10½	9	9	11	10	8	8½	7	6½	7	6½	7	7	7	8
South West	9	12	10	11	11	9	9	9	9	8	9	8	9	8½	9	8½
Midlands (East)	10	10	11½	8½	9½	10	8	7	6	10	7	6	7	5½	7	6½
Midlands (West)	12	13	11½	10½	12	9½	9	9	10	9	10	7	10	8½	12	6½
North West (East)	10	1	11	1	8	1	8	1	8	7	7	7	6	8	8	7
North West (West)	9	15	10	15	10	16	9	12	5	8	8	7	9	7	8	7
Yorks & Humberside	14	13	15	13	13	12	10	9½	10	7½	9	7½	10	8	10	9
Northern	9	7	10	6	9	7	7	6	6	8	6	6½	7	6½	8	6½
Scotland (East)	6	7	7	7	7	5	7	5	7	5	7	8	7	6½	7	6½
Scotland (West)	7	8½	8	6½	8	8½	4	7	6	6½	6	6½	6	8½	6	8
Wales	6	7	7	7	6	7	5	7	5	7	4	6	5	6	6	5
Great Britain	139	144	158	132½	155	133½	124½	111½	116	116½	116	101½	115	107	118	104½

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Common Agricultural Policy

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1983 the value in terms of the dollar of the central rate used for determining common agricultural policy prices, the co-efficient for the United Kingdom and the effect of any change as a result of realignments in the European monetary system on the central rate and on the monetary co-efficient for the United Kingdom.

Mr. Gummer: A central rate is a rate expressing the relationship between the European currency unit (ecu) and any one of the currencies that constitute the ecu for the purposes of the European monetary system (EMS). It does not have a value.

The correcting factor ("coefficient") used in the calculation of monetary compensatory amounts for all member states was 1·033651 from 1 April 1984 to 23 July 1985, 1·035239 from 24 July 1985 to 8 April 1986 and since 9 April has been 1·083682.

Central rates usually remain unchanged between EMS realignments. The rates for the United Kingdom since 1 January 1983 have been:

Value of 1ecu in £ sterling

	Rate
1 January 1983 to 20 March 1983	0·560453
21 March 1983 to 17 May 1983	0·629848
18 May 1983 to 16 September 1984	0·587087
17 September 1984 to 21 July 1985	0·585992
22 July 1985 to 6 April 1986	0·555312
7 April 1986 to date	0·630317

The United Kingdom monetary coefficient is calculated from the mathematical relationship between the representative rate for sterling (the "green" pound) and the market rate of sterling against the ecu. The effect of a realignment on the market value of sterling cannot be distinguished from the effect of other market factors.

Radiation (Milk Samples)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many samples of milk in *(a)* East Sussex, *(b)* West Sussex, *(c)* Kent and *(d)* Hampshire have been collected and analysed in the last four weeks as a result of the Chernobyl disaster; and what were the results.

Mrs. Fenner: The results of monitoring of cows' milk notified to my Department in each of these four counties, together with the highest level of iodine 131 found in these samples and the date on which these were found, are as follows:

	Number of samples to 14 May 1986	Highest Results I-131 Bq/litre	Date of Highest Results
East Sussex	4	16·8	12 May
West Sussex	13	102	5 May
Kent	43	230	6 May
Hampshire	26	103	6 May

These results indicate that the levels of iodine 131 found in milk have been well within the level at which the Government would need to consider whether action should be taken.

Pesticides

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will publish an up-to-date list of all horticultural products freely purchasable that contain 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, with the percentage by weight of each chemical in each product.

Mrs. Fenner: There are 147 products containing either 2,4,5-T or 2,4-D currently cleared under the pesticides safety precautions scheme for use in agriculture and horticulture. These are listed in the publication "Pesticides Safety Precautions Scheme 1986," and I have arranged for copies to be placed in the Library of the House. The percentage by weight of each chemical in each product could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Land Drainage, Flood Prevention and Coast Protection

Mr. Colvin asked the Minister of Agricultue, Fisheries and Food when the review following the Green Paper

financing and administration of land drainage, flood prevention and coast protection in England and Wales is expected to be completed.

Mrs. Fenner: We expect to complete the review before the end of the summer.

Intervention Stocks

Mr. Clay asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (1) if he will state *(a)* purchase costs, *(b)* storage costs and *(c)* other related costs of maintaining beef intervention stocks;

(2) if he will state *(a)* purchase costs, *(b)* storage costs and *(c)* other related costs of maintaining cereal intervention stocks;

(3) if he will state *(a)* purchase costs, *(b)* storage costs and *(c)* other related costs of maintaining butter intervention stocks;

(4) if he will state *(a)* purchase costs, *(b)* storage costs and *(c)* other related costs of maintaining skimmed milk powder intervention stocks.

Mr. Jopling: Expected purchase costs are set out in subhead A1 of the 1986-87 Supply Estimate for class IV vote I (HC 284-IV). Storage costs, forming part of the totals for incidentals, are expected to be as follows:

	£ million
Beef	18·879
Butter	18·619
Skimmed Milk Powder	00·521
Cereals	72·426

Conservation and Efficiency

Mr. Ottaway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what redeployment of his staff will take place, following enactment of the Agriculture Bill, to meet the requirement to have a duty to balance countryside conservation with agricultural efficiency when discharging any functions in connection with agriculture.

Mrs. Fenner: Clause 12 of the Agriculture Bill would, if enacted, give statutory backing to the present practice of my Department, which is to balance the need to promote and maintain a stable and efficient agricultural industry with other important interests in the countryside.

I do not expect additional resources to be required to implement this clause. However, in view of the importance of the interaction between agriculture and the environment, we recently strengthened the team of officials responsible for policy work in this area and established a co-ordinating environmental unit within ADAS.

Foodstuffs (Radiation)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what (i) domestically produced and (ii) imported foodstuffs have been withdrawn from public supply following exposure to more than 5 millisieverts/year; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: None.

Badgers

Mr. Marland asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will provide further details on how Professor Dunnet's recommended interim strategy for badger control will be applied.

Mr. Jopling: I announced on 7 April that action against badgers would be confined to that part of the breakdown farm where it was believed tuberculosis was transmitted to cattle or the whole farm if it was not possible to be more precise. Professor Dunnet's recommendation on this point also proposed that prior sampling of badgers and delineation of social groups should be discontinued. With the support of the consultative panel on badgers and tuberculosis I have now accepted the recommendation that prior sampling of badger social groups should be discontinued since maintenance of this procedure within the new strategy would be statistically unsound and could weaken its effectiveness in disease control terms. On the question of the delineation of social group territories, under the new strategy I have decided, again with the support of the panel, that the technique should no longer be carried out as a standard procedure but that it should continue to be employed where reliable results can be obtained which will be useful for operational or research purposes and provided there is no delay.

Beer

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what representations he has made to the European Economic Community Commission on behalf of the British brewing trade to allow British beers free access to the German market; whether any restrictions are imposed against the export of British beers in any other European Economic Community country; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *70*]: The Government fully supported the EEC Commission in bringing the case currently before the European Court of Justice which challenges the legality under Community rules of the German beer purity laws. Similar Greek laws are also the subject of proceedings before the court.

Mr. Mason asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will ascertain the specific reasons why British beers are not allowed to be exported to Germany and, in particular, whether there are substances, including formaldehyde in the beers which are causes for objection.

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what restrictions have been placed by Germany on the import of British beer; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *71*, and 20 May 1986]: The German beer purity laws provide that beer must be made exclusively from malted barley, hops, yeast and water. The use of other cereals and permitted additives in most British beers has meant their exclusion from the German market. While formaldehyde may be included at very low concentrations as a preservative in anti-foaming agents, I understand that the agents in use in this country do not, in fact, include formaldehyde, nor is it used as an additive for any other purpose in the production of British beers.

Bees

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will investigate the possibility of making sugar available to commercial beekeepers at subsidised rates to allow them to recover losses sustained as a result of the recent adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *70*]: As I explained in my reply earlier today it was necessary to use the limited resources available to compensate those most seriously affected by adverse weather. Making sugar available to beekeepers at subsidised rates would not help directly to make good the recent losses of bees.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will introduce a scheme to give financial relief to commercial beekeepers who lose more than 50 per cent. of their stock because of adverse weather conditions.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *69*]: I sympathise with those beekeepers who are amongst the many agricultural and other businesses which have suffered from the exceptionally poor weather over the last 12 months.

However, as my right hon. Friend the Minister explained in his reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Bury, North (Mr. Burt) on 26 February, we had to direct the limited resources available to those sectors and areas which were most seriously affected.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Board and Lodging Limits

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate how many private and voluntary homes have closed since the introduction of the new board and lodging arrangements.

Mr. Newton: Information collected centrally on nursing and registered residential care homes relates to the number operating on a particular day in each year and does not indicate how many may have closed or opened over a particular period. The latest available information for example is that the total number of private and voluntary residential care homes in England rose from 5,774 at 31 March 1984 to 7,021 (provisional) at 31 March 1985.

Photosensitivity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the centres which specialise in the treatment of photosensitivity.

Mr. Whitney: The great majority of cases of photosensitivity are treated in dermatology departments of district general hospitals. Cases requiring special investigation can be referred, in England, to St. Johns hospital for diseases of the skin, London, where special equipment and expertise in photobiology is available.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will ask the Committee on Safety of Medicines to assess the incidence and seriousness of photosensitivity as an adverse reaction to medical drugs;

(2) what research is being funded by his Department into ways of alleviating or curing photosensitivity resulting from an adverse reaction to medical drugs;

(3) how many adverse reaction reports there were in 1985 to the Committee on Safety of Medicines of a photosensitivy reaction to medical drugs; and which drugs were the most commonly involved.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the right hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Cancer Research Action Programme

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has reached a decision on the Government's response to the proposed European action programme on cancer research and treatment due on 29 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Women's Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the waiting list for private patients at the Women's hospital, Liverpool;

(2) how many National Health Service patients have received treatment at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, in each of the past three years;

(3) what was the waiting list at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, at the latest date for National Health Service patients; and if he will make a statement;

(4) how many private patients have received treatment at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, in each of the past three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Waiting Lists (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the waiting list at the Mersey regional health authority at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1983;

(2) what was the waiting list at the Liverpool district health authority (teaching); and what were the figures for May 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

South Killingholme

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people live within a 20-mile radius of South Killingholme.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

CIVIL SERVICE

Planners and Architects

Mr. Steen asked the Minister for the Civil Service how many town and country planners and architects are employed in central Government Departments; and if he will give a breakdown by Department for each of the last five years.

Mr. Luce [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *319*]: Information for town and country planners and architects as at 1 April each year is as follows:

Town and Country planners employed in Central Government Departments

	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Department of Environment	84	81	76	73	70
Welsh Office	7	7	7	7	7
Scottish Office	36	32	32	28	29
Architects employed in Central Government Departments					
Property Services Agency	488	455	421	417	443
Department of Environment	101	93	59	50	49
Department of Transport	10	9	11	11	12
Home Office	39	41	44	44	42
Welsh Office*	—	—	—	—	9
Scottish Office	77·5	70·5	68·5	69	44·5
Department of Education and Science	27	27	27	24	24
Department of Health and Social Security	38	34	34	32	26

* included with Property Services Agency until 1986.

SCOTLAND

Radiation Levels

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what radioisotopes were detected in air, rainwater and surface deposition in Scotland over the period between noon on Friday 2 May and midnight Sunday 4 May; what peak levels, in rems, were detected; and what are their respective chemical and biological half-lives.

Mr. Ancram: During the period 2-4 May air, rain and deposited radioactivity over Scotland contained a range of radionuclides attributable to the fallout from the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power station. The more significant in radiological terms were iodine 131, caesium 134 and caesium 137. The peak concentrations detected are shown in the table. The values are given in units of becquerel, this rather than the rem being the appropriate unit for measuring radioactivity. Also given in the table are the effective half lives of the radionuclides in man. The effective half life of a radionuclide takes into account its physical, chemical and biological characteristics.

Nuclide	*Effective half-life (days)*	*Maximum measured activity in air (becquerels per cubic metre)*	*Maximum measured activity in rain (becquerels per litre)*	*Maximum measured activity in surface deposition (becquerels per square metre)*
Iodine 131	7·5	2·7	9,400	8,000
Caesium 134	96	1·2	1,650	*1,200
Caesium 137	109	2·2	2,560	2,500

* This caesium 134 result was obtained in a different sample from that which gave the iodine 131 and caesium 137 result.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many samples of milk in Scotland have been collected and analysed for the presence of caesium 137; and what are the maximum levels which have been detected.

Mr. Ancram: Three hundred and six samples of milk were analysed for both caesium 134 and caesium 137. The highest values obtained in the period up to 13 May were:

	Cs 134 Bq/litre	*Cs 137 Bq/litre*
Cow's milk	175	351
Goat's milk	93	329
Ewe's milk	288	543

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether any tests have been performed on children, or other critical sections of the population, in Scotland to establish the actual dose absorbed of iodine 131 by the thyroid gland; and what levels have been detected as a result of contamination from the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. John MacKay: The National Radiological Protection Board has undertaken measurements on some primary schoolchildren in the Glasgow area. Preliminary analysis has shown that none of the children in the group will receive a committed dose to the thyroid of more than 3 mSv. This is small by comparison with the International Commission on Radiological Protection reference level of 50 mSv at which action would be considered.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many readings of radioactivity in the air over Scotland were taken and analysed on each of the days between 26 April and 8 May; and if he will list the sites involved and the levels of each radioisotopes detected.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department does not maintain a record of all daily measurements of airborne radioactivity throughout Scotland. As part of the arrangements made to monitor the effects of fallout from the Chernobyl reactor accident, measurements were made by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at Dounreay, Eskdalemuir and Lerwick, the South of Scotland Electricity Board at Hunterston and Chapelcross, the Ministry of Defence at Her Majesty's naval base

Rosyth, and by the National Radiological Protection Board at Glasgow and Peterhead. For the period 2 to 8 May, the results of 78 measurements of radioactivity in air were reported to the Scottish Development Department. These results, which showed that levels of airborne radioactivity were of no significance in radiological terms, will be placed in the Library.

Chernobyl Disaster (Cancer Deaths)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what risk is posed to the public, in terms of the expected additional number of cancer deaths per 10,000 population, by levels of radioisotopes detected over Scotland as a result of the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. John MacKay: The levels of radioisotopes detected over Scotland as a result of the Chernobyl incident have varied widely. These have, in all cases, been well within internationally agreed levels at which we would be required to consider taking action to protect individuals.

While it is extremely difficult to predict with any accuracy the extent to which the levels of radioisotopes detected might bring about an increase in the annual rate of mortality due to cancer, estimates based on models used by the National Radiological Protection Board and the International Commission for Radiological Protection indicate that the number of fatal cancers expected to occur over the next 35 years will be of the order of 0·02 per 10,000 population.

Airborne Radioactivity

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the normal procedures for informing the public regarding precautionary measures to be adopted in the event of airborne radioactive materials reaching Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Chernobyl accident is the first occasion on which such measures have had to be adopted. Arrangements were made for the normal monitoring of the concentration of radioactivity in environmental material to be extended. The normal arrangements for informing the public by means of parliamentary statements and news releases were supplemented in this instance by the opening of an information room to deal with inquiries from the public.

Rainwater (Radiation)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those sites in Scotland at which samples of rainwater have been regularly collected and analysed for radioisotopes since 26 April; and if he will list those areas in Scotland receiving the highest diurnal rainfall over the same period.

Mr. Ancram: Rainwater is collected regularly at the following locations as part of the programme undertaken jointly by the Environmental and Medical Sciences Division, Harwell Laboratory and the National Radiological Protection Board:

Lerwick
Dounreay
Glasgow
Eskdalemuir

As part of the arrangements for monitoring fallout for the accident at the Chernobyl power station additional rainwater samples have been taken and analysed at the following sites:

Dounreay Nuclear Power Development Establishment (UKAEA)
Chapelcross Nuclear Power Station: (British Nuclear Fuels plc)
Hunterston Nuclear Power Station (SSEB)
Torness Nuclear Power Station (SSEB)

Information on rainfall in Scotland is available from the Meteorological Office.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Robin Cook asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish a table showing for the sheriffdom of Edinburgh *(a)* the number of convictions for road traffic offences resulting in death or serious injury and *(b)* a breakdown on sentences following conviction for such offences by fine, community services order, and custodial sentence.

Mr. John MacKay: Information on causing death by reckless driving is given in the table. Offences where serious injury results cannot be separately identified.

Causing death by reckless driving 1985 (provisional)

	Sheriffdom of Edinburgh
Persons against whom a charge was proved	2
Sentence:	
Fine	1
Imprisonment	1

Deer Poaching

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many firearms and shotgun certificates have been cancelled by courts in Scotland under convictions for deer poaching in each of the last five years;

(2) what forfeitures have been ordered by courts in Scotland under convictions for deer poaching in each of the last five years.

Mr. Rifkind: I regret that this information is not available.

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) how many persons have been charged with, and how many convicted of, offences under the Deer (Scotland) Act 1959; and what was the total amount of the penalties imposed, in each of the last five years;

(2) how many persons have been charged with, and how many convicted of, offences under the Licensing of Venison Dealers (Prescribed Forms etc.) and (Application Procedures etc.) (Scotland) Orders 1984.

Mr. Rifkind: The table gives figures on offences relating to deer. A more detailed breakdown of such offences is not available.

Persons proceeded against and convicted of deer offences

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Persons proceeded against	45	57	36	40	59
Persons against whom a charge was proved	37	48	23	30	51
Sentence					
Imprisonment	2	4	1	2	5

	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985
Fine	34	42	22	27	38
Probation	—	1	—	—	—
Admonished	1	1	—	1	1
Community service order	—	—	—	—	7

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the operation of the legislation relating to offences of poaching of deer in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: The additional offences and increased penalties introduced by the Deer (Amendments) (Scotland) Act 1982 have helped to increase the deterrents to poaching. The Act also introduced new provisions for the licensing of venison dealers, which were brought into effect from the beginning of 1985, and preliminary indications are that these provisions have helped the police to secure convictions. Overall, I consider that the legislation is working satisfactorily, but I shall of course keep the position under review.

Hospitals

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what steps he plans to take to avoid or reduce errors in the design and construction of hospitals in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Guidance on the design and construction of health service buildings is issued to health boards from time to time to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in this area. Updating of the design and procedural guidance is a continuing process.

Errors in the design or construction of health service buildings are very much the exception. There have been a few cases of such errors, which have received much publicity. But these errors account for only a very small proportion of the £1 billion which has been spent on health service building in Scotland since the NHS reorganisation in 1974. Where problems are shown to be the result of errors in design or construction it is the policy of the Scottish Home and Health Department that the health board should seek redress.

Geriatric Services

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to increase resources for hospital, nursing and ancillary geriatric services for Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Resources are allocated to health boards according to the SHARE (Scottish Health Authorities Revenue Equalisation) formula which takes into account the higher demands for health care from the elderly. It is for individual boards to decide on local priorities. They should be guided by the report "Scottish Health Authorities Priorities for the Eighties," which identified a number of groups, including the elderly, which should be regarded as having particular priority in the provision of services.

Young Persons

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the number of young people reaching minimum school leaving age in each year from 1970 to the present, showing the number who stay on in education *(a)* at school and *(b)* at college or elsewhere; and what was the first destination of those who left school showing, where possible, separately, whether it was *(a)* full-time work, *(b)* part-time work, *(c)* job creation programme, youth opportunities programme or YTS, *(d)* unemployed and *(e)* other.

Mr. Allan Stewart: This information is not available in the precise form or for the full period requested. Broadly comparable information for a restricted range of years is contained in the following tables:

Table A
Young People in Education in Scotland: Aged 16 at 31 December

Thousands

	Total Population	School pupils	Further & Higher Education Students
1976-77	89·6	36·0	4·9
1977-78	89·5	35·1	5·3
1978-79	92·2	36·0	5·4
1979-80	91·4	36·9	5·4
1980-81	93·3	39·7	5·8
1981-82	91·6	42·2	5·6
1982-83	87·9	41·7	7·5
1983-84	88·0	41·1	5·8
1984-85	88·0	40·6	5·6

Table B
School leavers entering the labour market

Session of leaving school	Destination at following October	Age at 31 December of session of leaving: 15 and under	16	17	18 and over	Total
1979-80	Scheme (YTS etc.)	25	15	6	3	20
	Full-time job	52	67	65	59	58
	Unemployed	22	17	27	36	21
	Other, not known	1	1	2	2	1
	Total entering labour market	100	100	100	100	100
1981-82	Scheme (YTS etc.)	43	28	13	*	34
	Full-time job	35	49	51	*	42
	Unemployed	20	21	33	*	22
	Other, not known	2	3	3	*	2
	Total entering labour market	100	100	100	*	100
1983-84	Scheme (YTS etc.)	47	35	7	*	38

Session of leaving school	Destination at following October	Age at 31 December of session of leaving: 15 and under	16	17	18 and over	Total
	Full-time job	29	43	53	*	37
	Unemployed	21	19	36	*	22
	Other, not known	2	3	4	*	3
	Total entering labour market	100	100	100	*	100

Note:
* Indicates that percentages would have been based on fewer than 100 respondents.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate, for each year from 1970 to 1995, of the number of young people reaching or projected to reach *(a)* minimum school leaving age and *(b)* the age of one, two and three years after minimum school leaving age and, in each case, his estimate of the number known or expected to come on to the labour market in each year, separating all answers, to include separate figures for males and females.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Information is not available in the precise form or for the full period requested. Broadly comparable information for a restricted range of years is contained in the following tables:

Table A
16 to 19-year-old population in Scotland (as at 30 June)

	16	17	18	19
1973	83,402	82,042	77,988	77,192
1974	86,550	82,695	81,346	77,434
1975	87,301	85,262	81,719	80,264
1976	87,844	86,347	84,572	81,171
1977	89,787	87,013	85,662	84,092
1978	91,014	88,846	86,205	85,196
1979	91,442	90,000	87,940	85,727
1980	92,431	90,437	89,202	87,301
1981	95,046	93,304	91,049	89,792
1982	89,588	94,496	92,194	91,162
1983	89,756	88,738	92,970	91,959
1984	88,299	89,441	87,875	93,329
1985	85,787	87,562	88,023	87,777
1986	83,257	86,585	88,542	89,414
1987	82,625	83,293	86,463	88,295
1988	77,642	82,661	83,175	86,218
1989	72,010	77,681	82,543	82,932
1990	66,783	72,052	77,567	82,301
1991	64,936	66,829	71,942	77,329
1992	63,801	64,982	66,724	71,709
1993	58,156	63,848	64,878	66,495
1994	58,444	58,206	63,744	64,652
1995	62,714	58,494	58,107	63,518

Table B
School leavers entering the labour market (age at 31 December)

Thousands

Session	Males: 15 and under	16	17	18 and over	Total	Females: 15 and under	16	17	18 and over	Total
Actual										
1977-78	22·0	11·6	4·9	0·5	38·9	19·5	11·6	4·3	0·3	35·7
1978-79	21·7	11·4	4·8	0·5	38·4	19·5	11·2	4·2	0·3	35·1
1979-80	20·9	10·7	4·2	0·4	36·2	17·4	10·6	3·9	0·3	32·2
1980-81	19·2	11·0	3·7	0·4	34·3	15·0	11·0	3·9	0·2	30·2
1981-82	18·0	11·7	3·4	0·3	33·4	13·6	11·5	4·2	0·3	29·5
1982-83	19·8	11·8	3·9	0·2	35·7	14·2	11·9	4·5	0·3	30·8
1983-84	19·4	12·3	3·7	0·4	35·8	14·4	12·1	4·3	0·3	31·2
Projected										
1984-85	19·0	12·0	4·0	0	35·0	14·0	11·0	4·0	0	30·0
1985-86	18·0	11·0	4·0	0	34·0	14·0	10·0	4·0	0	29·0
1986-87	18·0	11·0	4·0	0	33·0	14·0	10·0	4·0	0	28·0
1987-88	16·0	11·0	4·0	0	31·0	13·0	10·0	4·0	0	27·0
1988-89	15·0	10·0	4·0	0	29·0	11·0	9·0	4·0	0	25·0
1989-90	14·0	9·0	3·0	0	27·0	11·0	8·0	3·0	0	23·0
1990-91	14·0	9·0	3·0	0	26·0	11·0	8·0	3·0	0	22·0
1991-92	13·0	9·0	3·0	0	25·0	10·0	8·0	3·0	0	21·0
1992-93	12·0	8·0	3·0	0	23·0	9·0	7·0	3·0	0	20·0
1993-94	13·0	8·0	3·0	0	23·0	10·0	7·0	3·0	0	20·0
1994-95	13·0	8·0	3·0	0	24·0	10·0	7·0	2·0	0	20·0
1995-96	14·0	9·0	3·0	0	25·0	11·0	8·0	3·0	0	21·0

Note: Figures for 1977-78 to 1983-84 rounded to nearest 100.
Projections rounded to nearest 1,000.

Police

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he is able to estimate the proportion of a police officer's time in Scotland which is devoted to administration; what steps are being taken to reduce this; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: The information required for such an estimate is not available centrally. It is for chief constables to ensure that the most efficient and effective use is made of the manpower and other resources available to them, and they are well aware of the need to reduce to a minimum, by such means as increased use of civilian staff and computers, the time spent by police officers on

non-operational duties. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary will continue to examine the progress that is being made.

Child Abduction

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will discuss with chief constables the co-ordination of police intelligence and information on crimes involving the abduction of children.

Mr. John MacKay: In recent years the police have developed procedures, including the use of computers, to improve the co-ordination and dissemination of information relating to the investigation of crimes involving the abduction of children. More particularly, a circular will shortly be issued to chief constables, following consultations between the Scottish Home and Health Department and the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), about the introduction of procedures to take account of the Child Abduction Act 1984. My right hon. and learned Friend has no plans for further discussions at present.

Crime Statistics

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the police force areas in Scotland where the total number of crimes has risen by *(a)* less than 10 per cent., *(b)* less than 25 per cent., *(c)* less than 33 per cent. and *(d)* more than 50 per cent., since 1975.

Mr. John MacKay: The Scottish police forces were reorganised during 1975; therefore, a meaningful comparison with figures for that year cannot be made. In the period 1976 to 1985 the percentage increases were as follows:

Increase in Crimes Recorded 1976 to 1985 by Police Force Area, Scotland

	Per cent
Less than 33 per cent.	
Strathclyde	31·2
33 to 50 per cent.	
Northern	42·4
Over 50 per cent.	
Dumfries and Galloway	53·8
Tayside	55·2
Lothian and Borders	63·7
Central	72·3
Grampian	76·8
Fife	99·1

Note:
In calculating the above percentages the 1976 figures have been adjusted to conform with the revised classification of crimes and offences introduced in 1980.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will state for each year since 1975 the number of crimes in Scotland involving the use of *(a)* any firearm, *(b)* a shotgun and *(c)* a crossbow.

Mr. John MacKay: The available information is set out. Figures are not available for years prior to 1978 and details for crossbow offences are not separately identifiable in the statistics.

Crimes and Offences recorded by the Police involving the use of a Firearm: Scotland

	Total	*Involving a Shotgun*
1978	492	54
1979	682	47
1980	1,093	62
1981	1,314	84
1982	1,283	98
1983	1,336	120
1984	1,353	137
1985	1,673	127

Note:
From 1980 onwards the statistics cover all crimes and offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been involved. For years prior to that only "crimes" as defined in the pre-1980 crime classification are included. Thus, for 1978 and 1979 cases of petty assault and of minor property damage are excluded from the above figures.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what has been the increase since 1975 in the number of victims of offences of violence against the person.

Mr. John MacKay: No information on victims is available from the routine statistics. However, between 1976 and 1985 the number of recorded crimes of violence against the person increased from 6,680 to 12,098.

For the purpose of this reply, the term "violence against the person" is taken to include all non-sexual crimes of violence (group 1 of the standard classification) apart from robbery, those crimes of indecency (group 2 which contain a violent element, and certain crimes involving malicious and reckless conduct.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many crimes in Scotland were not cleared up in each of the last three years.

Mr. John MacKay: The table sets out the information requested.

Crimes not Cleared Up by the Police: Scotland

	Numbers
1983	309,668
1984	328,738
1985	306,947

Homeless Persons

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many households applied to local authorities in Scotland for accommodation in 1985; how many were accepted; how many were accommodated in bed and breakfast hotels at the end of December 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The information available centrally about the numbers of applications for accommodation and acceptances is neither complete nor compiled on a uniform basis. I must therefore refer the hon. Member directly to the local authorities in which he is interested. Provisional figures indicate that some 230 households who had applied under the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 were in bed and breakfast accommodation at the end of December 985.

It is primarily for local authorities to consider the level of housing need in their areas and to make proposals in the light of local circumstances and the resources available. The Government have increased the planned level of

capital investment in public sector housing in Scotland this year to £322 million, an increase of £46 million over the figure at the beginning of the last financial year.

Housebuilding

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many public sector housing starts are planned for 1986-87; and what was the comparable figure for 1978-79.

Mr. Ancram: Information concerning the number of housing starts planned for any given period is not collected centrally.

Sexual Assault

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to issue fresh guidance to police forces on the manner in which they interview victims of rape and other forms of sexual assault; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John MacKay: Revised guidance on the investigation of complaints of sexual assault, including rape, was issued to the police service as recently as 14 November 1985 in the light of the Scottish Office social research study "Investigating Sexual Assault" and of consultations with the Association of Chief Police Officers (Scotland), the rape crisis centres and Scottish Women's Aid. The guidance, a copy of which is in the Library of the House, has been widely welcomed, and my right hon. and learned Friend has no present plans to issue further advice.

M80 (New Construction)

Mr. Norman Hogg asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he anticipates being able to announce his decision on the line of the proposed M80 motorway between Stepps and Haggs.

Mr. Ancram: As I told the hon. Member in my letter of 21 March 1986, there is a good prospect of a preferred line being selected during the latter half of this year, followed by the publication of draft orders during the first half of 1987. The assessment of possible lines for the motorway is going ahead with all speed.

Urban Programme

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will set up in Scotland a scheme under the urban programme similar to the Operation Raleigh inner city scheme announced by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 29 April.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend would be prepared to consider on its merits any such proposal submitted to him.

Atmospheric Radioactivity

Mr. Wallace asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether, pursuant to the answer given by the hon. Member for Edinburgh, South (Mr. Ancram) on 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *221-2*, he will publish the levels of radioactivity in the atmosphere as monitored at Lerwick, on each of the seven days commencing 3 May when such information becomes available.

Mr. Ancram: Results of the measurements made by the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority at its monitoring station in Lerwick are included in the regular reports of radioactive fallout in air and rain published by the Harwell laboratory. I will write to the hon. Member with the results for May 1986 as soon as they are available. I shall place copies of the figures in the Library.

DEFENCE

United States Weapons (United Kingdom Bases)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish the terms of the agreement governing the use by the United States of America of conventional weapons based in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Stanley: I refer the hon. Member to the relevant section of the communiqué published on the conclusion of the talks between the then British Prime Minister (Mr. Churchill) and the United States President (Mr. Truman) in January 1952. The section reads as follows:

"Under arrangements made for the common defence, the United States has the use of certain bases in the United Kingdom. We reaffirm the understanding that the use of these bases in an emergency would be a matter for joint decision by Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government in the light of the circumstances prevailing at the time."

Royal Navy Ships (Radiation)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the effect on ships of the Royal Navy, at present in the Mediterranean of the nuclear explosion in Chernobyl in the Ukraine; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: We have been advised by the National Radiological Protection Board that in the Mediterranean the radiation level since the Chernobyl accident has not risen to a level that would give cause for concern.

Trebor Corporation of America

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether any branch of the armed forces has purchased any of the following weapons from the Trebor Corporation of America: stun gun, stun burst and stinger 37; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I am not aware that any such purchases have been made.

Departmental Land (Wales)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence, what land is owned at present by his Department in Wales.

Mr. John Lee: At 1 April 1986 the Ministry of Defence owned 51,247 acres of land and foreshore. In addition, 179 acres were held on lease and there were rights over a further 3,683 acres.

Local Liaison Committees

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the annual budget of his Department for funding local liaison committees throughout Britain.

Mr. John Lee: The information required is not immediately available. My noble Friend the Minister of State for Defence Support will write to the hon. Member.

Holy Loch (Anniversary Ceremony)

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Defence what was the cost to the Defence Estimates involved in the organising of the anniversary ceremony for the Holy Loch United States base held on 8 March in Dunoon.

Mr. Stanley: My Department was not involved in organising the ceremony. The identifiable extra costs incurred by the Ministry of Defence amounted to some £400 occasioned by representation at the ceremony and hospitality afforded on board HMS Naiad principally to United States navy officers and members of the local community.

NATO (Radiation Artillery Rounds)

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether at the Montebello meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation Nuclear Planning Group in 1983 SACEUR's proposal of a requirement for modern non-enhanced radiation artillery rounds to replace the current rounds was supported by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Stanley: I cannot add to the communiqué of the Montebello meeting, a copy of which is in the Library.

British Army Equipment Exhibition

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) if he will now make it his policy to publish the names of the countries invited to the British Army equipment exhibition;

(2) whether countries with records of human rights violations and countries involved in armed conflict will be invited to the British Army equipment exhibition.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 May 1986]: It is the long-standing policy of successive British Governments to issue invitations to the British Army equipment exhibition on a confidential basis. I see no reason to depart from this policy. An invitation to the exhibition does not, of course, imply that we would necessarily allow the sale of the equipment on display.

Turkey (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence which arms manufacturers are accompanying the Minister of State for Defence Procurement in his delegation to Turkey commencing on 21 May.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 May 1986]: Some 20 firms from a cross section of British industry have accepted invitations, but for commercial reasons it is a matter for the companies concerned to state their involvement.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 22 May 1986

PRIME MINISTER

Pay Review Bodies

Mr. Leigh asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the latest reports of the pay review bodies.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on the reports of the pay review bodies.

The Prime Minister: The 1986 reports of the review bodies on the pay of nursing staff, midwives, health visitors and professions allied to medicines, doctors and dentists, and the armed forces, and of the Top Salaries Review Body, have been published today. Copies are now available in the Vote Office. The Government are grateful to members of the review bodies for these reports and the time and care which they have put into their preparation.

The reports recommend pay increases from 1 April 1986 which it is estimated would increase the 1986-87 pay bill for nurses, midwives and health visitors by 7·8 per cent., that for the professions allied to medicine by 8·2 per cent., that for doctors and dentists by 7·6 per cent., that for the armed forces by 7·5 per cent., and that for senior grades of the higher Civil Service, senior officers in the armed forces and the judiciary by 6·5 per cent. These figures are all very substantially above the rate of inflation, and above the general level of current wage settlements.

The Government have nevertheless decided that the increases recommended by the review bodies, with the exception of those recommended by the Top Salaries Review Body, should be implemented in full, but having regard to the sums involved, with effect from 1 July 1986. The resulting increases in the pay bills concerned in 1986-87 will average a little under 6 per cent., and this year's costs will be generally met from within existing public expenditure plans.

This year the hospital and community health services (HCHS) programme will benefit from lower inflation, which has already fallen well below the 4·5 per cent. expected when the planning total was agreed; and it will also have resources available from planned cost improvements. Nevertheless, the Government recognise that implementation as proposed might adversely affect services to patients, and have therefore decided, exceptionally, to provide an extra £60 million for health authority cash limits from within the total of planned public expenditure this year.

The Top Salaries Review Body (TSRB) last year carried out a major review of the remuneration of those covered by its remit, as a result of which it recommended increases, some of them substantial, in the salaries of those concerned. The recommended salaries have been fully in effect since 1 March 1986. This year the Government have decided that the TSRB's recommendations should be scaled down to an average 4 per cent. to take effect from 1 July 1986, thus keeping the effective increase in the pay of this group in 1986-87 in line with inflation, that is, 3 per cent. In addition the Government have decided in principle to accept the recommendations first put forward by the TSRB last year, for discretionary pay at Civil Service grades 2 and 3, as part of the arrangements for strengthening the link between pay and performance at these levels. A fuller account of these proposals is being sent to staff interests, with whom there will be consultation.

Details are as follows:

	Recommendation Average	*Range*	*Average Effective Percentage Increase in 1986-87*	*Estimated Cost (£m)* Recommended*	*1986-87*
Nurses	7·8	5·4 to 8·0	5·9	326	244
PAMs	8·2	6·5 to 8·0	6·1	30	23
DDRB	7·6	6·8 to 9·6	5·7	179	134
AFPRB	7·5	5·5 to 9·5	5·6	234	175
TSRB	6·5	5·3 to 7·3	3·0	5	2½

* Review Body figures, amended as necessary.

Full year effects for groups other than TSRB are as recommended; for TSRB groups the full year average is 4 per cent. and the range 3·2 per cent. to 4·4 per cent.

The pay rates and scales resulting from the decisions will be promulgated as soon as possible for National Health Service and armed forces groups. Rates for TSRB groups are set out below. Pensions will be based on the salaries actually in payment in accordance with the principle set out in my written answer of 13 April 1984, at column *383*. The Government are considering separately certain points of detail in the recommendations.

	Salaries currently in payment £	*Salaries effective from 1 July* £	*Staff in post**
SENIOR GRADES OF THE HIGHER CIVIL SERVICE			
Head of the Civil Service (and Secretary of the Cabinet)	75,000	77,400	1
Permanent Secretary of the Treasury	70,000	72,400	1

	Salaries currently in payment £	Salaries effective from 1 July £	Staff in post*
Grade 1 (Permanent Secretary)	60,000	62,100	21
Grade 1A (Second Permanent Secretary)	55,000	56,800	14
Grade 2 (Deputy Secretary)			
—on promotion	40,000	41,500	140
—after 1 years service in the grade	42,000	43,500	
—discretionary	—	45,500 47,825 50,150	—
Grade 3 (Under-Secretary)			
—on promotion	31,000	32,350	482
—after 1 years service in the grade	32,500	33,850	
—after 2 years service in the grade	34,000	35,350	
—discretionary	—	36,850 38,425 40,000	—
SENIOR OFFICERS IN THE ARMED FORCES			
Admiral of the Fleet Field Marshal Marshal of the Royal Air Force	75,000	77,400	1
Admiral General Air Chief Marshal	60,000	62,100	19
Vice-Admiral Lieutenant General Air Marshal	42,000	43,500	33
Rear Admiral Major General Air Vice-Marshal	34,000	35,350	154
JUDICIARY			
Lord Chief Justice	75,000	77,400	1
Lords of Appeal Master of the Rolls Lord President of the Court of Session Lord Chief Justice (Northern Ireland)	69,000	71,400	12
Lord Justice Clerk Lords Justices of Appeal Lords Justices of Appeal (Northern Ireland) President of the Family Division Vice-Chancellor	66,000	68,400	28
High Court Judges Judges of the Court of Session Puisne Judges (Northern Ireland)	60,000	62,100	102
Chairman, Scottish Land Court and President, Lands Tribunal (Scotland) Sheriffs Principal Official Referees Vice-Chancellor of the County Palatine of Lancaster Senior Circuit Judges Recorder of Liverpool Recorder of Manchester Recorder of Belfast Chief Social Security Commissioners (England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland) Presidents, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) Judge Advocate General President, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals (England, Wales and Scotland) Chairman, Criminal Injuries Compensation Board	44,500	46,000	30
Presidents, Lands Tribunals (England, and Wales and Northern Ireland†	40,000	46,000	1

	Salaries currently in payment £	Salaries effective from 1 July £	Staff in post*
Circuit Judges Sheriffs County Court Judges (Northern Ireland) Social Security Commissioners (England, Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland) Registrar of Criminal Appeals Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Senior and Chief Masters and Registrars Master, Court of Protection Chairman, Foreign Compensation Commission Regional Chairmen, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales and Scotland) Judge Advocate of the Fleet Vice-Judge Advocate General President Value-Added Tax Tribunals President Immigration Appeal Tribunal Presiding Special Commissioner of Income Tax President, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals (Northern Ireland) Regional Chairman, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals	40,000	41,500	507
Members, Lands Tribunals (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland)†	30,500	41,500	9
Chairmen, Industrial Tribunals (England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland) Metropolitan Magistrates Provincial Stipendiary Magistrates Resident Magistrates (Northern Ireland) Masters and Registrars of the Supreme Court Masters of the Supreme Court (Northern Ireland) Registrar of Civil Appeals County Court Registrars and District Registrars of the High Court Circuit Registrars (Northern Ireland) President, Pensions Appeal Tribunal Vice-Presidents, Immigration Appeal Tribunal Vice-President (Scotland) and Chairmen, Value-Added Tax Tribunals Chairmen, Social Security Appeal Tribunals and Medical Appeal Tribunals Special Commissioners of Income Tax	30,500	31,850	395

* At latest available date.
† Post rebanded for salary purposes.

Argentine-USA Fleet Manoeuvres

Q125. **Mr. Dalyell** asked the Prime Minister what notification Her Majesty's Government were given of United States plans for joint manoeuvres with the Argentine fleet; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: We are in regular wide-ranging contact with the United States Administration. A series of exercises between the United States navy and a number of South American countries has taken place annually for more than 20 years. According to Argentine press reports, Argentina has again decided not to participate this year.

US Forces (Consultation)

Mr. Wigley asked the Prime Minister whether the United States Government are expected to give prior notification to the United Kingdom Government if their armed forces situated in the United Kingdom are to be put on either amber or red alert.

The Prime Minister: The Government would expect to be informed about any change in the state of operational readiness of United States forces based in this country.

Civil Service (Pay Offer)

Mr. Deakins asked the Prime Minister why a 6 per cent. pay offer was made to the Civil Service; what was the rate of inflation at the time of the offer; if any difference represents changes in productivity; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The offer, which is a final one, followed negotiations with the unions concerned in the light of a survey of non-manual pay settlements in the private sector in 1985 conducted by the Office of Manpower Economics. It was made on 28 April, at which time the latest published retail prices index showed an annual increase of 4·2 per cent.

Westland plc

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she now has anything to add to her statements on Government involvement in the ownership of the Westland Company.

The Prime Minister: No.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

Mr. Nicholas Brown asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

Mrs. Clwyd asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 22 May.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Falkland Islands

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her talks with Senor Perez de Cuellar on the future of the Falklands.

The Prime Minister: The Falklands was one of several topics discussed. The Secretary General gave an account of his recent visit to Argentina. I noted that we had made all the running in the search for improved bilateral relations, and made clear that our position remained that sovereignty over the Falklands was not negotiable.

South Africa

Mr. Wareing asked the Prime Minister what plans she has to meet Commonwealth leaders to review progress being made towards the promotion of peaceful political change in South Africa.

The Prime Minister: The Commonwealth leaders who set up the Eminent Persons Group are to meet after the group has reported on its work.

Terrorism (International Co-operation)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Prime Minister what discussions took place at the recent Tokyo summit about the implications of the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior by French agents in Auckland harbour for international political co-operation to counter terrorism; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: None.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister, further to her answer of 19 May to the right hon. Member for Manchester, Wythenshawe, when she expects the search of military records by the Ministry of Defence in connection with allegations relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities to be completed; and if she will make a further statement.

The Prime Minister: This search is continuing. It is not yet possible to say when it will be completed.

Israel

Mr. Latham asked the Prime Minister whether she will outline her objectives for her visit to Israel; and whether she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: I hope that my visit will help to strengthen our close relations with Israel. I look forward to my talks with Mr. Peres and his colleagues about the search for peace in the middle east and other international and bilateral issues.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates

Mr. Kilroy-Silk asked the Attorney-General what is his policy on the circumstances under which magistrates are able to refuse to disclose their names to the press and the public.

The Attorney-General: This matter is currently sub judice. If the hon. Member will put down another question at a convenient time after judgment has been given in the case of David Leigh and *The Observer Limited v.* Peter Wain and Stephanie Thew, I will be happy to answer it.

Court Hearings

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Attorney-General what guidance he gives to High Court and Crown court clerks on the circumstances in which they may agree to take out of the list a hearing to strike out a plaintiff's legal action.

The Attorney-General: The Practice directions for trial out of London given by the then Lord Chief Justice on 10 December 1971, in respect of High Court proceedings, require all applications for adjournments, postponements and vacation of fixed dates to be made to the district registrar or the judge except where the application is by consent of all parties when the officer of the court having charge of the list may give effect to it, or refer the matter to the district registrar or the judge if he thinks fit.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Attorney-General whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Yes.

Merthyr County Court

Mr. Rowlands asked the Attorney-General how many sittings there were of *(a)* the registrar and *(b)* the deputy registrar at the Merthyr county court in 1985-86.

The Attorney-General: In 1985-86 there were 63 registrar and 21 deputy registrar sitting days.

TRANSPORT

Merchant Shipping Act 1984

Mr. Ottaway asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many inspections have been carried out under part I of the Merchant Shipping Act 1984; and how many notices have been served as a result.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Inspections of ships are undertaken on an ad hoc basis to ensure compliance with a variety of merchant shipping regulations and not to give effect to part I of the Merchant Shipping Act 1984 which makes provision only for the service of improvement and prohibition notices. Since the Act came into force, marine surveyors of my Department have made about 5,500 ship inspections and have issued eight prohibition and three improvement notices.

Vehicle Registration Prefix

Mr. Walters asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what assessment he has made of the implications for rural car dealers of the proposed change in the vehicle age registration system from August to October;

(2) what assessment he has made of the impact on car sales of the proposed move from August to October of the vehicle age identification system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: There is no basis for making such assessments since the view of a major part of the motor industry has been that October would overall be the most beneficial alternative to the present August change. The amount of notice given should allow the motor industry ample time to adjust to the new month of change. However, if the industry as a whole now wishes to put forward an alternative arrangement, we are prepared to consider it.

Seafarers (ILO Convention)

Mr. Stott asked the Secretary of State for Transport what measures he has taken to ensure his Department's compliance with International Labour Organisation Convention 134, 1970, Prevention of Accidents, Seafarers, with particular reference to articles 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 9.1 and 9.2, respectively, of the convention.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The United Kingdom has not ratified this convention but measures promoted by my Department, which include regulations and codes of practice, have ensured that the majority of its requirements have been met in respect of merchant seamen.

Falmouth Container Terminal

Mr. Mudd asked the Secretary of State for Transport on what date he received from Falmouth Container Terminal Ltd. the desk study carried out by Hydraulics Research Ltd. of the effects of a container terminal on the regime of Falmouth harbour; how the desk study will be evaluated; and by what date he anticipates reaching a conclusion on the implications of the study.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The desk study was received in the Department on 9 April. Consultations on it with navigational interests and other bodies concerned are well advanced and we are taking independent professional advice on its conclusions. It is hoped to announce a decision shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Small Companies (Accounting and Auditing)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is yet in a position to announce the outcome of the Government's review of accounting and audit requirements for small companies; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The Government have now completed their review of policy in this area in the light of the many and varied comments received on the consultative document "Accounting and Audit Requirements for Small Firms" published by my Department last June. We are grateful to the many consultees—over 200 in all—who took the trouble to comment.

On accounting requirements, the Government intend to relax the rules governing the amount of information small companies are required to disclose in their accounts. Details of the changes proposed will be announced shortly. The changes will reduce the amount of information companies are currently required to give shareholers while at the same time enabling companies to meet as simply as possible the needs of the Inland Revenue. The changes will also make it easier and cheaper for those choosing to file modified accounts at the Companies Registration Office to do so. By removing certain pages from the shareholder's accounts companies will be able to use the same set of accounts for filing purposes. The interests of individual shareholders will be safeguarded by giving them the right to ask the company for information which, under present arrangements, would be contained in the full accounts.

Current consultations will also be pursued with interested parties on the scope for introducing changes in tax rules which would make it easier for proprietors of businesses wishing to do so to cease trading as limited companies and to trade instead as sole traders or partnerships. Consideration will also be given to changes in company law which might help to streamline the process of disincorporation.

On the audit, the Government have decided to retain the statutory requirement for small companies to have their accounts audited. The consultation revealed no strong balance of opinion in favour of abolition. We are determined to clamp down on fraud and believe that removal of this first defence against fraud would be inappropriate.

The changes in accounting rules will be applied as widely as possible within the limits set by Community obligations. The Companies Act definition of a small company will be extended to cover companies with an annual turnover of less than £2 million and a balance sheet total of less than £975,000. This will significantly reduce accounting burdens for some 90 per cent. of companies. The turnover and balance sheet thresholds for medium-sized companies will also be increased — from £5·75 million and £2·8 million to £8·0 million and £3·9 million respectively.

The Government believe that this package strikes a fair balance between conflicting considerations and will make a real contribution to deregulation. The changes in accounting rules will be implemented as soon as possible.

Shipbuilding Orders

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and industry what information he has for each of the last 10 years of the percentage of merchant shipping built for owners in the United Kingdom and the total tonnage of shipping built and the tonnage sourced, respectively, from *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* other European Economic Community countries and *(c)* South Korea.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The following is the information:

	Tonnage of United Kingdom flagged merchant ships completed Units: 000's*	*Of which: Tonnage and share of newly completed United Kingdom flagged vessels built in:*					
		United Kingdom		*Other EEC Countries†*		*South Korea*	
		000's	*share per cent.*	*000's*	*share per cent.*	*000's*	*share per cent.*
1976	1,282	560	44	471	37	10	1
1977	1,212	448	37	245	20	42	3
1978	1,024	460	45	209	20	60	6
1979	804	409	51	75	9	11	1
1980	542	262	48	119	22	0	0
1981	442	165	37	47	11	55	12
1982	644	339	53	119	18	33	5
1983	303	191	63	34	11	60	20
1984	373	169	45	23	6	70	19
1985	232	190	82	27	12	0	0

Tonnage of merchant vessels completed in: *Units: 000's*

	United Kingdom	*Other EEC Countries†*	*South Korea*
1976	898	4,878	349
1977	693	4,385	517
1978	709	3,553	504
1979	584	2,873	449
1980	513	2,447	445
1981	254	2,827	512
1982	418	2,721	880
1983	349	3,168	986
1984	288	2,469	1,068
1985	262	2,239	1,618

Notes:
Tonnage=Compensated tonnage, with figures from 1984 based on the new tonnage measurement system.
* Includes vessels owned by Commonwealth companies registered under the United Kingdom flag.
† Other EEC (12)
Source: Department of Trade and Industry, Lloyds, OECD.

Mr. A. Watey (Correspondence)

Mr. Malins asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he expects to reply to the letter dated 21 April, from Mr. A. Watey, of Albany Road, London S.E.5 regarding imports of television sets from the People's Republic of China.

Mr. John Butcher: Department of Trade and Industry officials met Mr. Wacey on 6 May in response to his letter of 21 April. Mr. Wacey also wrote to my hon. Friend the Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Sir H. Rossi) and I replied on 20 May.

General Motors (New York Meeting)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, pursuant to the answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *502*, on what date the meeting in New York on 4 May between the Minister of State, the hon. Member for City of Chester (Mr. Morrison) and Mr. Stempel of General Motors was arranged; if the position of Leyland Vehicles and Land and Freight Rover was discussed; and if he discussed Bedford and GM Commercial Vehicle operations in the United Kingdom were discussed.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Arrangements for a meeting with Mr. Stempel of General Motors were set in train in March. Final arrangements were not agreed until the last week in April. During a wide-ranging discussion, covering the position of the Bedford commercial vehicle operations in the United Kingdom, I took the opportunity of restating the Government's position on the future of individual BL businesses in the terms of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State's statements of 25 March and 24 April.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Butcher: Yes; my Department submitted seven applications for registration before 11 May 1986 under the Data Protection Act 1984.

Import Substitution (Awards)

Mr. Onslow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he will give consideration to establishing an award scheme, similar to existing awards for exports, for companies which record outstanding achievements in the field of import substitution.

Mr. Channon [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *502*]: Although no review of the Queen's Award scheme is planned at present I have asked the Queen's Award Office to take careful note of your proposal.

I applaud those companies which recognise and take advantage of the excellent commercial opportunities in our domestic market, and I would welcome action by companies and organisations in Industry Year 1986 to highlight the commercial opportunities for British suppliers to make competitive products for market sectors which are currently dominated by imports.

British Sugar Corporation

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make a statement concerning any communication he has received from the Director General of Fair Trading concerning the future ownership or control of the British Sugar Corporation.

Mr. Howard [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *501*]: I am now able to make a statement.

It was announced on 20 May that my right hon. Friend had decided, in accordance with the recommendation of the Director General of Fair Trading, to refer the proposed acquisitions of S and W Berisford plc by Hillsdown Holdings plc and Tate and Lyle plc to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for investigation.

My right hon. Friend considered that the proposed acquisition by Tate and Lyle raised issues of competition in the sugar market, and that both proposed acquisitions raised wider issues of public interest arising from a change of ownership of British Sugar, given the special nature of the sugar market, and British Sugar's place in it.

ENERGY

Nuclear Incidents

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will ask the chairmen of *(a)* the Central Electricity Generating Board, *(b)* the South of Scotland Electricity Board, *(c)* British Nuclear Fuels plc and *(d)* the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority to publish all nuclear incidents that have occurred at any of their facilities since the Government changed the all-inclusive nuclear incident reporting system of the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the relevant chairmen to write to the hon. Member on this matter.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether considerations of *(a)* material security or *(b)* commercial confidentiality have ever resulted in failure to disclose immediately radiological incidents; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the UKAEA, BNFL, CEGB and SSEB that at no time have they failed, in respect of any United Kingdom civil nuclear installation, either on grounds of security or commercial confidentiality, to make prompt disclosure to the relevant authorities of any incident judged likely to have any implications for public health and safety.

Oil Prices

Mr. Bruce asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether, in the light of the Norwegian Government's decision to hold talks with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries, he will now agree to talks with the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries and other oil producing countries with a view to securing a stable oil price.

Mr. Walker: No.

Sellafield

Mr. Cohen asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will now list all incidents which have occurred at Sellafield since 19 March 1982 which have *(a)* involved any leakage of radioactive material either within or outwith the plant and *(b)* are otherwise of radiological significance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I have asked the chairman of British Nuclear Fuels plc to write to the hon. Member on this matter.

Gas Purchases

Mr. Hardy asked the Secretary of State for Energy what is his estimate of the volume of gas which was purchased by British Gas but not taken in 1984, 1985 and in 1986 to date.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: British Gas manages its gas purchases so that where gas is paid for but not taken a credit is given against future purchases. The volumes of such gas are commercially confidential.

Severn Barrage

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Energy when he expects to be able to make a response to the Severn Tidal Power Group's report on the Severn barrage project.

Mr. David Hunt: I refer to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for Wells (Mr. Heathcoat-Amory) on 12 May at column *333*.

Coal Mining Subsidence (Waddilove Report)

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is yet in a position to announce his response to the report of the Waddilove committee on coal mining subsidence compensation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Hunt: Careful consideration continues to be given to the numerous and complex issues raised by the Waddilove report. A Government response will be published as soon as possible.

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about the safety record of French nuclear power stations situated close to the English Channel; what discussions have taken place between Her Majesty's Government and the French Government about safety standards and procedures at nuclear power stations in the light of the Chernobyl disaster; and what plans exist for the exchange of information in the event of an accident to a nuclear power station near the Channel.

Mr. Goodlad: The nuclear installations inspectorate and its French counterparts have a formal arrangement for

continuously exchanging information on all matters affecting safety. This would include details of incidents and actions resulting as a consequence. The NII has not found it necessary to alert me to any concern over the safety of French nuclear facilities. No formal exchange has taken place between the two regulatory authorities as yet, which are specific to Chernobyl, but both participated in a meeting on 9 May organised by the nuclear energy agency committee on the safety of nuclear installations. In addition to the arrangement referred to above there is a formal Government to Government agreement of July 1983 (Cmnd 9041) which spells out actions in the event of an accident occurring in either country which could have radiological consequences for the other.

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has about recent problems involving welding defects in the nuclear steam supply systems of pressurised water reactors in France and other countries.

Mr. Goodlad I have asked Her Majesty's nuclear installations inspectorate to reply to the hon. Member.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Walker: My Department submitted all six of its applications covering 18 "standard purposes" to the registrar by the due date.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Leicester Prison

10. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will pay an official visit to Leicester prison.

Mr. Hurd: I have no plans to do so at present.

Criminal Statistics

12. **Mr. McGuire** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the number of crimes per 100,000 population in *(a)* the 10 most deprived and *(b)* the 10 least deprived boroughs in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences per head of population are available nationally only for entire police force areas.

23. **Mr. Chris Smith** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the increase since 1978 in the total number of crimes in *(a)* the 10 most deprived boroughs and *(b)* the 10 least deprived boroughs, in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: Statistics of notifiable offences are available nationally only for entire police force areas.

Mr. Bulmer asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of those convicted of serious crimes during the last 12 months for which records are available had a criminal record; and how this compares with the previous five years.

Mr. Mellor: The latest available information about the previous criminal record of those convicted of "standard list" offences is published in "Previous Convictions of Persons Convicted in 1982", Home Office statistical bulletin 2/86. It is estimated that 61 per cent. of those convicted in 1982 of non-motoring "standard list" offences had a previous conviction. The equivalent proportion for those convicted in 1977 was 56 per cent.

Racially Motivated Crimes

13. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he will make a statement on progress in investigating crimes suspected of being racially motivated.

Mr. Giles Shaw: All police forces in England and Wales are well aware of the seriousness of racially motivated incidents and have made arrangements for these to be monitored locally. Guidelines issued by the Association of Chief Police Officers last year call for a vigorous and sympathetic response to such incidents and we are confident that appropriate investigations are carried out thoroughly and expeditiously.

25. **Mr. Tom Cox** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if his Department has any plans to conduct research into the incidence of crimes with an apparent racial motivation.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The 1986-87 programme of work for the Home Office research and planning unit includes a study of the nature and incidence of racially motivated incidents in selected areas and a study of possible improvements in the police response to such incidents and of victims' perceptions and needs. The possibility of a third study looking at crime prevention measures for Asian shopkeepers is also being considered.

Plastic Bullets

14. **Mr. Winnick** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from chief constables on the policy adopted by their forces for the use of plastic bullets.

Mr. Hurd: No. Plastic baton rounds should be available to forces which need them, for use in circumstances of last resort. I announced earlier this week that new arrangements had been introduced to provide the necessary equipment. Where a police authority withholds agreement the chief constable will be able to obtain the equipment from my Department if his assessment of need is endorsed by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary. We have also issued revised guidelines on the use of the equipment. Plastic baton rounds have never been used in Great Britain, and I very much hope that they will never have to be, but it is essential that the police should have the means of dealing with extreme disorder.

Chernobyl Disaster

15. **Mr. Patrick Thompson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what conclusions about the role of civil protection Her Majesty's Government draw from the disaster at Chernobyl.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The incident has underlined the importance of planning flexibly for a wide range of emergencies as proposed in the Government's all-hazards approach to civil protection.

32. **Mr. Terlezki** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when his Department first received

information from the Devon emergency volunteers about a suspected incident in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of radiological significance prior to official confirmation of the Chernobyl disaster.

41. **Mr. Speller** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he received from outside sources alleging an incident in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics suspected to be of radiological significance prior to official notification from within Government about the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In the absence of notification from the Soviet Government, initial information about the incident came from monitoring by other countries which were affected before us. The county emergency planning officer of Devon telephoned the Department's emergency planning division on the afternoon of 28 April after hearing a local radio news story about a suspected nuclear accident in the USSR.

Crimes of Violence

16. **Mr. Frank Cook** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the information available to his Department indicates the number of households in Great Britain who were victims of a crime in 1985.

Mr. Mellor: No.

21. **Mr. Willie W. Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for each year since 1978, the proporton of crimes of violence against the person in England and Wales which were committed by a member of the family of the victim.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the relationship between victim and offender is not regularly collected centrally except for offences of homicide which is published each year in "Criminal Statistics for England and Wales".

Crime Prevention (Lighting)

17. **Mr. Norman Atkinson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will issue guidance to all local authorities advising that the brighter new modern lighting of town centres, housing estates and blocks of flats constitutes the best crime prevention available to them.

Mr. Giles Shaw: There is insufficient evidence to suggest that such guidance would be justified, although improved lighting on housing estates can make a contribution to deterring crime.

Kidnap Insurance

18. **Mr. Greenway** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to introduce legislation relating to kidnap insurance; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The possibility of measures against kidnap ransom insurance is being considered. Until that work is complete it is not possible to say whether legislation will be necessary.

36. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Republic of Ireland about kidnap insurance.

Mr. Hurd: This was among the subjects discussed at a meeting with my European Community colleagues, including the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Ireland, in the Hague on 24 April. It was agreed that further study was needed.

Police-Community Relations

19. **Mr. Bellingham** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress there has been in relations between the police and the community they serve since the publication of the Scarman report.

Mr. Hurd: The Government and the police have responded positively to the recommendations made by Lord Scarman in 1981. Policing methods, training, recruitment and arrangements for consultation with the community have been substantially revised and are making a strong contribution to the development of police-community relations. The many imaginative initiatives taken by the police in recent years have been well received by local communities and the Government are giving the police every encouragement to continue with this important work.

Greater Manchester

20. **Mr. Sackville** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of Greater Manchester as to the latest figures for recorded crime in Greater Manchester in the year to date.

Mr. Mellor: Recorded crime figures for the first quarter of 1986 are due to be published next month. At present, complete figures for individual police force areas are not available.

Prisoners and Detained Persons

22. **Mr. Maclennan** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the latest available figure for the average daily population in prisons, hostels and detention centres; and how this total compares with the statistic for 1979.

Mr. Mellor: On 9 May 1986 there were 45,708 prisoners held in prisons, remand centres and youth custody centres and 1,140 in detention centres in England and Wales. On 30 April 1979, the nearest equivalent date for which figures are available, there were 38,402 prisoners held in prisons, remand centres, young offender prisons and borstals and 3,728 in detention centres. Figures for prisoners in hostels are not recorded separately.

The latest available figures showing the distinction between prisoners convicted, unconvicted and held for civil offences can only be supplied for 31 March 1986 and I shall compare these to figures recorded for 31 March 1979 as follows. Convicted prisoners held were 38,449 in 1986 as against 37,998 in 1979. Those unconvicted held in 1986 numbered 8,115 compared to 3,907 in 1979. Those held in connection with civil proceedings numbered 234 in 1986 and 600 in 1979.

Civil Protection (Nuclear Incidents)

24. **Mr. Aspinwall** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, in the light of experience arising as

a result of the Chernobyl nuclear incident, he has any plans to increase the level of civil protection in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Government will be reviewing contingency arrangements in the light of experience following the Chernobyl incident.

39. **Mr. McQuarrie** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what assessment he has made of the implications for the role of civil protection in the United Kingdom of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to my hon. Friend the member for Norwich, North (Mr. Thompson).

Crimes Against Children

26. **Mr. Dixon** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will state, for each year since 1978, the number of crimes against children which were known to the police in England and Wales, distinguishing between each category of offence.

Mr. Mellor: Information on the age and sex of victims of crime is not regularly collected except for offences of homicide. The only other information available relates to certain offences defined as being committed against children. This information is published annually in "Criminal Statistics for England and Wales."

Police Training

27. **Mr. Wolfson** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on plans for further police training; and if he will make a statement.

29. **Mr. Hunter** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes have recently been made, or are about to be made, in the training of police officers.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Police training is subject to a continuous process of review and improvement. Plans for change currently being developed or under consideration at the national level cover all ranks and span probationer, career development, management and command training as well as more specialist functions.

37. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what steps he is taking to seek to modify police training to meet the demands arising in the inner cities.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given today to questions from my hon. Friends the Members for Sevenoaks (Mr. Wolfson) and Basingstoke (Mr. Hunter). Training in community and race relations aspects, which focus most strongly in inner cities, is receiving special attention; the inner city is the main theme of this year's senior command course at the police staff college.

Prison Officers' Dispute

28. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the latest position in the prison officers' dispute.

Mr. Mellor: I refer my hon. and learned Friend to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Westminster, North (Mr. Wheeler) on 14 May at columns 464-466.

Prison Officers Association

30. **Mr. Evennett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he last met representatives of the Prison Officers Association; and what subjects were discussed.

Mr. Mellor: My right hon. Friend last met representatives of the Prison Officers' Association on 28 April and reported to the House on that meeting in his statement the following day at columns 797-805.

Thames Valley Police

31. **Mr. Andrew MacKay** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is satisfied with police manning levels in the Thames Valley force.

Mr. Giles Shaw: A total of 370 additional police posts have been approved for the Thames Valley police since May 1979. There were 49 vacancies on the present police establishment of 3,367 on 30 April 1986 when the force was beginning to implement the latest increase of 50 posts, which was approved on 15 April. My right hon. Friend will consider in the autumn the possibility of a further increase for Thames Valley.

Crime Prevention (Residential Dwellings)

33. **Dr. Marek** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if, pursuant to his answer of 20 March, *Official Report*, column *269*, the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention has produced a low-cost security package to protect residential dwellings in particularly vulnerable areas.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Part of the terms of reference for the Home Office standing conference on crime prevention working group on residential burglary is to "prepare a low cost security package for inner city households". The working group is currently considering this matter and will present a report at an open meeting of the standing conference on 18 November 1986.

In the interim, my right hon. Friend and I shall continue to monitor closely the progress of all five standing conference working groups through the ministerial group on crime prevention and at the second crime prevention seminar to be held on 23 June 1986 at 10 Downing street.

Cruelty to Children

34. **Mr. Nicholas Baker** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will introduce legislation to provide for higher mandatory sentences for those found guilty of offences of cruelty to children.

Mr. Mellor: We are satisfied that the penalties available to the courts for dealing with offences of cruelty to children (including assaults and sexual abuse) are adequate; the most serious offences carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. Mandatory sentences would restrict the power of the courts to take into account all the circumstances of a particular case when passing sentence.

Remand Statistics

35. **Mr. Alex Carlile** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people are currently held

in prisons on remand awaiting trial; what were the comparable figures for 1 May 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information is given in the table. Information on the number awaiting commencement of their trial is not available centrally and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Untried population of prisons and remand centres in England and Wales

At 30 April	*Number of Persons*
1983	5,650
1984	6,970
1985	8,240
1986	*8,580

* Provisional.

Rape Victims

38. **Mr. Parry** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any plans to issue fresh guidance to police forces on the manner in which they treat victims of rape; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We are considering with the Association of Chief Police Officers what further guidance might be issued on the police's treatment of rape victims, in the light of the report by the Women's National Commission on violence against women.

Police Officers (Injuries)

40. **Mr. Hirst** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many police officers received injuries in the course of their duties in the latest available 12-month period; how many days' service were lost as a result; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: This information is not collected centrally.

Civil Defence

42. **Mr. Strang** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when he expects to publish new Government civil defence information.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information, comprising a film and printed literature, is expected to be available in the next few months.

Oxford Street (CND Demonstration)

43. **Mr. Barnett** asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis about the handling of the demonstration in Oxford street organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament on 20 April.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Commissioner informs me that on 19 April demonstrators taking part in a march organised by CND sat down in Oxford street. When the march resumed, about 500 people refused to move. In order to relieve the serious traffic congestion caused, police removed demonstrators from the road. For the next hour demonstrators persisted in attempts to block the road and missiles were thrown at bus drivers and police officers. I understand that 72 people were arrested for a variety of public order offences.

Radio Deregulation

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the Government's policy on deregulation of radio; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Within the existing legislative framework for radio, the Government welcome the steps taken by the IBA to avoid unnecessary burdens on programme contractors, consistent with the maintenance of the public interest in broadcasting. The future regulatory and institutional framework for all radio services will be addressed, in the light of the forthcoming experiment in community radio, in the Green Paper referred to in my reply to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Leominster (Mr. Temple-Morris) on 8 May at column *206*.

Section 11 Grants

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will give details of recent approved changes in the rules governing section 11 moneys.

Mr. Waddington: There have been no recent changes in the arrangements under which applications for grant under section 11 of the Local Government Act 1966 are considered. However, the Home Office is currently consulting local authority associations and some other organisations on the terms of a draft circular which would introduce certain changes in these arrangements. The principal effect of the changes now proposed would be to improve the targeting of the grant so that it will in future be more effective in meeting the special needs of Commonwealth immigrants and their immediate descendants; but the proposed new arrangements will also require local authorities to pay explicit attention to value for money considerations, and to ensure that there is effective consultation with those who are intended to benefit from the grant before any application is made. The consultation period will last until the end of June and it intended that the new arrangements will be brought into force as soon as possible after that. In the meantime, new applications for grant are being considered under the existing criteria only in exceptional circumstances.

Data Protection

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the forms and information circulated in Wales concerning the Protection of Information Act will be published in both Welsh and English; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the Data Protection Act 1984. The Data Protection registrar, who is responsible for administering the registration requirements of the Act, is now arranging to have the registration forms translated into Welsh and is considering what further information should be made available in the Welsh language.

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Yes.

Merseyside (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Merseyside.

Mr. Hurd: I refer the hon. Member to the reply given to his question on 20 May at column *127*.

Prison Population

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will *(a)* state the total increase in the average daily number of prisoners between 1980 and 1985, expressing this also as an average percentage rise in each year, *(b)* publish the comparable figures for the period 1970 to 1979 and *(c)* give his Department's latest estimate for the growth in size of the prison population between 1985 and 1994.

Mr. Mellor: The average population of prison department establishments in England and Wales increased between 1980 and 1985, by about 4,000, an average annual increase of 1·8 per cent. Between 1970 and 1979 the average population increased by about 3,200, an average annual increase of 0·9 per cent. The increase in the average population between 1985 and 1994 is projected to be between 6,600 using a demographic model and 12,700 using a non-demographic model. Further details are given in "Projections of Long Term Trends in the Prison Population to 1994" (Home Office statistical bulletin 5/86).

Burglaries (Wales)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Welsh homes have reported burglaries in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. Mellor: The number of offences of burglary in a dwelling recorded by the police in Wales in 1985 was 16,707. Figures for the years 1980 to 1984 have been published in the annual "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume 3" (table S.3.1) and for earlier years in the annual Command Papers on criminal statistics.

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the clear-up rate for crimes of burglaries from Welsh houses in each of the past 15 years.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is contained in the following table:

Recorded Offences of Burglary in a Dwelling (cleared up) in Wales
Numbers and percentages

	Numbers cleared up	*Per cent cleared up*
1971	3,120	33
1972	3,259	32
1973	3,043	35
1974	3,081	37
1975	3,888	34
1976	3,641	33
1977	4,729	38
1978	4,255	39
1979	4,220	39
1980	4,969	36
1981	6,993	46
1982	6,048	41
1983	6,807	39
1984	7,040	41
1985	6,842	41

Benefits (Fraud)

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people in Wales in each of the past seven years have been convicted of crimes related to the claiming of supplementary or unemployment benefit.

Mr. Mellor: Information collected centrally does not distinguish offences of fraud or forgery involving supplementary or unemployment benefit. Records available to me which may be incomplete, on social security offences cover the summary offences of false statements or misrepresentations. To provide figures for all of the years requested would involve disproportionate cost so details for 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1984 only have been provided in the following table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

Defendents found guilty of offences of making a false statement or misrepresentation contrary to the Supplementary Benefit Act 1976 or Family Income Supplement Act 1970 in Wales

	Numbers
1979	1,039
1981	593
1983	274
1984	230

Drug Abuse (Grange Hill Video)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department which officials from his Department were present at the launch of the Grange Hill anti-drug abuse video, "Just Say No", held in March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: Two officials from the Home Office drugs branch attended the launch on 25 March 1986 of the Drugwatch/SCODA National Directory of Services for drug users, their families and friends, at which the Grange Hill cast's "Just Say No" record and video were also launched. My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr. Whitney) spoke at the launch. I had intended to be there but my duties on the Standing Committee considering the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill precluded me. The Home Office, DHSS and DES each gave financial help towards the distribution of the National Directory.

Prison Officers' Houses (Sales)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the value of the 49 prison officers' houses at Culcheth; what reserve price has been placed on them; when he put out to tender for the sale of these houses; and when the contract will be awarded.

Mr. Mellor: The prison officers houses at Culcheth have not been valued. No reserve price has been placed on the 39 now for sale, since reserve prices are normally

applicable only when properties are auctioned. Formal tenders were not invited. The estate agents were instructed on 11 November to market the 26 houses then available. Negotiations for the sale of the 39 houses are proceeding on a private treaty basis. The contract will be awarded as soon as possible.

Fugitive Offenders Act 1967

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he has any proposals to introduce legislation to seek to amend the Fugitive Offenders Act 1967; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: In the light of the decision of Commonwealth Law Ministers in 1983 to revise the Commonwealth scheme for the rendition of fugitive offenders, we are considering whether to amend the Fugitive Offenders Act. The scheme is to be considered further by Law Ministers in Harare in July, and my right hon. Friend shall reach a decision in the light of that meeting.

Refugees and Asylum

Mr. Portillo asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on the Government's implementation of recommendation 32 of the report of the Home Affairs Committee on refugees and asylum.

Mr. Hurd: The Government accepted this recommendation subject to reviewing the situation in the country concerned shortly before the seven year point was reached by those first granted leave under a particular exceptional policy. I have now considered the position in respect of Iranians granted exceptional leave to enter or remain since the Iranian revolution in December 1979. In the light of conditions in Iran I have decided that where an Iranian has had exceptional leave to be in this country for seven years indefinite leave to remain should be granted, provided that he or she is not personally unacceptable. Applications from Iranians will now be considered with a presumption in favour of giving settlement on this basis. This policy will be kept under review in the light of the situation in Iran.

DEFENCE

RAF Fylingdales

Sir Michael Shaw asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will make a statement on the modernisation of the ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales.

Mr. Stanley: The ballistic missile early warning system at RAF Fylingdales needs to be modernised in order to maintain its effectiveness in giving warning of modern multiple warhead missiles. Effective early warning systems contribute significantly to deterrence. This modernisation, therefore, enhances the overall safety of the Alliance. The Government have, therefore, decided to proceed with a modernisation programme in co-operation with the United States Government. We are satisfied that the modernisation of this system fully conforms with United States obligations under the anti-ballistic missile treaty. This does not prohibit the modernisation of ballistic missile early warning systems already in existence, as Fylingdales was, when the treaty entered into force.

The modernised system will be of a more advanced design and will have a more compact, less visible profile. The modernisation and subsequent operation of the early warning system will be carried out under the provisions of the Anglo/US memorandum of agreement published in 1960, together with new arrangements to cover detailed matters implementing those provisions. The systems will remain under RAF command and control. The necessary consultations will shortly commence with the appropriate local planning authority.

As well as maintaining our early warning capability, the Fylingdales modernisation will create job opportunities. British companies will be used in the construction of the facility and infrastructure required by the improved radar, and they will also be undertaking the deactivation work on the existing radars. In addition, arrangements have been made which ensure that a range of British companies will have a significant opportunity to benefit to an extent closely equivalent to the investment undertaken by the Americans at Fylingdales.

Holmfield School, Christchurch (Rifle Range)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the reasons why he has given a 90 per cent. grant to the Holmfield school, Christchurch, for a rifle range.

Mr. Freeman: I shall answer this question shortly.

NH90 Helicopter

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence what plans he has to review his Department's orders for the NH90 helicopter; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: The five-nation NH90 collaborative project is at present only in its feasibility/pre-definition phase. The question of orders does not therefore arise.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Yes.

Keeni Meeni Services (KMS)

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Defence if his Department employs personnel from a security firm called Keeni Meeni Services (KMS); whether his Department retains this company or any of its employees to undertake any services or to give advice; whether his Department has employed personnel from this company or retained this company at any time since 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: I shall answer this question shortly.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

HTLV III Virus (Africa)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department has

any plans to provide help to African countries through financial assistance or via provision of equipment to prevent the spread of HTLV III virus; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Raison: We are ready to consider any requests from African Governments to give help in combating AIDS. At present there is useful co-operation between African and British scientists, some of whom receive support from the Overseas Development Administration, on the clinical, immunological and epidemiological aspects of the disease.

EMPLOYMENT

Retail Prices Index

Mr. Wareing asked the Paymaster General what representations he has received about the adequacy of the retail prices index at reflecting the true rate of inflation for poorer households; if he is satisfied with the weightings given to various goods and services; whether he plans any changes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I have received no direct representations, though I understand that the matter of price indices for different types of household is raised from time to time and I am aware of recent arguments in favour of producing a number of price indices. My right hon. and noble Friend is guided in these matters by the retail prices index advisory committee, an independent body with wide representation. The committee is expected to report shortly and any plans for changes will be announced subsequently.

Prisoners (MSC Services)

Mr. Ashley asked the Paymaster General what services are offered by the Manpower Services Commission to prisoners before, on and after their release from prison; and what links there are concerning such services between the Manpower Services Commission and the probation service.

Mr. Lang: The Manpower Services Commission (MSC) offers a wide range of assistance to prisoners principally through its jobcentres. This includes providing information about jobs available locally and in other districts; advice on employment matters and MSC schemes; advice on and assistance with training and retraining; and normal job placing services. As a means of helping long-term prisoners to resettle on release, the probation service arranges, in conjunction with prison authorities and the MSC, for selected prisoners to be placed in work outside the prison during the last months of their sentences.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Paymaster General whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The Department of Employment, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), registered separately under the Data Protection Act. In all, a total of 43 applications for registration, comprising 163 separate purposes for holding data, were submitted within the legally specified time limit on behalf of the whole Department of Employment group. Confirmation of acceptance has not yet been received from the Data Protection Registrar.

Keeni Meeni Services (KMS)

Mr. Madden asked the Paymaster General if his Department received any application, since 1979, for a work permit to permit a person to undertake employment in the United Kingdom on behalf of a security company called Keeni Meeni Services (KMS).

Mr. Lang: My Department has no record of any such application.

Gas Explosion (Glasgow)

Dr. Twinn asked the Paymaster General when the report of the Health and Safety Executive into the gas explosion in Glasgow, on 29 November 1985, will be published.

Mr. Trippier: The report is being published today. I have arranged for a copy to be placed in the Library of the House.

Non-advanced Further Education

Mr. Radice asked the Paymaster General what proportion of rate support grant funding transferred from local education authorities to the Manpower Services Commission for non-advanced further education in 1986-87 will not be reallocated directly to local education authorities.

Mr. Trippier: Of the £110 million being transferred to the Manpower Services Commission from rate support grant in 1986-87, £5 million will be held back to support change within the further education system.

Mr. Radice asked the paymaster General which local education authorities will have non-advanced further education allocations in 1986-87 reduced by the Manpower Services Commission regional directors; and by what amounts.

Mr. Trippier: None.

Mr. Freud asked the Paymaster General whether he will list in the *Official Report* for each local education authority in England *(a)* the sum received for technical and vocational education initiative projects, *(b)* the sum received for technical and vocational education initiative projects expressed as a percentage of the education budget, *(c)* the number of pupils engaged on technical and vocational education initiative projects, *(d)* the number of such pupils expressed as a percentage of the total in secondary education, *(e)* the number of secondary schools involved in technical and vocational education initiatives, *(f)* the percentage of secondary schools involved in technical and vocational education initiative, and *(g)* the percentage of pupils in participating schools engaged in technical and vocational education initiative projects in each case (i) during the pilot scheme and (ii) under the proposed expansion of the scheme.

Mr. Trippier [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The table sets out the answers to the hon. Member's questions for each of the 60 local education authorities in

England currently participating in the technical and vocational education initiative. With the exception of the first round projects which started in 1983 (asterisked in the table), participating projects have each been allocated up to a ceiling of £2 million spread over a period of six financial years to fund additional provision for four successive cohorts of about 250 pupils from 14 to 18 in a group of relevant institutions, both secondary schools and colleges. Pilot projects of this constant size inevitably bulk larger in relation to some local education authorities than others, given authorities' varying size. The figures also reflect the different stages that authorities have reached with their projects. Thus comparisons between authorities must be made with caution.

The information requested about the ratio of pupils involved in TVEI to the overall numbers of each of the 337 schools and 118 colleges participating could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Local Education Authority (England)	*Sum received by TVEI Projects in 1985-86*	*(2) expressed as a per cent. of estimated net education expenditure 1985-86*	*TVEI pupil numbers at September 1985*	*(4) expressed as a per cent. of LEA secondary school population (January 1985)*	*Number of schools participating in TVEI excluding FE Colleges*	*(6) expressed as a per cent. of total secondary schools per LEA as at January 1985*
	£'s					
(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*	*(5)*	*(6)*	*(7)*
Barnsley*	639,670	1·20	1,144	5·9	7	30·0
Bedfordshire*	858,193	0·66	1,213	2·5	5	6·6
Berkshire	305,592	0·18	489	0·9	6	9·2
Birmingham*	753,836	0·31	794	1·0	8	8·3
Bolton	389,647	0·63	419	1·9	4	2·0
Bradford*	625,593	0·51	760	1·6	2	2·3
Bromley	367,253	0·63	228	1·2	5	21·7
Buckinghamshire	420,475	0·28	494	1·3	8	15·7
Bury	295,923	0·72	383	2·9	4	22·2
Cambridgeshire	400,000	0·29	460	1·0	4	8·2
Cheshire	300,194	0·12	390	0·5	5	6·5
Cleveland	455,084	0·29	422	0·9	7	12·3
Cornwall	416,999	0·47	565	1·7	3	9·1
Coventry	392,553	0·50	518	2·1	3	14·3
Croydon	200,904	0·28	477	2·3	4	13·8
Cumbria	372,700	0·32	448	1·2	7	15·9
Derbyshire	347,670	0·16	492	0·7	4	4·9
Devon*	577,637	0·30	805	1·2	5	5·9
Doncaster	392,266	0·54	484	1·9	5	14·7
Dudley	374,763	0·55	498	2·3	5	18·5
Durham	410,901	0·29	510	1·1	6	12·8
Ealing	400,000	0·57	195	1·4	4	26·6
East Sussex	341,234	0·29	502	1·3	4	10·2
Enfield*	721,640	1·26	674	3·5	12	60·0
Essex	322,915	0·09	498	0·4	6	4·9
Gloucestershire	331,963	0·31	536	1·4	5	9·8
Hampshire	403,000	0·12	586	0·6	6	5·5
Havering	451,416	0·78	494	2·6	6	28·6
Hereford and Worcester*	733,443	0·53	764	1·4	10	12·2
Hertfordshire*	866,813	0·39	876	1·1	10	9·3
Isle of Wight	322,118	1·23	528	4·7	5	23·8
Kent	325,000	0·10	225	0·2	4	2·6
Kingston upon Thames	399,890	1·48	243	2·9	6	54·5
Leicestershire*	697,050	0·34	1,524	2·1	11	12·9
Lincolnshire	393,713	0·32	484	1·1	5	7·1
Newcastle	360,471	0·50	495	2·5	5	21·7
Norfolk	319,901	0·22	438	0·9	6	10·3
North Tyneside	354,704	0·71	507	3·0	5	15·1
Northamptonshire	399,541	0·29	496	1·0	6	8·9
Northumberland	353,621	0·51	550	1·8	7	11·1
North Yorkshire	376,176	0·25	274	0·5	6	8·8
Richmond	404,382	1·30	504	7·3	8	100·0
Sandwell*	354,772	0·44	1,491	5·9	10	38·5
Shropshire	499,011	0·55	502	1·5	6	13·6
Solihull	357,042	0·77	502	2·8	7	36·8
Somerset	412,000	0·45	504	1·6	2	5·0
South Tyneside	367,220	0·85	520	4·4	6	42·9
Staffordshire*	408,682	0·16	946	1·1	5	4·2
Stockport	396,803	0·64	502	2·2	7	35·0
Suffolk	393,141	0·30	452	0·8	3	3·8
Sunderland	337,065	0·46	509	2·1	4	16·6
Surrey	434,005	0·22	515	1·0	3	4·4
Tameside	388,500	0·72	545	3·2	4	19·0
Walsall	422,880	0·56	250	1·0	5	20·8
Warwickshire	346,947	0·32	433	1·3	5	11·9
West Sussex	356,604	0·29	206	0·4	4	9·1
Wiltshire	396,136	0·34	256	0·6	3	7·0

Local Education Authority (England)	Sum received by TVEI Projects in 1985-86 £'s	(2) expressed as a per cent. of estimated net education expenditure 1985-86	TVEI pupil numbers at September 1985	(4) expressed as a per cent. of LEA secondary school population (January 1985)	Number of schools participating in TVEI excluding FE Colleges	(6) expressed as a per cent. of total secondary schools per LEA as at January 1985
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Wigan*	397,764	0·49	672	2·4	9	28·1
Wirral*	5,760,431	0·72	766	3·0	6	23·0
Wolverhampton	330,054	0·47	243	1·1	4	19·0

Source:

Column (3) calculations derived from information taken from "Education Statistics 1985-86 Estimates" published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (August 1985).

Column (5) and (7) calculations derived from information taken from "Statistics of Education: Schools 1985" published by the Department of Education and Science (December 1985).

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

National Advisory Body (Planning Exercise)

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he has recently met the committee of polytechnic directors to discuss the National Advisory Body's planning exercise for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: My right hon. Friend attended the annual conference of the committee of directors of polytechnics on 15 April 1986. The planning exercise being undertaken for 1987-88 by the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education was among the subjects discussed.

Teachers (Pay)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what would be the salary at 1 April 1985, 1 November 1985, 1 April 1986 and 1 November 1986 for teachers *(a)* entering the profession as new graduates, *(b)* at the top of scale 1, *(c)* at the mid-point on scale 2, *(d)* at the bottom of scale 3, *(e)* at the top of scale 2, *(f)* at the top of scale 3 and *(g)* at the top of scale 4 and for heads, *(h)* of group 2 primary schools and *(i)* of group 12 secondary schools if the agreements of 24 January and 9 May 1986 were implemented; and, for each *(a)* to *(i)*, what was the salary actually received on 30 January 1986.

Mr. Chris Patten: The table shows teachers' salaries at the points requested (i) at 1 April 1985, following the implementation of the agreement initially reached at ACAS on 24 January, (ii) at 1 April 1986 as they will be after the agreement reached in the Burnham committee on 9 May has been implemented and (iii) actually received as at 30 January 1986, ie the rates which came into force from 1 April 1984. There is no difference in teachers' salaries between 1 April 1985 and 1 November 1985; and the agreement reached on 9 May does not provide for any difference in salaries between 1 April 1986 and 1 November 1986.

£ per annum

	(a) Graduate entry point	(b) Top scale 1	(c) Mid-point scale 2	(d) Bottom scale 3	(e) Top scale 2	(f) Top scale 3	(g) Top scale 4	(h) Group 2 Heads	(i) Group 12 Heads
(i) 1 April 1985	6,684	9,147	8,268	8,268	10,260	11,793	13,215	11,838	22,134
(ii) 1 April 1986	7,302	9,804	8,910	8,910	10,986	12,627	14,151	12,675	23,700
(iii) 30 January 1986 (1 April 1984)	6,252	8,556	7,734	7,734	9,597	11,031	12,363	11,073	20,706

Notes:

1. New entrants assumed to have entered at point 4 of scale 1.
2. Top of scale 1 and top of scale 2 without good honours graduate additions.
3. Mid-point of scale 2 taken as point 6.
4. Head teachers assumed to be at salary maximum throughout.

Vocational and Academic Qualifications

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will now institute a review of the relationship between vocational and academic qualifications in the over-16 age group, in the light of the conclusions of the De Ville report on that subject; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The report of the review group on vocational qualifications was submitted to Ministers on 23 April and published on 8 May. The Government are not yet ready to announce their conclusions on the report or on any aspect or implication of it. I can, however, assure the hon. Member that my right hon. Friend is aware of the importance of ensuring a clear relationship between all qualifications available to the post-16 age group for the purposes of progression to higher education and to employment.

Teacher Training

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what relative importance, was attached, in determining allocations for initial teacher training courses from 1987, to *(a)* Her Majesty's inspectors' reports, *(b)* Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education reports, *(c)* rates of employment of graduates,*(d)* links with other institutions, *(e)* geographical location and *(f)* Council for National Academic Awards reports and validation.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend considered advice from Her Majesty's inspectors before reaching his provisional decisions, along with the views of the validating bodies concerned, including the CNAA, as well as the views of the institutions themselves and of their governing bodies. He also took account of a wide range of other considerations including the rates of employment of graduates from those institutions, their relationship with other higher education and the geographical spread of provision. He did not receive advice from CATE on this matter. His provisional decisions are an overall judgment of how the available numbers can best be deployed to ensure the most effective provision of initial teacher training in the public sector as a whole.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department in respect of the number of mature entrants to teacher training in each of the last five years; whether he is satisfied with the number; what proposals he has to increase the number; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The numbers of students aged 25 and over entering initial teacher training in 1980, 1981, 1982, 1983 and 1984 were 5,697, 5,620, 4,995, 4,489 and 4,192 respectively. My right hon. Friend recognises the value of prospective teachers having had previous employment, or experience of work with children or adolescents. In his recent provisional allocation of target intakes to the public sector he has taken particular account of proposals for courses designed to attract those with relevant experience of this sort.

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what criteria he used, in relation to the requirements of inner cities and the ability of inner city teacher training institutions to satisfy the demands placed upon them, in fixing the provisional allocation of teacher training intakes; if he has any plans to increase the allocation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: My right hon. Friend took into account the geographical distribution of teacher training provision and the capacity of institutions to safeguard and expand the provision of courses utilising skills in ethnic minority languages. The provisional allocations will be reviewed in the light of any representations received by 27 June.

School-Industry Exchanges

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has as to the number of exchanges currently operating between schools and industry; and what trend this represents in relation to previous years.

Mr. Chris Patten: Such information is not available centrally. The Government have often stressed the importance of the different forms of school-industry liaison and they hope that such liaison will expand, particularly as a result of the initiatives being taken in Industry Year.

Vocational Qualifications

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information is available to his Department in respect of the willingness of higher education institutions to admit students with vocational qualifications; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The Department does not possess detailed information about the admission policies and practices of individual higher education institutions. However, recent statistical investigation, supported by a project undertaken by the further education unit, suggests that the proportion of entrants to degree level courses holding qualifications such as those of the Business and Technician Education Council varies greatly between institutions and between subject areas, being significant in subjects such as engineering and very low in most others. Information is not however available which would indicate the number of unsuccessful aspirants to degree places who hold such qualifications.

The Government wish to encourage the route to degree status via BTEC and similar qualifications, and to this end have encouraged dialogue between BTEC, the Council for National Academic Awards and the Standing Conference on University Entrance to promote a freer flow of information about the value of such qualifications, to encourage degree awarding and providing institutions to consider their holders for entry, and to identify and rectify possible barriers. It is however ultimately for those institutions to decide which candidates are best qualified for, and able to benefit from, degree level study.

Public Sector Higher Education

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list the number of lecturers and the number of full-time equivalent students in public

sector higher education in 1981 and 1986, stating the ratio in each year; and what analysis has been carried out of the productivity of this sector in these two years.

Mr. Walden: Information is not available in precisely the form requested. However the Department's monitoring survey of student-staff ratios in further education gives the following information:

Advance level work in further education establishments covered by the survey

	Academic year	
	1980-81	*1984-85*
Full-time equivalent student number* (000)	174·9	265·9
Full-time equivalent staff number* (000)	20·2	24·7
Student-staff ratio†	8·7	10·8
Number of colleges covered by the survey	143	292
Total number of colleges in England	500	469

* Student and staff numbers do not represent total figures for England. The figures relate to number in the colleges covered by the survey.

† Student-staff ratios for 1980-81 and 1984-85 are not strictly comparable because of changes in the size of sample of colleges surveyed.

The Green Paper, "The Development of Higher Education into the 1990s", published in May 1985, referred to the need to develop and use measures of performance in higher education, including the public sector, and gave an outline of the then present state of work on how reliable performance measures might be established. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State invited the National Advisory Body for Public Sector Higher Education, also in May 1985, to undertake a review of good management practice in the public sector, including of the application of performance measures. The NAB is currently engaged on that review, which it is intended should yield advice in time to assist decisions on the NAB's 1987-88 planning exercise.

Educational Initiatives (Voluntary Organisations)

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals his Department is currently considering for involving voluntary organisations in educational initiatives in maintained schools; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government much value the contribution made by the voluntary bodies to education in the maintained sector, which aids the diversity of provision; and will continue to consult them on all matters of common interest in education.

Research Contract

Mr. David Howell asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will take steps to encourage the placing of research contract by industry at institutions of higher education.

Mr. Walden: As was stated in "The Development of Higher Education in to the 1990's" (Cmnd 9524), the Government consider that higher education needs to develop closer and better working with industry and commerce. In particular, business should be able to take advantage of what higher education has to offer through research, technology transfer, business start-up facilities and consultancy. We are doing what we can to encourage this.

The Further Education Act 1985 removed barriers to commercial exploitation of their work by local authority institutions of further and higher education. The grant allocations for 1986-87 announced by the University Grants Committee, and its intentions for subsequent years, reward universities' success in attracting research funds from outside sources. The Science and Engineering Research Council has also initiated several schemes to promote links between higher education and industry, including for teaching companies, and for co-operative grants and awards.

AIDS

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer of 23 January, *Official Report*, column *246*, when his Department expects to issue its definitive guidance on acquired immune deficiency syndrome.

Mr. Dunn: Shortly.

Astronomy

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will set up an inquiry into the funding, organisation and administration of British astronomy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: No. The responsibilities of the bodies responsible for British astronomy are clear and the discipline is in a healthy condition. The recent formation of the British National Space Centre will serve further to invigorate this and other areas.

Royal Greenwich Observatory

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make it his policy to reject the recommendations of the Science and Engineering Research Council on the Royal Greenwich Observatory.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the Science and Engineering Research Council is not in a position to take a decision on its preferred site for the Royal Greenwich Observatory before its June meeting.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will arrange to publish the Science and Engineering Research Council's report on the Royal Greenwich Observatory prepared by Sir John Kingman.

Mr. Walden: The report prepared by a working group under the chairmanship of Sir John Kingman was one of a series of internal documents prepared to assist the Science and Engineering Council in its deliberations on the possible future relocation of the Royal Greenwich Observatory. It would be inappropriate to publish such a document.

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will give details, by individual programme, of *(a)* research on positional astronomy, *(b)* work on laser ranging of artificial satellites and *(c)* Her Majesty's Nautical Almanac Office work carried out at the Royal Greenwich Observatory on his behalf; and what assessment he has made of the effects of the proposed dispersal of the observatory on these programmes.

Mr. Walden: The details requested for the specified programmes are as follows, together with the Science and Engineering Research Council's estimate of the effects of the proposed move of the Royal Greenwich Observatory on the programmes:—

(i) Research on positional astronomy at RGO: The observatory participates in four programmes concerned with the measurement of the positions and movement of stars and planets. These are:—

(a) The ESA astrometric satellite HIPPARCOS to be launched in 1988. It would be necessary to make special arrangements to protect the HIPPARCOS programme by relocating the team earlier than the main Observatory move;

(b) Carlsberg Automatic Meridan Circle, now in operation on La Palma, this would be unaffected by a move;

(c) the second Cape photographic catalogue now nearing completion, this would also be unaffected by a move;

(d) the Equatorical group of telescopes, which are currently in use on funded research programmes and are made available for university teaching and other support observations in positional astronomy. They cannot be relocated with the RGO and could be lost to scientific research.

(ii) Work on laser ranging on artificial satellites: The RGO operates at Herstmonceux on behalf of the Science and Engineering Research Council, the Natural Environment Research Council, the Ministry of Defence and Department of Trade and Industry, a satellite laser ranging system which is one of the few most effective ones in the world. It regularly measures the continually varying range to two SLR — dedicated satellites with a precision of about 4cm. The council is currently considering the implication of a move on the laser ranging work.

(iii) Her Majesty's Nautical Almanac Office: in collaboration with United States Naval Observatory produces various publications giving the position of planets, natural satellites and stars, for use by navigators, astronomers and surveyors. This programme would not be affected by relocation.

School Leavers, Leicestershire

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science, pursuant to the answer to the hon. Member for Leicester East, *Official Report*, 15 May, columns *511-2*, what information he has on the percentage of school leavers in Leicestershire, obtaining one or more A-levels, five or more higher grade O-levels or CSE grade 1 passes, one or more higher grade O-level or CSE grade 1 passes, and no graded O-level or CSE results, in each year from 1965 to 1985.

Mr. Dunn: Data for Leicestershire for the years 1964-65 to 1967-68 are not available. The information for 1967-68 to 1984-85 is shown in the following table:

*School Leavers, Leicestershire**

Academic Year	*One or more A level pass*	*Percentage of leavers with 5 or more higher† grade passes at O level or CSE*	*1 or more higher* grade passes at O level or CSE*	*No graded result at O level or CSE*
1967-68	12·7	17·5	33·6	56·7
1968-69	11·5	16·6	37·3	51·1
1969-70	12·1	17·6	36·4	49·9
1970-71	16·2	19·9	38·0	45·3
1971-72	13·0	18·6	37·5	47·5
1972-73‡	—	—	—	—
1973-74	11·9	17·0	44·0	22·6
1974-75	11·4	15·1	38·8	21·9
1975-76	13·0	16·3	41·6	22·0
1976-77	14·5	18·9	43·5	20·0
1977-78	13·5	17·7	42·1	17·3
1978-79	13·5	20·4	46·1	14·6
1979-80	14·4	19·1	44·8	14·5
1980-81	16·0	22·6	46·9	12·6
1981-82	15·8	22·1	48·8	11·4
1982-83	17·4	23·3	51·7	10·3
1983-84	16·6	22·8	50·5	9·7
1984-85	16·8	23·0	50·8	9·5

Notes:

* For the years prior to 1973-74, the figures are derived from the combined totals of the former Leicester county borough and Leicestershire local education authorities.

† From 1974-75 O level grades A-C, CSE grade 1. Prior to 1974-75 O level examinations were graded pass or fail.

‡ The raising of the school leaving age in 1973 affected the total number of school leavers which was unusually low. Percentages are therefore unrepresentative and have been omitted.

Education Act 1981

Mr. Freud asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if the Government have any plans to publish joint Department of Education and Science/Department of Health and Social Security guidance in relation to the completion of statements under the Education Act 1981, section 5; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Dunn: Guidance is given in a joint circular (Department of Education and Science No. 1/83, Department of Health and Social Security HC(83)3/LAC(83)2) which is available in the Library. My right hon. Friends will alter or add to that guidance as necessary.

East Dorset

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he is satisfied with the provision of educational facilities in the maintained sector in east Dorset; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten Broadly, yes. Although there are clearly some problems, our general impression is one of effective schools and teachers, supported by a coherent overall curricular policy, to which schools are responding well. Some encouraging examples of curricular innovation and inter-school collaboration are to be found there, some of these funded directly by central Government. As to the problems, my right hon. Friend recognises that policies of expenditure constraint over a number of years, in which education must play its part, have required difficult decisions by and within all local education authorities, including those which, like Dorset, have shown their willingness to make efficiency savings in line with the views of the Government.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Chris Patten Yes. The Department has submitted, within the required time, applications in respect of 20 separate operations involving the collection of data about individuals.

Schools (Anti-drug Campaign)

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what information he has about the types of television programme material being used so far by schools as part of the anti-drug abuse campaign promoted by the British Broadcasting Corporation.

Mr. Dunn The Department of Education and Science does not have details about the use by schools of the BBC drugs education materials. However I understand that much interest has been shown by schools in the 60-minute "Drugwatch" educational video.

Education Expenditure

Mr. Madel asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to make available the report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate on the effects of local authority expenditure policies on the education service in England in 1985.

Mr. Chris Patten: The HMI report on the observed effects of local authority expenditure policies on the education service in England in the autumn of 1985 was published yesterday. Copies have been placed in the Vote Office and my right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, North-East (Sir K. Joseph) wrote to all hon. Members for English constituencies. This is the sixth report to be published since this Government decided that HMI's findings should be made generally available and, like its predecessors, it should be essential reading for all concerned with the provision of education.

Llandough Hospital (Pneumoconiosis Research Unit)

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science where research work previously done at the pneumoconiosis research unit at Llandough hospital is now being done since the closure of that unit.

Mr. Walden [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1986, c. *569*]: I understand from the Medical Research Council that research work initiated at its pneumoconiosis unit at Llandough hospital is now continuing at the following sites:

MRC occupational lung diseases team, Llandough hospital
MRC epidemiology unit, Cardiff
MRC toxicology unit, Carshalton
The Welsh school of pharmacy, University of Wales Institute of Science and Technology.
Sully hospital, Penarth.

SCOTLAND

Local Government Finance

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) whether he has any plans to bring forward proposals to change the basis of current expenditure controls on local authorities in Scotland;

(2) whether he intends to instigate a review of the present basis of current expenditure controls on local authorities in Scotland; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In January the Government published the Green Paper "Paying for Local Government: Proposals for Change" (Cmnd. 9714). It reviews the present system of local government finance in Great Britain and in chapter 8 makes proposals for reform of the system in Scotland. An important element of the proposals is the strengthening of local accountability for determining local expenditure priorities. It is envisaged that there will be no continuing need for general grant penalties.

Drinking Water (Lead)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) if he will report on progress with the Government's application to the European Commission for a five-year delay in meeting the terms of Council directive 80/778/EEC relating to the content of lead in drinking water in Scotland;

(2) on what date the Government applied to the European Commission for a five-year delay in implementing the tems of the Council directive 80/778/EEC relating to lead contamination of drinking water throughout Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The Government applied for the delay in respect of the lead content in drinking water in Scotland on 7 August 1985. The Commission has not so far conveyed a decision on the application, but has asked for further details.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland on which date the Scottish Office first asked local authorities for information on lead levels in drinking water in individual supply areas.

Mr. Ancram: In 1975, the Scottish Development Department and the other United Kingdom environment departments organised a survey by local authorities of lead levels in a sample of households. A United Kingdom expert advisory group prepared a report in 1980 which set out a standard method for identifying areas which required detailed investigation. In September 1983 the Scottish Development Department arranged for all Scottish water authorities to undertake a programme of lead identification studies. Results have been obtained from all but one of the authorities, and are under consideration.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what resources of financing and manpower were devoted between July 1980 and July 1985 towards ensuring that the terms of Council directive 80/778/EEC concerning the quality of water intended for human consumption would be met throughout Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not held centrally. The directive is implemented by the water authorities which decide their own priorities within their individual financial allocations.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline under which article and on what basis the Government have applied to the European Commission for a derogation in respect of the lead content of drinking water in Scotland under Council directive 80/778/EEC.

Mr. Ancram: The application for a delay in complying with the directive in respect of lead was made under article 20 of the directive. The initial application covered the whole of Scotland. Since then the Commission has asked for more precise descriptions of the geographical areas affected and the Government will make a fresh application relating only to those areas where remedial action on lead is required, as indicated by the results of lead identification surveys carried out by Scottish water authorities.

Hazardous Waste

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many man days per year his officials in the Scottish Development Department, or other Departments, devote to hazardous waste inspectorate responsibilities.

Mr. Ancram: In the year 1985-86 approximately 470 man-days were spent on these duties by officers of the Scottish Development Department.

Waste Disposal

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report on the current position regarding the drawing up by waste disposal authorities of draft waste disposal plans; if he will outline which district councils have yet to finalise their arrangements; and what steps he intends to take to ensure that this is accomplished without delay.

Mr. Ancram: Section 2 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, which come into effect on 1 September 1978, requires waste disposal authorities (district and islands area councils) to prepare waste disposal plans for their areas, and to send copies to the Secretary of State. No timetable is specified in the legislation, but, with the support of the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, the waste disposal authorities were encouraged to complete their plans by 31 December 1985. To date 35 plans have been received and 13 have been submitted in draft form.

Plans are awaited from the following eight authorities:

Banff and Buchan
Dundee
Dunfermline
East Lothian
Midlothian
Renfrew
West Lothian
Western Isles

These authorities are being asked to submit their remaining plans as soon as possible.

River Quality Surveys

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline the work being undertaken by his officials in connection with river quality surveys announced by the Department of the Environment in 1985, and the financial resources and manpower which are being devoted to this project.

Mr. Ancram In parallel with similar work in England and Wales, my officials are collecting information from

the seven river purification boards in Scotland on the quality of rivers and estuaries in their areas. Later this year we will publish the fourth report since 1968 in the Scottish series of river quality surveys. A sum of £40,000, including manpower of one man-year, has been allocated to the project.

Nature Conservation

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report progress on consultations with the Countryside Commission for Scotland and the Nature Conservancy Council over the selection and setting up of environmentally sensitive areas under the Agriculture Bill.

Mr. John MacKay: Consultations are almost complete and a report will be made shortly to my right hon. and learned Friend.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will consider producing an annual publication for Scotland of the document "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics" produced for England and Wales by the Department of the Environment.

Mr. Ancram: Such a publication has not so far been felt necessary mainly because information is available in existing publications.

In particular, the "Scottish Abstract of Statistics", published annually, contains Scottish environmental data, while data on river water quality are published by the Scottish Development Department at approximately five-year intervals. In addition, in 1984, Her Majesty's Industrial Pollution Inspectorate published two statistical bulletins containing details of all radioactive waste disposals from the Scottish nuclear establishments and the monitoring undertaken in respect of them; subsequent information on disposals was published in a further bulletin in February 1986, and it is intended to publish further monitoring results shortly. These bulletins include all the relevant information relating to Scotland which is provided on a United Kingdom basis in the "Digest of Environmental Protection and Water Statistics."

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department will be participating in the scheme to set aside funds for the conservation of environmentally sensitive areas in Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland announced in January a short list of areas to be considered for designation in Scotland. My right hon. and learned Friend intends to designate at least one of these areas after the Agriculture Bill receives the Royal Assent.

North Sea (Conference)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many of his officials or appointees are members of the international technical working group established in preparation for the international conference on the environmental protection of the North sea to be hosted by the United Kingdom in November 1987.

Mr. Ancram: One senior Scottish Office official is a member of the United Kingdom delegation to the scientific and technical working group set up to prepare for the international North sea conference 1987. Appointments will be made to sub-groups as necessary.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will outline what role his Department will play in preparation for promotion of and participation in the international conference on the environmental protection of the North sea, to be hosted by the United Kingdom in November 1987.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Office is already participating fully in the preparations for the international North sea conference 1987. The Department was represented at the international meeting of senior officials (IMSO) in London last November and will participate in the scientific and technical working group, the next meeting of which is to be held in Aberdeen in June. Consideration is also being given to holding the final IMSO in Edinburgh in September 1987 in preparation for the main conference in November.

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what guidance is currently provided by Departments of the Scottish Office to local authorities on their role in nature conservation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: The national planning guidelines issued by the Scottish Development Department in 1981 require planning authorities to consider, in consultation with the Nature Conservancy Council, whether their land use planning and development policies are compatible with nature conservation. Further guidance is provided in an associated land use summary sheet on nature conservation and in planning guidelines dealing with specific subjects including coastal planning, aggregate working and skiing developments. Circulars have been issued to local authorities on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Wildlife and Countryside (Amendment) Act 1985 and the Wildlife and Countryside (Service of Notices) Act 1985. The question of whether further guidance is needed at the present time is currently under review.

Soil Analysis

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what is the projected cost of *(a)* staff transfers from Aberdeen to Dundee and *(b)* new buildings and equipment in Dundee, for work on arable soil fertility;

(2) what is the estimated cost of transferring soil analysis, the facility advisory work, and the spectrochemical analysis from the Macaulay to the Scottish colleges of agriculture; and what is the cost of transporting samples to Edinburgh from all areas of Scotland north of Montrose.

Mr. John MacKay: The information requested is not yet available. A steering group is currently considering a number of practical questions arising from the strategy document on agricultural R and D which was published by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland last December. The steering group will report to my right hon. and learned Friend as soon as possible.

Royal Scottish National Hospital, Larbert

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, further to his answer of 6 May, *Official Report*, column *14*, if he will arrange for the full report of the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland on its visit to the Royal Scottish National hospital at Larbert to be published.

Mr. John MacKay: No. The Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland is an independent statutory body and my right hon. and learned Friend has no locus to arrange publication of its internal reports. The only report which the Commission is required to publish is its annual report and that for 1985 will, I understand, deal with conditions at the Royal Scottish National Hospital. It will also acknowledge recent improvements at the hospital.

Youth Activities (Grants)

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has on expenditure by regional authorities *(a)* in the last year for which figures are available and *(b)* in 1982-83 on training of part-time youth leaders in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: This information is not centrally available.

Mr. Craigen asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he received the urban aid application C/204/86 from Strathclyde regional council to assist the Wanderers parents group in Milton, Glasgow, in furthering youth activities with parental back-up; and when he expects to decide on the grant application.

Mr. Ancram: The Scottish Development Department received this application in December 1985 as part of a package submitted by Strathclyde regional council for urban programme support in 1986-87. Further information was sought from the council in March to clarify the project's eligibility. This was received on 21 May. A decision will now be taken on the application as quickly as possible.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Yes. Sixty-four applications were submitted. To date the registrar has not raised any questions on them.

Dwellings (Fire Escape)

Mr. Hirst asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to publish guidance on means of escape from fire in houses in multiple occupation in Scotland.

Mr. Rifkind: A draft version of a guide setting out an advisory standard for means of escape from fire in certain houses in multiple occupation in Scotland has been prepared by the Scottish Home and Health Department. The guide also covers related fire safety measures and will assist the process of consultation between housing and fire authorities which is required under housing legislation. Copies of the draft guide, on which written comments are invited by Friday 4 July 1986, are being sent to the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities and to other interested bodies; copies have also been placed in the Library of the House. Subject to the outcome of the consultation exercise, I hope to be able to publish the final version of the guide during 1986.

WALES

Radiation Levels

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what are the highest levels of radioactivity recorded in milk samples in south-west Wales; on what days such levels were recorded in the time period since the nuclear reactor disaster at Chernobyl; and how these levels compared with those recorded prior to this incident.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The most radiologically significant radionuclides found in samples taken since the Chernobyl nuclear accident have been iodine 131 and caesium 137. In south-west Wales iodine 131 was at its highest at 18 becquerels/litre in a sample taken from milk in Haverfordwest on 5 May 1986. Caesium 137 was at its highest at 23 becquerels/litre in a sample taken from the same source on 11 May 1986. These levels are well below the emergency reference levels for milk of 2,000 becquerels/litre and 3,600 becquerels/litre respectively. Regular monitoring near Carmarthen prior to the incident revealed background levels for caesium 137 of 0·1 becquerels/litre but no detectable levels of iodine 131.

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what were the highest levels of radioactivity recorded in samples of rainwater collected in south-west Wales; when such levels were recorded following the Chernobyl disaster; and how such levels compared with those recorded prior to the incident.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Atomic Energy Research Establishment, Harwell has assessed the level of radioactivity in rainwater at its monitoring point in Milford Haven to be approximately 5·6 becquerels per litre of iodine 131 on 3 May. Iodine 131 is not mormally found in rainfall. Caesium 137 in samples taken from rainfall at Milford Haven following the Chenobyl incident was below the level of detection as it has been for at least the last three years.

Radiation (Monitoring)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales where are the nearest radiation monitoring stations to south-west Wales which monitor the levels of radioactivity in milk, rainwater and general background.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Levels of radioactivity in milk are routinely sampled near Carmarthen. However, following the Chernobyl incident, monitoring for radioactive contamination in milk was undertaken throughout Wales on a daily basis. In south-west Wales samples were taken from creameries at Llangadog, Felinfach and Whitland and from individual farms at Aberystwyth, Carmarthen and Brawdy. Rainwater is sampled at Milford Haven. Measurement of the natural gamma ray background has been undertaken by NRPB in virtualy every accessible 10 km square in south-west Wales as throughout Great Britain.

Health Expenditure, Cardiff

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much has been spent in the last five years, on hospital equipment appertaining to patients' needs; what type of equipment has been purchased over the past five years in

Cardiff and Cardiff, West in particular; how it compares with the years 1975 to 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not held centrally.

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the total expenditure on the National Health Service in Cardiff and Cardiff, West in particular, in each year since 1979 and up to the most recently available data; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available in the form requested. However the recurrent allocations to South Glamorgan health authority, at cash prices, have been as follows:

	£ million
1978-79	57·841
1979-80	69·542
1980-81	88·903
1981-82	98·302
1982-83	107·064
1983-84	113·222
1984-85	119·490
1985-86	126·282
1986-87	*134·994

* Provisional

Hospital Closures, Cardiff

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy not to approve the closure of any hospitals in Cardiff, West; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The planning and management of Health Service facilities in Cardiff is the responsibility of the South Glamorgan health authority. If it decides to implement proposals for the closure or change of use of a hospital, it must first embark on public consultation. If, as a result of that, there is unresolved local opposition to a proposal to close or change the use of a hospital the authority must submit its proposals to the Secretary of State for his consideration.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a table showing for November 1985 and for November of each of the previous six years, the number of unemployed persons registered at the Pwllheli local employment office and the number of job vacancies registered during each of those months at that office.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The requirement that unemployed people should register at a jobcentre was removed in October 1982. Information that distinguishes the number of unemployed registrants after that date is not available. The following is the available information.

Pwllheli Jobcentre

	Unemployed Registrants	*Unfilled Vacancies*
November 1979	542	107
November 1980	702	11
November 1981	862	12
November 1982	n.a.	16
November 1983	n.a.	9
November 1984	n.a.	28
November 1985	n.a.	30

Source: MSC Wales.
n.a.: Not available.

Dwyfor District Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* the details of every meeting which Ministers in his Department have had with officers of Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor since May 1979, indicating the dates of such meetings, the location and the matters under discussion.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: This information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Estuarial Barrage (Cardiff)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects to publish the feasibility studies into a Cardiff estuarial barrage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The results of the preliminary studies into the feasibility of building a barrage across the Cardiff harbour mouth and of the investment potential in the south Cardiff area will be available shortly. I shall make known my initial reaction to those studies as soon as possible thereafter.

Chess Union

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales what financial assistance is available from the Welsh Office for the Welsh Chess Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The Department makes a grant to the Welsh Chess Union towards the costs of international travel for competitions. Grant for 1986-87 will be up to £4,738.

Education Expenditure

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what percentage of education expenditure in Wales is spent on non-mandatory youth services; and what were the figures for each year since 1979.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: In 1984-85, the latest year for which outturn information is available, expenditure incurred by the Department and by local education authorities on the youth service represented just under 1 per cent. of total expenditure on education in Wales (excluding expenditure on universities and on mandatory student awards). This percentage has been unchanged in each year since 1979-80.

GCSE (Syllabuses)

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many syllabuses for the new general examination have been translated into Welsh.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The examination department of the Welsh joint education committee has this task in hand.

NHS (Gwynedd)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Offical Report*, the details of hospital and health care facilities, the number of doctors and nurses, the

number of hospital beds and specialist facilities provided by the National Health Service in Gwynedd *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the present time.

Mr. Mark Robinson: National Health Service hospitals in Gwynedd, and their numbers of allocated beds, are as folls:—

	*Staffed beds allocated**	
	1979	*1985*
Caernarvonshire & Anglesey General	193	†—
St. David's	168	118
Minffordd	37	†—
Druid	46	46
Cefni	30	30
Valley	40	28
Gors Maternity	17	‡—
Stanley Sailors	27	23
Eye & Cottage	30	14
Eryri	67	30
Gallltysil	32	—
Brynseiont	67	39
Madoc Memorial	12	12
Bryn Beryl	52	52
Llandudno General	166	166
Groesynyd	22	22
Conway	71	71
Bryn-y-Neuadd	310	303
Ffestiniog Memorial	16	16
Bronygarth	30	30
Dolgellau and Barmouth	36	32
Llwyn View	46	31
Garth Angharad	19	11
Tywyn	30	30
Ysbyty Gwynedd	—	515
TOTAL	1,564	1,625

* As at 31 December.
† Closed during 1984.
‡ Closed during 1980.
‖ Closed during 1985.

Additionally, outpatient facilities were provided, in 1979 and 1985, at ophthalmic clinics (in Anglesey, Caernarfon and Meirionnydd), a gynaecology clinic (Porthmadog), ante-natal clinics (at several locations), at Pwllheli health centre, Bala and Maes Derw. In 1985, but not in 1979, out patient clinics were also held at Madyn road (Amlwch), St. David's priory (Holyhead) and at Criccieth and Llanfair P G health centre. The numbers of medical, dental and nursing staff employed by the Gwynedd health authority are given in the table.

	*1979**	*1985**
Hospital doctors	97	129
Hospital dentists	1	3
Community doctors	35	19
Community dentists	35	13
Hospital nurses and midwives	1,419	1,830
Community nurses and midwives	207	262

* Whole-time equivalents at 30 September.

Secondary Education, Gwynedd

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will state the number of teachers, pupils, expenditure per pupil and the average size of class in secondary schools in Gwynedd *(a)* in 1979 and *(b)* at the present time.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The latest available information is as follows:

Number of teachers†*

	Number
1979	1,132
1985	1,261

Number of pupils†*

	Number
1979	19,031
1985	19,642

Net cost per pupil at outturn prices‡‖*

	£
1979-80	578·4
1984-85	1,027·7

Information on the average size of class as taught in secondary schools is not available. Figures for registered classes are as follows:

Average size of registered classes¶*

	Number
1979	23·3
1984	25·4

* Full-time equivalent full-time qualified teachers.
† At January each year.
‡ Net recurrent institutional costs.
‖ Financial year.
¶ Average size of registered classes in years I to V, at September each year.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Wales whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: My Department's applications, required under the provisions of the Data Protection Act, were submitted to the office of the Data Protection registrar within the time allowed.

Haemophiliacs (Counselling Centres)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how much money his Department makes available to centres run by Welsh health authorities at which haemophiliacs are treated and supported in counselling centres.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The Department has given £20,000 in the current financial year to South Glamorgan health authority towards the cost of counselling at the haemophilia reference centre at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. South Glamorgan health authority has asked the Department to designate the reference centre as a regional service. If this application is approved it will in future be funded centrally.

In-vitro Fertilisation

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he has any proposals for the establishment of National Health Service facilities in Wales for the provision of in-vitro fertilisation.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Funds have been made available by the Department to South Glamorgan health authority

for the provision of facilities at the University Hospital of Wales which will initiate a programme for in-vitro fertilisation within the National Health Service in Wales.

Residential Homes

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many people are at present resident in local authority homes now as compared with 1979; and what is the present average occupancy of such residences.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The latest available information relates to 31 March 1985 and is given in the following table along with comparable information for 1979.

Local authority residential homes

	31 March 1979		*31 March 1985*	
Home for the	*Number of residents*	*Per cent. occupancy*	*Number of residents*	*Per cent. occupancy*
Elderly, physically handicapped and blind	7,381	97	7,473	95
Mentally ill	293	89	338	75
Mentally handicapped	447	83	703	88

Mental Patients (Community Care)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many patients in care for five years or more have been discharged into the community during the last year for which figures are available from National Health Service hospitals caring for mental illness and mental handicap patients.

Mr. Mark Robinson: Forty persons, who had previously been resident in an institution for five years or more, were discharged from psychiatric hospitals and units to reside in the community during 1984, the last year for which information is available.

Health Authorities (Land Disposal)

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what was the income to the Health Service in Wales from the sale of land and properties owned by the health authorities during the last year for which information is available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: For 1985-86 income was £1,575,985.

Personal Social Services

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Wales what is the amount spent in Wales per head on personal social services in the last year for which figures are available; and how such figures compare with England in general and with each of the English regions.

Mr. Mark Robinson: In 1983-84, the latest year for which outturn information is available, expenditure in Wales and England on personal social services was £42·73 and £39·49 per head respectively. I have arranged for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Social Services, to supply the hon. Member with the information requested on personal social services expenditure in each of the English regions.

YTS (Cardiff)

Mr. Terlezki asked the Secretary of State for Wales, how many people have completed YTS schemes in *(a)* Cardiff and *(b)* Cardiff West, since the scheme's inception; how many persons completing the scheme have found full-time or part-time employment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards *[pursuant to his reply,* 15 May 1986, c. *538-39]:* Owing to an administrative error an incorrect figure for YTS entrants was given. The correct information is now as follows: The information as requested is not available. Available information relates to the counties of south and Mid Glamorgan where, since the inception of YTS in April 1983, there have been 23,712 entrants. The most recent Manpower Services Commission 100 per cent. follow-up survey showed that 46 per cent. of those leaving YTS in this area between April and November 1985, found full-time or part-time employment.

Nuclear Power Stations, Gwynedd

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will now ensure that emergency procedure instructions indicating what local residents should do in the case of major nuclear accident at either Trawsfynydd or Wylfa nuclear power stations in Gwynedd, be issued to every household within 30 miles of either nuclear power station.

Mr. Mark Robinson *[pursuant to his reply,* 19 May 1986, c. *39]:* Present plans are as set out in the Health and Safety Executive's publication "Emergency plans for civil and nuclear installations". Responsibility for preparing these plans rests with the stations concerned and copies are held by the local authorities and the emergency services. The plans are regularly reviewed and tested by the CEGB under the terms of the licence issued by the nuclear installations inspectorate.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Dafydd Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will list in the *Official Report* those locations, institutions or facilities in Wales which have a capability of measuring the incidence of strontium 90 and of plutonium 239; and from which of these his Department has obtained information on the incidence of these isotopes following the Chernobyl nuclear accident.

Mr. Mark Robinson *[pursuant to his reply,* 19 May 1986, c. *39]:* Testing for strontium 90 and plutonium 239 at environmental levels is an extremely specialised procedure and I am not aware of any establishment in Wales which currently have the capability of undertaking such measurement. Samples from Wales collected by the CEGB are tested at the Board's central research laboratory.

ENVIRONMENT

Windscale Fire (1957)

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what types and levels of radioisotope, along with their chemical and biological half-lives, were emitted as a result of the 1957 Windscale fire; and how many people are expected to die or have died of cancer as a result.

Mr. Waldegrave: Full details are given in a report by the National Radiological Protection Board under the title

"An assessment of the radiological impact of the Windscale reactor fire, 1957" November 1982 and "Addendum to report R.135" September 1983. Copies of these will be placed in the Library of the House.

Urban Renewal

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *359-60*, he will set out the categories of detailed information which will be included in the reports to be published of agreed schemes submitted to his Department's urban renewal unit for additional housing investment programme resources; and if he will give further details of schemes submitted but not approved.

Sir George Young: I refer the hon. Gentleman to my answers of 20 February [Vol. 92, columns *340-41*], 12 March [Vol. 93, column *464*], 13 March [Vol. 93, columns *560-61*], 26 March [Vol. 94, columns *500-2*], 24 April [Vol. 96, columns *239-40*], 2 May [Vol. 96, columns *507-9*], and my right hon. Friend's answer of 16 May [Vol. 97, columns *592-93*] which gave detailed information about the schemes which we have already approved. Similar information will be given about further schemes as they are approved.

Meanwhile, as stated in my answer of 12 May [Vol. 97, columns *359-60*], the details of such schemes remain subject to change. None has yet been rejected outright.

Parish, Town and Community Councils

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the 100 parish and town councils with the largest rate receipts in 1986-87, showing also their budgeted current expenditure for 1986-87.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall write to the hon. Member.

Nuclear Waste Disposal

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what research he has commissioned on sulphate attack on concrete and concrete cancer; what is the life expectancy of concrete linings in near-surface nuclear waste dumps; and how long metal drums containing solid low-level nuclear waste take to decay.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department supports a long-term research programme at the Building Research Establishment on sulphate attack on concrete. Results of the first five years' exposure of concrete specimens are summarised in:

> Harrison and Peychenne. Sulphate resistance of buried concrete: second interim report on long term investigations at Northwick Park. BRE, HMSO, 1981.

Work is now being done on concrete specimens which have been exposed for 15 years, and further work will be carried out in due course on specimens after 25 years' exposure.

BRE's current recommendations for producing concrete resistant to sulphate attack are given in BRE Digest 250 "Concrete in sulphate bearing soils and groundwaters" (revised 1984) and are incorporated in the recent British Standard on structural concrete BS8110, 1985, part I, table 6.1.

The life expectancy of concrete linings in nuclear waste repositories would depend on many factors including the composition of both concrete and groundwater, and the method of placement. The subject is discussed in Harwell report No. 11465 "An assessment of long-term durability of concrete in radioactive waste repositories".

My Department and NIREX are jointly funding work on the specification of a waste drum with a life expectancy of 300-500 years. Results so far available suggest that this life expectancy should be achieved with thin-walled stainless steel or thick-walled carbon steel drums.

Housing Defects Act

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the types of houses for which repair schemes are currently available under the Housing Defects Act.

Sir George Young: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend, the Minister for Housing, Urban Affairs and Construction, on Tuesday May 20 to the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr (Mr. Rooker) at column *136*.

Housing Statistics

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the number of houses which were demolished or otherwise became uninhabitable in the course of the last year; and as to the number of houses, previously uninhabitable, which became habitable in the course of the year.

Sir George Young: The available information is from English authorities' returns for the financial year 1984-85. After allowing for missing figures, it is estimated under slum clearance powers 2,600 dwellings were closed and 8,100 dwellings were demolished, of which 900 had been previously closed. A further 15,700 dwellings were demolished or lost through, for example, destruction by fire or flood. An estimated 8,800 dwellings which would otherwise have been unfit, were brought up to standard following formal or informal action by local authorities. Information is not available about dwellings made habitable as a result of other forms of action by owners.

Housing

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will estimate the total new housing starts in England and Wales in each of the years since 1970.

Sir George Young: The figures for England from 1976 to 1985 appear in table 2 of my Department's monthly housing statistics press notice issued on 2 May and figures for the earlier years appear in table 72(a) of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1970-1980"; copies are in the Library. For information on housebuilding in Wales, I refer my hon. Friend to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has received from the Audit Commission concerning the rate of increase of the cost of bringing up to standard the housing stock in the United Kingdom.

Sir George Young: The Audit Commission has given an estimate, in its response to my Department's consultations on systems of local authority capital

expenditure control, that the backlog of maintenance work needed to the local authority housing stock in England and Wales might be growing at £750 million a year. I understand that this estimate is based on a theoretical model relating the age of the stock to the lives of building components, rather than on direct observations. Further information will be available in the commission's forthcoming report on local authority housing maintenance.

The commission has made no estimates concerning the private sector stock.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will estimate the total cost of bringing up to standard all housing in *(a)* the private sector and *(b)* the public sector.

Sir George Young: Local authorities estimated, in my Department's recent stock condition inquiry, that they needed to spend some £18·8 billion on repairs and improvements to their own housing stock. The 1986 English house condition survey will provide an independent estimate of the condition of the stock as a whole.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has of the total number of houses that have been in need of *(a)* some repair, *(b)* substantial repair or have been *(c)* unfit for habitation in each of the last 10 years for which figures are available; and what is each of these figures as a percentage of the total housing stock in each of those years.

Sir George Young: Estimates from the 1976 and 1981 English house condition surveys are as follows:

	1976		*1981*	
	Thousands	*Per cent. of stock*	*Thousands*	*Per cent. of stock*
Dwellings in serious disrepair* and/or unfit	1,557	9·1	1,690	9·4
of which:				
in serious disrepair*	859	5·0	1,049	5·8
unfit	1,162	6·8	1,116	6·2

* requiring repairs costing £7,000 or more at 1981 prices.

In 1981 an estimated 3·9 million dwellings (21·7 per cent.) needed repairs of £2,500 or more; a corresponding figure for 1976 is not available.

New Towns

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will produce a table in the *Official Report* listing all the new towns in England and Wales and the district or borough and county councils within whose boundaries each new town lies or partly lies.

Mr. Tracey: For the new towns in England which still have development corporations the information requested is as follows:

New Town	*District or Borough Council*	*County Council*
Aycliffe	Sedgefield	Durham
Milton Keynes	Milton Keynes	Buckinghamshire
Peterborough	Peterborough	Cambridgeshire
Peterlee	Easington	Durham
Runcorn	Halton	Cheshire
Telford	Wrekin	Shropshire
Warrington	Warrington	Cheshire
Washington	Sunderland	—

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for new towns in Wales.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will produce a table in the *Official Report* of all the new towns in England and Wales stating, for each, the start date and the latest winding-up date.

Mr. Tracey: For the new towns in England which still have development corporations the designation dates were as follows:

New Towns	*Designation dates*
Aycliffe and Peterlee	19 April 1947 } combined 10 March 1948 } 1 July 1985
Washington	24 July 1964
Milton Keynes	23 January 1967
Peterborough	21 July 1967
Telford	Designated as Dawley new town—16 January 1963 and subsequently extended
Warrington and Runcorn	26 April 1968 } combined 10 April 1964 } 1 April 1981

My right hon. Friend, the Member for Wanstead and Woodford (Mr. Jenkin), announced on 21 March 1985 that the lives of the development corporations in Aycliffe and Peterlee and in Washington were to be extended until 31 March 1988. In 1981, my right hon. Friend, the Member for Henley (Mr. Heseltine) announced that the development corporations for the other English new towns — Milton Keynes, Peterborough, Telford and Warrington and Runcorn would be wound up in the late 1980s. Further announcements on the wind-up dates for these corporations will be made shortly.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales is responsible for new towns in Wales.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimated proportion of the low-level nuclear waste produced up to the year 2030 will come from *(a)* hospitals and laboratories, *(b)* nuclear power plants and *(c)* reprocessing.

Mr. Waldegrave: I shall answer this question shortly.

Letchworth Garden City

Mr. Bowen Wells asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what will be the effect of section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the operation after 1986 of the Letchworth Garden City corporation.

Mr. Tracey: Section 262 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that local Acts applying to non-metropolitan areas cease to have effect at the end of this year unless re-enacted or exempted. An order under section 262 will shortly be laid before Parliament exempting from repeal a number of local statutory provisions including all provisions of the Letchworth Garden City Corporation Act 1962, other than those which are spent by the passage of time. This order will allow the corporation to continue unchanged its statutory task of managing and developing the undertaking of the former Garden City company.

Local Government Reform

Mr. Maples asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he can now estimate the staff savings from the abolition of the Greater London council and the metropolitan county councils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The savings at present come about largely from the reduction in posts in the structure. The estimated number of claims for compensation for redundancy received by residuary bodies from ex-GLC or MCC employees is as follows:

	Number
London	3,000
Greater Manchester	640
Merseyside	358
South Yorkshire	521
Tyne and Wear	160
West Midlands	531
West Yorkshire	950
Total MCCs	3,160
Grand Total	6,160

These figures are broadly in line with the Government's estimate in November 1984 that about 7,000 posts could eventually be saved from abolition. It does not mean that 6,160 people have been made redundant against their will. The great majority have been ready to go, generally by taking early retirement, and in some areas posts have been available for all employees of the outgoing authorities who wanted them.

The Government's earlier estimate was based on savings arising from rationalisation of the structure of local government, leaving aside any savings from changes of policy by the successor authorities. Initial redundancies will not be the same as the number of posts saved because, for example, staff left the GLC and MCCs in anticipation of abolition and many of the jobs in residuary bodies will disappear in due course.

Residuary bodies are well advanced in making redundancy compensation payments to those eligible. It has been our aim all along that the number of posts should be reduced without making large numbers of people redundant against their will. I believe we have achieved both aims.

Derelict Land Grants

Mr. Rowe asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much his Department disbursed in derelict land grants in the years 1981-82, 1982-83, 1983-84 and 1984-85; and what proportion of that was given each year to companies who intended to build large retail stores.

Sir George Young: Derelict land grant paid by my Department for the years 1981-82 to 1984-85 is set out below, showing separately the amounts paid to local authorities and those paid direct to others including the private sector. No grant was paid to reclaim land for large retail store development.

	Local Authorities	*Others*	*£ million Total*
1981-82	29·05	0·02	29·07
1982-83	34·50	0·76	35·26
1983-84	65·90	1·74	67·64
1984-85	64·55	3·29	67·84

Radiation

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why dosage emergency reference levels differ, namely, for iodine-131 in milk, by as much as a factor of four in the countries of western Europe; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The emergency reference levels applied in the United Kingdom are recommended by the National Radiological Protection Board and are consistent with the international recommendations. Different levels may have been adopted in other countries but we have no information about the methods of calculation employed.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list the consultants used and consultancy fees paid by the London Docklands Development Corporation in the financial year 1985-86.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 9 May 1986, c. *301*]: LDDC policy is to keep its core of permanent staff as small as possible and to supplement their work with external private sector skills wherever necessary. The following consultants were used by LDDC during 1985-86.

Ahrends Burton & Koralek
American City Corporation
AMK Associates
Arthur Andersen
Ansell & Bailey
Architects Workshop
Ove Arup & Partners
Arup Associates
Ashurst Morris Crisp
W S Atkins
Aviation and General Consultants
Awford Hoye Partnership
Aworth Land Survey
Charles Barker Group Ltd
Alan Baxter & Associates
Beard Dove & Partners
Bellamy and Wareham
R Bernstein
Chris Blandford Associates
Tom Brandon
J F Brennon Associates
Bricolpar
P Bridgeman Associates
Briford Associates Ltd
Building Design Partnership
CIPFA Services Ltd

Peter Clapshaw & Co
Ian Clayton Ltd
Brian Clouston & Partners
Timothy Cochrane Associates
Colliers Bigwood & Bewley
Alan Conisbee and Associates
Conran Roche
Trevor Crocker and Partners
Edward Cullinan
De Leuw Chadwick Oheocha
ECD Partnership
Economic and Transport Planning Group
Charles Ellis
EPS Consultants
W A Fairhurst & Partners
Julian Feary Architects
Fielden & Mawsen
Fitch & Company
Fulcrum
John Francis Associates
Gardiner & Theobald
Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners
Gifford & Partners
Gold Greenlees Trott
Gracey Associates
Grant and Partners
Greenbank Engineering Group
Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners
Haiste & Partners
Sir William Halcrow & Partners
Hancock Hutton & Wilcher
Keith Harrison & Associates
Julian Harrop
Healey & Baker
G L Hearn & Partners
Hockley & Dawson
Michael Hopkins Architects
Horton & Points
A. F. Howland Associates
Paddy Jackson
Jamieson Mackay & Partners
Jardine Mattheson
Richard Kelsall
L. L. Kenchington Associates
Laurence King and Partners
Nicholas Lacy Jobst and Hyett
Landscape Design Partnership
Land Use Consultants
Large & Associates
Georgina Livingston
Livingston McIntosh Associates
Llewellyn Davies Planning
London Landscape Consortium
Derek Lovejoy & Partners
John Mason & Partners
Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall
Maritime & Distribution Systems
McBains
Tim McFarlane
Alan Morgan
Mott Hay and Anderson
Monk Dunstone Associates
Neale & Partners
London Borough of Newham
Newman Levinson & Partners
James Nisbet & Partners
Ronald J. Orwell & Partners
John Outrom
Peat Marwick Mitchell
John Pelling Associates
Penarth Research Centre
Charles Pike & Partners
T. H. Preston
Primary Systems Ltd
David Price
Price Low & Cullen
Project Development Associates
Rendel Palmer & Tritton
Rickaby Thomson Associates
Richard Rogers & Partners
Robson Rhodes
Saunders & Huggins
Seifert Ltd
Shandwick P. R.
Shepheard Epstein & Hunter
B. Sheriden & Co
Sir Frederick Snow & Partners
Spicer Kapica and Associates
Strategy International Limited
Sutcliffe and Associates
Robert Taylor
Bernard Thorpe & Partners
Titmuss Sainer & Webb
Transportation Planning Associates
Turner Whyte Energy Services
Robin Verney
Wallace Evans & Partners
H. L. Waterman & Partners
Warden & Company
Wythe Holland Udall Partnership
Yeoman & Edwards
Y. R. M. Partnership
Zambia Engineering Services

These consultants have undertaken assignments ranging from a few hundred to several hundred thousand pounds. It would breach commercial confidentiality to give the fees paid to each consultant, but the corporation estimates that within its total programme some £5·6 million has been paid to consultants for specific projects. About £2·3 million has been paid to consultants for legal, financial, computing and other services.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Births and Deaths (Statistics)

Mr. Proctor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in the years 1983 and 1984 what was *(a)* the number of live births, and the live birth rate, *(b)* the number of perinatal deaths and the perinatal mortality rate, *(c)* the number of infant deaths and the infant mortality rate and *(d)* the perinatal and infant mortality rates by district council area in Northern Ireland for the years 1983 and 1984, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Northern Ireland

	1983	*1984*
(a) Live births		
Number	27,255	27,693
Rate per 1,000 population	17·3	17·5
(b) Perinatal deaths		
Number	359	301
Rate per 1,000 live and still births	13·1	10·8
(c) Infant deaths		
Number	329	291
Rate per 1,000 live births	12·1	10·5

	1983		1984	
	Perinatal death rate per 1,000 live and still births	*Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births*	*Perinatal death rate per 1,000 live and still births*	*Infant mortality rate per 1,000 live births*
(d) Districts councils				
Ards	8·8	15·4	16·3	9·3
Belfast	14·6	12·0	13·8	11·5
Castlereagh	10·1	8·4	7·4	11·9
Down	13·2	10·5	8·0	12·5
Lisburn	18·3	12·3	8·1	14·3
North Down	4·2	8·5	6·9	8·8
Antrim	15·6	6·8	12·7	12·8
Ballymena	11·4	9·4	11·0	7·8
Ballymoney	7·1	4·8	4·9	7·4
Carrickfergus	13·6	9·1	2·2	4·4
Coleraine	19·4	7·0	9·2	12·0
Cookstown	8·5	8·5	6·6	10·0
Larne	22·6	12·7	5·0	10·0
Magherafelt	9·3	10·9	17·9	6·6
Moyle	4·7	18·8	4·2	—
Newtownabbey	14·2	15·2	5·6	7·3
Armagh	10·4	15·1	7·0	5·8
Banbridge	10·3	14·5	6·3	10·4
Craigavon	14·1	15·6	13·4	7·8
Dungannon	8·9	12·0	8·6	9·6
Newry and Mourne	9·4	5·6	14·5	14·6
Fermanagh	20·9	16·3	10·5	10·5
Limavady	13·3	15·1	12·5	19·7
Derry	14·5	14·6	10·5	10·5
Omagh	16·9	24·5	12·7	10·6
Strabane	7·0	7·0	15·1	6·9

The figures reflect a continuing overall downward trend in rates for perinatal and infant deaths in Northern Ireland.

Construction (Ballyhalbert)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at what stage is the proposed Northern Ireland Housing Executive scheme for new homes at Ballyhalbert, County Down; when it is planned to commence work on sites; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Needham: This is a matter for the chairman of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive who has advised me that, following a review of priorities, the proposed scheme for five new houses in Ballyhalbert, which had been planned to start in December 1985, has been rescheduled to 1987-88.

Rathlin Island

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what considerations govern the possible connection of Rathlin island to the electricity main grid; and whether there are presently any plans for action.

Dr. Boyson: The Northern Ireland electricity service last carried out a study of the provision of a mains supply of electricity on Rathlin island in 1983 and concluded that neither of the two main options considered could be economically justified at that time. This is a matter which is kept under regular review and is currently being reassessed.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on Government action in relation to the development of Rathlin island, giving details of investments over the past six years and all planned investment or schemes under consideration.

Mr. Needham: Set out are details of past and proposed action and expenditure on Rathlin island undertaken by Northern Ireland Departments.

Department of Environment

1. *Roads*

The DOE(NI) Road Service has spent £155,000 on the improvement and maintenance of the roads on Rathlin island over the past six years. No significant reconstruction works are under consideration at present.

2. *Housing*

In 1983 the Northern Ireland Housing Executive completed an improvement scheme on the two cottages remaining in its ownership on the island at a cost of £49,000. In addition, during the past six years renovation grants totalling almost £42,000 have been paid in respect of eight dwellings and applications for grants totalling £17,900 in respect of three dwellings are under consideration.

3. *Water Supplies and Sewerage*

The Water Service of the DOE(NI) has spent £335,000 since 1983 on the provision of a public water supply. A scheme to construct a public sewer at Church Bay is programmed for 1989-90 at a cost of £20,000.

4. *Conservation*

In association with the Commissioner of Irish Lights the DOE(NI) provided Nature Reserve Warden accommodation at a cost of £11,500. It is proposed to spend approximately £6,000 in 1986-87 on fencing and associated works on Kebble National Nature Reserve.

Department of Economic Development

5. *Harbours*

(i) The Department of Economic Development provided £187,367 in grant assistance towards the cost of major improvements to the harbour at Church Bay, Rathlin.

(ii) The island has benefited from grant assistance of £843,342 under the Amenity Harbour Grant Scheme provided by the Department for the development of Ballycastle Harbour.

Department of Education

6. *Schools*

The Department has given grant aid for capital works at the island's Primary School totalling approximately £14,157 during the last two financial years. There are no planned investments or schemes under consideration.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give consideration to the granting of boarding allowances to children from Rathlin island who have to attend school on the mainland.

Dr. Mawhinney: Boarding allowances are available to children from Rathlin island who are non-fee-paying pupils at grammar schools and the North-Eastern education and library board may provide board and lodging otherwise than at school for those who attend other schools on the mainland.

Border Security

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary has discussed with the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana the effect on border security of the reduction of overtime in the latter force.

Mr. Scott: Discussions between the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda Siochana are confidential. The subjects discussed are a matter for those concerned.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: Yes. The registration forms for the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments were submitted before the appointed date, 11 May 1986.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, following acts of intimidation against the security forces since 1 March, *(a)* how many people have been arrested, *(b)* how many people have been charged and *(c)* what the charges were; and if there have been any resulting convictions.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *37*]: During the period 1 March to 5 May, 172 people were arrested on suspicion of involvement in acts of intimidation against members of the security forces. Of these, 70 were charged. The charges included arson, throwing petrol bombs, possession of an offensive weapon, assault on police, attempted intimidation and criminal damage. The majority of those charged have yet to have their cases brought before the courts. Two people have so far been convicted.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Ventilation

Mr. Norman Atkinson asked the Lord Privy Seal what savings have been made during the last 12 months from the recycling of polluted air through the air ducts servicing the windowless offices on the Upper Committee Corridor South; and if he will arrange for 100 per cent. fresh air to be circulated.

Mr. Biffen: All returned air is filtered before recycling. There is no reason on health grounds for changing the proportion of recycled air. One hundred per cent. fresh air is circulated once the heating is turned off and throughout the summer. I am advised that an estimated 20 per cent. energy saving is achieved in this area of the building during the winter months.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Morocco

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he intends to make any changes in Her Majesty's Government's policy towards relations with Morocco in the light of the report for 1985 on the Kingdom of Morocco by Amnesty International, a copy of which has been forwarded to him; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. The Moroccan authorities can be in no doubt of our continuing concern over abuses of human rights wherever they occur.

British Council (Painting Exhibition)

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether the British Council has any plans to mount an exhibition of 20th century British painting in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The British Council is actively preparing a modern art exhibition for the Soviet Union to cover the period 1900 to 1950. It is envisaged that the exhibition will be displayed at the Pushkin museum in Moscow and the Hermitage museum in Leningrad in early 1988.

South Africa

Mr. Anderson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government have taken in consequence of the agreement reached by European Economic Community Foreign Ministers last September in Luxembourg on sanctions against South Africa; and what information he has on action taken by other European Economic Community member states.

Mr. Eggar: Along with our EC partners, we have adopted all the restrictive measures agreed by the Twelve in Luxembourg last September. Many of these measures had been United Kingdom policy long before the Luxembourg agreement.

Middle East (PLO)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations have been made to the Iraq Government by Her Majesty's ambassador in Iraq regarding claims by the Palestine Liberation Organisation radio in Baghdad on 4 May of alleged violent incidents by supporters of the Palestine Liberation Organisation in Jerusalem and Gaza, including

an alleged attack upon a petrol station, and about the implications of such claims for the peace process in the middle east.

Mr. Eggar: Our support for a just, negotiated settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute is well known. We make these views clear in discussions with representatives of other Governments, including the Government of Iraq.

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will seek information from Her Majesty's ambassador in Amman about the implications for the peace process in the middle east of the policy of King Hussein towards political co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organisation, following the King's meeting with President Mubarak in Aqaba, Jordan.

Mr. Eggar: Her Majesty's ambassador at Amman follows closely all developments in Jordanian policy towards the peace process in the middle east and reports regularly.

European Assembly

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will ask the President of the European Assembly if it is the intention of that Assembly to recover from certain political parties the sums which the European court determined had been unlawfully distributed to parties by the Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. This is a matter for the Bureau of the European Parliament, which is still considering the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Justice.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Yes. This Department submitted its completed applications for registration in April.

Sri Lanka

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received about Britons flying helicopter gunships against Tamils in Sri Lanka; what representations he has received about a company called Keeni Meeni Services (KMS) in this context; how many British citizens are employed by the Sri Lankan Government to give training to its armed forces; what instructions have been given to the British high commission in Sri Lanka in relation to British citizens who are involved in military action against the Tamils; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received no formal representations about Britons flying helicopter gunships in Sri Lanka nor about Keeni Meeni Services (KMS). We understand that KMS has for a number of years provided training to the Sri Lankan security forces. The details of the agreement under which such training is provided is a commercial matter between the company and the Sri Lankan Government. We have, however, made it clear to both that we do not wish British subjects to become involved in the fighting. The Sri Lankan Government have assured us that KMS personnel would not be employed in an operational role. We are not aware of any other British citizens giving training to the Sri Lankan armed forces. No special instructions have been given to the British High Commission in Sri Lanka.

Iran and Iraq

Mr. Madden asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from other Governments opposing the export by Britain of military equipment and spare parts to Iran and Iraq; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. and learned Friend gave to the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel) on 29 October 1985. Our strict policy remains unchanged. We have discussed our policy with a number of Governments, including both parties to the conflict.

Angola (UNITA Forces)

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the United States Government concerning United States support for UNITA forces in Angola and in particular the United States decision to supply UNITA forces with Stinger missiles.

Mr. Eggar: The question of United States support for UNITA is for the United States Government to decide, but the latter are aware of our view that Western interests in southern Africa would be best served by the peaceful negotiation of a settlement leading to the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the region and full independence for Namibia. We have been assured by the United States Government that they will continue their efforts to achieve such a settlement.

Irina Ratushinskaya

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent representations have been made to the Soviet Government concerning the imprisoned Irina Ratushinskaya; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), made clear to the Soviet ambassador, when he called on him on 7 May, our strong concern over the deplorable treatment of Mrs. Ratushinskaya and her deteriorating state of health.

United Kingdom Bases (Libyan Attack)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether any action against Britain, involving diplomatic protest or boycott measures, has been communicated to Her Majesty's Government by any Government of the League of Arab States, following Her Majesty's Government's decision to permit the use of United States warplanes to attack Libya.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the answer given by my hon. Friend the Minister of State, the Member for Mid-Sussex (Mr. Renton), on 7 May, at column *183*, to the hon. Member for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Mr. Alton).

Israel

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in relation to the Prime Minister's visit to Israel, he has received reports from Her Majesty's ambassador in Tel Aviv about the speech by Prime Minister Peres on 15 May stating that Israel had no intention of attacking Syria.

Mr. Eggar: We welcome Mr. Peres' statement. We continue to urge both sides to exercise restraint and avoid provocation.

Galilee (PLO Attacks)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether, in forthcoming meetings with Palestine Liberation Organisation representatives in Lebanon, British diplomats there will raise the statements on 10 May in Lebanon by Khalil Al Wazir that the Palestine Liberation Organisation intends to resume rocket attacks against civilians in the Galilee.

Mr. Eggar: Our support for a just, negotiated settlement of the Arab/Israel dispute is well known. We make this clear in contacts with PLO representatives.

Baha'i Community (Iran)

Mr. Latham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he has lodged any recent protest with the Khomeini regime in Iran about the treatment of the Baha'i community, following recent reports of the stoning to death of a 15-year-old; and whether he will also raise such incidents with the United Nations.

Mr. Eggar: We are aware of recent press reports of renewed persecution of the Baha'is in Iran. We have asked our representatives in Tehran to make further inquiries.

The Government have consistently supported the efforts of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to improve the treatment of Baha'is. We co-sponsored the resolution on human rights in Iran at the last session of the United Nations General Assembly. We shall continue to express our concern about the human rights situation in Iran at every suitable opportunity.

Nicaragua

Mr. Park asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations he has received from British citizens concerning the supply of arms and funds to the Contras by the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: We have received under 200 letters this year from right hon. and hon. Members, individuals and organisations about this matter. We have made clear in our replies that we support the Contadora initiative; do not believe that the problems of central America can be resolved by armed force; and that the United States Government are aware of our views.

United States (Arms Control)

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs when he next expects to discuss arms control matters with a representative of the United States Government.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend will be holding bilateral discussions with the United States Secretary of State on 27 May. It is expected that the talks will cover a range of issues, including arms control matters.

Tourism (Terrorism)

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what account was taken in reaching the decision to grant permission for United Kingdom bases to be used for the United States attack on Libya of the possible implications of retaliatory action by Libya for the perception by intending tourists of their safety in the United Kingdom; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The reasons for our decision have been fully explained on a number of occasions and I have nothing further to add. The measures taken by the Government since 1984 have greatly reduced Libya's ability to promote terrorist activity in this country and intending tourists have no reason to cancel their plans on that account.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Shareholders

Mrs. Virginia Bottomley asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has as to the number of shareholders in Great Britain.

Mr. Ian Stewart: A survey commissioned on behalf of the Treasury by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys from National Opinion Poll Market Research Limited was carried out in February and March this year. This indicated that around 14 per cent. of the adult population of Great Britain owns shares. I am placing a copy of the report produced by NOP in the House of Commons Library.

Eastern Bloc Imports

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list those sites in Scotland at which vessels carrying cargoes from Europe and the Eastern Bloc have arrived since 26 April.

Mr. Brooke: Cargo vessels have arrived from Europe and the Eastern Bloc at:

Leith
Grangemouth
Rosyth
Kirkcaldy
Methil
Dundee/Perth
Ardrossan Harbour
Clyde Port Container Terminal
Loch Striven
Ayr Harbour
Port Ellen Pier
Aberdeen
Corpach

Stornoway
Invergordon
Inverness
Fraserburgh
Kirkwall
Montrose
Macduff
Wick
Peterhead
Scalloway
Lerwick

Correspondence (Replies)

Mr. Pawsey asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what percentage of letters sent to him are answered within *(a)* two weeks, *(b)* three weeks, *(c)* four weeks, *(d)* five weeks, *(e)* six weeks and *(f)* more than six weeks.

Mr. MacGregor: The information in the form requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. However, for the first quarter of 1986 the average time taken for Treasury Ministers to answer letters from hon. Members was 18 working days.

Covenants (Abuse)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the Inland Revenue investigation into alleged abuse of the covenants procedure in a Scottish Roman Catholic diocese.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will propose at the next meeting of the Council of Finance Ministers that the budget of the European Assembly should be reduced by the sum which the European Court determined recently had been unlawfully granted by that Assembly to certain political parties; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the sum, expressed in pounds sterling, which the European Court determined had been granted unlawfully by the European Assembly to certain political parties; and how much of the total was distributed to British political parties.

Mr. Peter Brooke: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, further to his reply dated 7 May, *Official Report*, column *137*, concerning the appropriations for the EEC budget, if he will provide the figures for 1972 to 1985 in terms of pounds sterling.

Mr. Brooke: The information is set out in the table. Details of the 1972 budget are not readily available. The United Kingdom was not of course a member of the Community at that time.

	Agriculture			*Other expenditure*		
	Payment appropriations in the main budget	*Payment appropriations in any supplementary budgets*	*Payments actually made during the year*	*Payment appropriations in the main budget*	*Payment appropriations in any supplementary budgets*	*Payments actually made during the year*
						£ million
1973	1,397	429	1,594	649	17	417
1974	1,789	0	1,671	800	74	632
1975	2,229	146	2,700	1,033	102	890
1976	3,207	446	3,335	1,502	110	1,195
1977	4,031	611	4,031	1,721	98	1,659
1978	4,621	0	6,151	3,586	1	1,799
1979	6,194	518	6,734	2,529	98	2,553
1980	6,874	0	6,753	2,512	299	2,997
1981	7,011	−403	6,062	3,680	91	3,779
1982	7,662	0	6,933	4,659	0	4,513
1983	8,247	1,034	9,268	4,408	1,022	5,004
1984	9,747	1,083	10,827	5,234	32	5,432
1985	11,741	0	n.a.	4,988	0	n.a.

Source: Court of Auditors Reports and relevant budgets.
Notes:
(1) The sterling figures have been derived using average annual exchange rates (source: "European Economy", Vol. 26, November 1985). Until 1977 the budget was established in units of account. Between 1978 and 1980 it was established in European units of account. Since 1981 it has been established in European currency units.
n.a. not available.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury did complete its applications correctly and on time.

Drugs

Dr. Marek asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, pursuant to the answer of the 19 May, he is prepared to estimate what proportion of the £107 million of worth of drugs that was seized was imported at points other than recognised points of entry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: I regret that this information is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

The additional resources which have been allocated to mobile units, to the development of local intelligence and to more drugs investigation staff are intended not only to reinforce controls at recognised points of entry but also to increase Customs effectiveness outside these places. The recently announced Customs drugs hotline is also aimed at encouraging the public to assist Customs in these more remote areas.

Overseas Investment

Mr. Batiste asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the current level of United Kingdom investment overseas; into what categories it is divided for statistical purposes; and what is the estimated annual rate of return on such investment.

Mr. Ian Stewart: The preliminary estimates of the gross level of United Kingdom investment overseas at the end of 1985 is just over £180 billion. This figure is composed of direct investment of about £75 billion and portfolio investment of around £105 billion. Details of these and other United Kingdom assets and liabilities overseas are published annually in "United Kingdom Balance of Payments — The Pink Book" (see Tables 11.1, 11.2 and 13.2 in the 1985 edition).

Official estimates of the rates of return on overseas investment are not available because there is insufficient information on which to base them. Part of the return is in the form of interest, profits and dividends, as shown in the balance of payments current account (published quarterly in *Economic Trends*). However, the full return on assets also includes capital gains (or losses) for which separate information is not available. A discussion of the rate of return on United Kingdom assets and the problems associated with calculating it may found in Her Majesty's Treasury's economic progress report (No. 175 February 1985) "United Kingdom overseas assets and liabilities".

Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer (1) if he will update to 1986-87 the information on tax break-even points, tax-free income thresholds and tax on the same basis as his reply of 26 July 1985 to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown), *Official Report*, columns *855-56*;

(2) if he will update to 1986-87 the tax thresholds for a single person, married couple without children, married couple with two children and four children on the same basis as appendix C of the 1985 Inland Revenue statistics.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Child Benefit and Tax Allowances

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the rates of child benefit, single person's tax allowance and married man's allowance at current and at 1979 prices, in April each year since 1979 up to April 1986 on the same basis as his reply of 3 December 1985 to the hon. Member for Kensington (Sir B. Rhys Williams) *Official Report*, columns *173-74*.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Dr. Marek asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received regarding the tax position in relation to the import and export of cars through freeports; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *90*]: None since 1984.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Nurses (Pay)

Mr. Baldry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish for each of the last 10 years, in real terms (i) the annual salary of a state registered nurse, (ii) the year-to-year percentage increases, (iii) the year-to-year rate of inflation, and (iv) the average annual increase in earnings.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following table shows:

1. the minimum and maximum basic salary for the staff nurse grade for the years 1975-76 to 1985-86;
2. the Retail Price Index at the mid-point of the settlement period;
3. the movement in staff nurse salaries measured against this Index, and
4. information about estimated average earnings for the period from August 1982 to January 1986.

From April 1979 to February 1986 the salary maximum of a staff nurse rose by 112 per cent. compared to an increase of 80 per cent. in the retail price index over the same period. This was over and above the effect (not included in the table) of the reduction in nurses' working hours from 40 to 37½ per week in 1980-81 which was itself equivalent to a further increase of 6·5 per cent. on basic pay.

Staff Nurse Pay Grade

Start of Settlement period	*Actual basic salary scale*				*Retail Price Index at mid point of settlement period**		*Index showing changes in basic pay levels in real terms as measured against RPI of September 1976: 100*		*Estimated Average Annual Gross Earnings for full-time staff†*
	Minimum		*Maximum*				*Minimum*	*Maximum*	
	£	*Percentage Increase*	£	*Percentage Increase*	*Index*	*Percentage Increase*			*Per cent.*
April 1975	2,121	—	2,646	—	—	—	—	—	—
April 1976	2,433	14·7	2,958	11·8	160·6	—	100	100	Not available
April 1977	2,563	5·3	3,106	5·0	185·7	15·6	91	91	Not available
April 1978	2,776	8·3	3,385	9·0	200·2	7·8	92	92	Not available
April 1979‡	3,150	13·5	3,813	12·6	215·9	7·8	96	96	Not available
August 1979	3,368	6·9	4,107	7·7	237·7	10·1	94	94	Not available
April 1980	4,198	24·6	5,119	24·6	270·2	13·7	103	103	Not available
April 1981	4,450	6·0	5,426	6·0	306·9	13·6	96	96	Not available

Start of Settlement period	Actual basic salary scale				Retail Price Index at mid point of settlement period*		Index showing changes in basic pay levels in real terms as measured against RPI of September 1976: 100		Estimated Average Annual Gross Earnings for full-time staff†
	Minimum		Maximum				Minimum	Maximum	Per cent.
	£	Percentage Increase	£	Percentage Increase	Index	Percentage Increase			
August 1982¶	4,998	12·3	6,094	12·3	334·7	9·1	99	99	6,348
April 1984	5,398	8·0	6,582	8·0	355·5	6·2	100	101	7,001
April 1985●	5,708	5·7	6,960	5·7	376·7	6·0	100	100	7,378
February 1986●	6,000	5·1	7,175	3·1	381·1	1·2	104	102	Not available

* As at September except when Settlement period is not equal to 12 months.
† These estimates were compiled on different bases and are therefore not comparable with each other.
Includes items other than basic pay, eg overtime, payments for night and weekend duty but excludes London Weighting.
‡ Paid in anticipation of Clegg settlement implemented in August 1979.
§ First stage of Clegg award.
¶ Two year settlement operative from 23 August 1982 to 31 March 1984.
● 1985-86 award was implemented in two stages.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Roy Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many representations he has received concerning the changes in the eligibility of students to claim benefits.

Mr. Newton: Since publication of the White Paper we have received approximately 1,230 written representations and inquiries on the proposals which were put to the Social Security Advisory Committee and the local authority associations on 7 January.

Claimant Couples

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimant couples with children in receipt of *(a)* unemployment benefit only, *(b)* supplementary benefit only and *(c)* unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit for the latest available year in Doncaster, Wath-on-Dearne and Mexborough Department of Health and Social Security offices.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available centrally. Statistics are not kept routinely so that the information requested could be obtained only by a special exercise which would be disproportionately expensive.

Claimants (Support Agencies)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what expenditure his Department incurs in supporting agencies providing advice and assistance for claimants at his Department's local offices.

Mr. Major: The Department has no powers under social security legislation to make grants to agencies specifically for the provision of advice and assistance to claimants. Agencies which provide a range of services including the provision of such advice and assistance may receive support from the Department under other legislation, but it is not possible to put a figure on the sum involved.

Family Planning

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which organisations receive resources from his Department or through its agencies for instruction in, promotion of, and research into, natural methods of family planning; and how many organisations received an offer for such funding, for each of the past three years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department has given grants of £31,000 in 1983-84, £34,000 in 1984-85 and £36,500 in 1985-86 to the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council for work in the area of natural family planning. The Family Planning Association, which receives a Department grant, and the Family Planning Information Service which receives financial support from the Government-funded Health Education Council, also provide information and advice about natural family planning as part of their overall service.

Rubella

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will detail the support his Department is giving to the campaign by the National Rubella Council to promote vaccination for adult women.

Mr. Hayhoe: In addition to the Department's annual grant to the Council to support its headquarter's expenses, the council's efforts to reach adult women who may be at risk from congenital rubella syndrome are also fully supported. The Government-funded Health Education Council has funded the leaflets and posters issued by the National Rubella Council which are aimed specifically at adult women and has given the Council a grant of £5,000 towards the recently-launched video film "Why Worry?" which I hope will be seen widely by women's groups.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many rubella vaccinations were given in the last year for which figures are available to *(a)* school children and *(b)* adult women; and if he will categorise the adult women according to whether they were vaccinated in (i) hospital, (ii) family planning clinics, (iii) general practitioners surgeries, (iv) occupational health centres and (v) other places.

Mr. Hayhoe: In 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, the number of schoolgirls in England in the 10 to 14 age group who were vaccinated was 308,000. Information about the numbers of adult women is not at present available centrally.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many reported cases there were of rubella in the last five years for which figures are available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many babies, identified as having been damaged as a result of their mother contracting rubella, were born in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The numbers of confirmed or suspected cases of congenital rubella infection reported to the national congenital rubella surveillance programme were:

Year	*Number*
1981	13
1982	23
1983	37
1984	23
1985	n.a.

n.a. Not available.

These figures may require adjustment if further cases are identified.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the average take-up of rubella vaccination by schoolgirls in each of the last five years.

Mr. Hayhoe: The available information for England is as follows:

Percentage of Schoolgirls Vaccinated by the end of the Year in which they reached age 14

	Per cent
1980	84
1981	84
1982	83
1983	84
1984	86

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department has issued regarding screening for immunity to rubella for adult women, pregnant and otherwise; and how his Department monitors whether the advice is followed.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Department's Chief Medical Officer wrote to all general practitioners and district medical officers in 1983 asking them to take all possible steps to ensure that women of childbearing age are immune to rubella. This advice is repeated in the Memorandum "Immunisation against Infectious Disease" issued to doctors. The public health laboratory service has been commissioned by the Department to report on serological testing for rubella antibodies in its laboratories. These tests numbered 650,000 in 1984, compared to 522,000 in 1981.

Limited List Prescribing

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the actual total savings in the first year of operation of the limited list system.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 25 February at column *525*.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to extend the limited list prescribing system; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Mrs. Ann Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for what purpose the savings accrued under the limited list prescribing system are to be used.

Mr. Hayhoe: Limited lists of drugs in certain therapeutic groups were introduced to restrain the continued high growth in the drugs bill. The estimated savings have been taken into account in the planned level of spending on the National Health Service.

X-ray Radiation

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the safety, in terms of radiation measurement, between old and new X-ray machines; if he will make it his policy to give priority to the purchase of the most effective X-ray machines with the lowest radiation risk to patients, radiographers and other hospital staff; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for a report from each district and regional health authority on the efficiency, age and radiation effects on patients, radiologists and radiographers of existing X-ray machines; if he is satisfied with current standards of operation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I do not consider it necessary to call for a report as suggested by the hon. Member. The National Health Service follows a detailed code of practice covering all uses of radiation in medicine designed to ensure adequate protection for both patients and staff. This includes advice on the safety features required in diagnostic X-ray equipment. The Ionising Radiations Regulations 1985 now require all X-ray equipment to be constructed and maintained so that exposures can be restricted so far as is reasonably practicable commensurate with the clinical purpose. No machine regardless of age should be used which does not meet this requirement, and health authorities are expected to have regard to this requirement when purchasing new machines.

Mr. Carter-Jones asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give his best estimate of additional radiation doses experienced by patients, radiographers and other hospital staff, by X-ray films which are spoiled and where the procedure has to be repeated; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: To make such an estimate requires details of the number of spoiled films analysed according to the procedure being carried out; this information is not collected centrally. Surveys relating to individual hospitals have been carried out, and the professions concerned are conscious of the need to minimise the number of spoiled films. Guidance on procedures designed to minimise the need for repeat exposures is given in a code of practice covering all uses of radiation in medicine.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many statutory single payments were made to pensioners in Scotland under the supplementary benefit rules in each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pensioners in Scotland are currently in receipt of supplementary benefit.

Mr. Major: The figure was 148,000 at February 1985, the latest date for which information is available.
Source: Quarterly Statistical Enquiry.

Mrs. Peacock asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the Batley and Spen constituency received assistance through supplementary benefit with mortgage repayments in each of the last 12 months.

Mr. Newton: I regret that this information is not available.

Radiation (Chernobyl)

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what specific steps he is taking to ensure that the levels of thyroid activity in children are monitored, following the Chernobyl incident; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is no medical need for general monitoring of levels of radioactivity in thyroids of children in England following the Chernobyl incident. I am advised that the National Radiological Protection Board has undertaken some limited monitoring of children in the Glasgow area and in Oxfordshire. The radioactivity detected in the children in the Glasgow area was well below the International Commission on Radiological Protection dose limit for members of the public and none was detected in the children in Oxfordshire.

Environmental radiation monitoring data following the Chernobyl incident indicate that the radiation dose to children throughout England would not be higher than that received by the children in Scotland, and in most cases would be much lower.

Bethlem Royal Hospital

Ms. Harman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will make a statement on ambulance services for out-patients attending Hilda Lewis house at Bethlem royal hospital;

(2) what transport arrangements will be made for out-patients attending Hilda Lewis house at the Bethlem royal hospital after the amnbulance service ends.

Mr. Hayhoe: I understand that the London amnbulance service, the Inner London education authority and the Bethlem Royal and Maudsley hospitals are currently discussing the matter. In the meantime transport is being provided by the London ambulance service on the same basis as previously.

Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Appeal

Mr. John asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will now reconsider the question of National Health Service funding for the Anthony Nolan bone marrow appeal located at St. Mary Abbot's hospital, London; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: My Department has given financial support to the Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust since 1978. Officials met representatives of the trust earlier this month and consideration is being given to the level of support to be offered to the trust in 1986-87.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applications for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: All uses of personal data within DHSS were registered with the Data Protection Registrar on 8 May.

Southend Hospital (Radiotherapy)

Dr. Michael Clark asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received from people in South East Essex about the possible closure of the radiotherapy unit at Southend Hospital; whether he will discuss the matter with the chairman of the North-East Thames regional health authority; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: These representations have opposed the closure of the radiotherapy unit at Southend hospital.

Following public consultation over an overall strategy for the region's cancer services the North-East Thames regional health authority has adopted a policy of moving towards a pattern of care focused on district general hospitals, supported by larger, better equipped specialist cancer treatment centres. The regional health authority has commissioned further research and will be considering recommendations on the choice of sites for the treatment centres at its July meeting. Any proposal to change the existing disposition of services will be subject to full public consultation under normal National Health Service procedures, including, if the relevant community health council objects, the referral of any final decision to Ministers. It would not, therefore, be appropriate to comment further at this stage.

Member's Questions

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Oldham, West for priority written answer on 8 April, relating to expenditure arising out of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: I replied to the hon. Member on 8 April.

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to reply to the question tabled by the hon. Member for Oldham, West for priority written answer on 8 April, relating to staffing levels in local authority social services departments, with specific reference to child abuse cases.

Mr. Hayhoe: My hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State replied to the hon. Member on 8 April.

"Just Say No"

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services which officials from his Department were present at the launch of the Grange Hill anti-drug abuse video "Just Say No" held in March; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Three officials accompanied my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health—his private secretary, a social services inspector and an administrator.

The occasion also launched the BBC's Drugwatch directory of services produced in conjunction with the standing conference on drug abuse, towards the cost of which the Government contributed £4,000. I welcome this initiative by the BBC in the fight against drug misuse.

Housing Benefit

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the recent change in the treatment of annuity as income for purposes of establishing housing benefit entitlement.

Mr. Major: My hon. Friend's reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Sir P. Hordern) on 15 May at column *526* explained that we intend to amend the housing benefits regulations as soon as possible to provide for the mortgage interest element of a home income plan to be ignored in the housing benefit assessment. We have no plans at present to change the way that other types of annuity are treated in the assessment.

Child Benefits

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing for each year since 1955 the combined value of child tax allowance after clawback and family allowance on child benefit expressed in November 1985 prices, on the same basis as his reply of 26 July 1985 to the hon.Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) *Official Report*, columns 523-4.

Mr. Newton: The information is as follows:

Value of child support for each child in standard rate taxpaying families expressed at November 1985† prices*

Date‡	*Children under age 11*			*Children aged 11-15*			*Children 16 and over*		
	1st Child	*2nd Child*	*3rd Child‖*	*1st Child*	*2nd Child*	*3rd Child‖*	*1st Child*	*2nd Child*	*3rd Child‖*
April 1955	7·31	9·71	9·71	7·31	9·71	9·71	7·31	9·71	9·71
April 1956	6·81	8·97	8·97	6·81	8·97	8·97	6·81	8·97	8·97
April 1957	6·69	8·81	9·47	8·32	10·53	11·02	10·04	12·16	12·73
April 1958	6·38	8·40	9·03	7·94	10·04	10·50	9·57	11·59	12·14
April 1959	5·84	7·94	8·49	7·24	9·42	9·97	8·72	10·82	11·45
April 1960	5·80	7·89	8·51	7·19	9·36	9·90	8·66	10·75	11·37
April 1961	5·65	7·68	8·28	7·00	9·11	9·64	8·43	10·46	11·07
April 1962	5·34	7·26	7·83	6·62	8·62	9·12	7·98	9·90	10·47
April 1963	6·00	7·89	8·44	7·26	9·28	9·70	8·58	10·54	11·03
April 1964	5·88	7·73	8·28	7·11	9·10	9·51	8·41	10·33	10·81
April 1965	5·90	7·71	8·10	7·19	8·94	9·40	8·49	10·24	10·69
April 1966	5·69	7·45	7·82	6·94	8·63	9·07	8·20	9·89	10·32
April 1967	5·53	7·23	7·59	6·74	8·38	8·81	7·96	9·60	10·02
April 1968	5·29	6·63	7·04	6·45	7·70	8·14	7·62	8·90	9·30
April 1969	5·01	6·56	6·94	6·12	7·66	8·05	7·22	8·76	9·09
April 1970	4·75	6·21	6·57	5·79	7·25	7·62	6·84	8·30	8·61
April 1971	5·53	7·01	7·34	6·39	7·92	8·25	7·30	8·77	9·11
April 1972	5·20	6·59	6·91	6·01	7·45	7·76	6·86	8·25	8·57
April 1973	4·72	5·91	6·20	5·59	6·74	7·02	6·28	7·43	7·72
April 1974	5·42	6·42	6·67	6·24	7·17	7·45	6·92	7·85	8·13
April 1975	4·75	6·57	6·57	5·42	7·24	7·24	6·01	7·86	7·86
April 1976	4·98	6·53	6·53	5·55	7·10	7·10	6·06	7·59	7·59
April 1977	4·79	5·48	5·48	5·27	5·96	5·96	5·69	6·36	6·36
April 1978	5·70	5·70	5·70	6·14	6·14	6·14	6·51	6·51	6·51
April 1979‡	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07	7·07
November 1980	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56	6·56
November 1981	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47	6·47
November 1982	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79	6·79
November 1983	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19	7·19
November 1984	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22	7·22
November 1985	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00	7·00

* The combined value of child tax allowances after clawback and family allowance/child benefit.
† Based on the movement on the General index of retail prices at November 1985.
‡ Child tax allowance ceased after the 1978/79 tax year and uprating dates are shown from 1979 onwards.
‖ and subsequent children.

Resettlement Units

Mr. Chope asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to announce a final decision on the future of re-establishment centres; and when he expects to reply to the Second Report from the Social Services Committee, Session 1985-86, on resettlement units and re-establishment centres.

Mr. Major: In February 1985 the Government announced plans to close the 19 re-establishment centres (RECs) run by the Department of Health and Social Security. In view of the greatly increased provision for the long-term unemployed made by the Manpower Services Commission, it was felt that the role of the RECs in retraining the long-term unemployed for regular work would be more appropriately undertaken by the MSC and that this would eliminate the wasteful duplication of function.

Following this proposal, the Social Services Select Committee recommended that my Department defer the closure of RECs until it could be demonstrated that the MSC would be able to fill the gap their closure would

create. The Government are substantially extending the range of help available to the long-term unemployed and in particular the group that includes re-establishment centre users. The community programme, for example, is to be increased to 255,000 places by November 1986. By March 1987 the restart programme should make it possible to assist all the long-term unemployed as they reach 12 months unemployment. Each person referred to a Manpower Services Commission employment adviser will have an initial interview at which the availability of jobs and the appropriateness of training will be considered. Links between employment advisers and DHSS unemployment review officers will be strengthened to match people with the most suitable Manpower Services Commission programme.

For these reasons, we have decided that re-establishment centres will close as soon as is practicable and, at the latest, by 31 March 1987. Every effort will be made to find alternative employment for the staff involved. It has been agreed with the Department of Employment that discussions about the possible employment of re-establishment centre workshop supervisors on MSC programmes should proceed with the MSC at a local level.

The Social Services Committee has today been informed of this decision along with the Government's responses to the other recommendations in its second report.

NHS (General Managers)

Mr. Neale asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish arrangements for the pay and conditions of service of general managers in the National Health Service to replace interim arrangements now in force.

Mr. Fowler: I shall be issuing a circular next week to health authorities setting out new arrangements for general managers in England. Copies of the circular will be placed in the Library of the House.

The appointment of general managers was recommended in 1983 by the Griffiths inquiry into the management of the National Health Service. All regional and district general managers and the great majority of unit general managers have now been appointed. Their job is to improve services to patients by streamlining decision-taking and increasing efficiency.

General managers are personally accountable for managerial performance and for the achievement of national, regional and local policies and objectives. Their role is entirely new to the National Health Service. A high level of performance is expected from them. The existing terms and conditions of service for National Health Service staff are not appropriate to these posts and I am therefore introducing new arrangements.

The arrangements include important new features—notably the introduction of rolling short-term contracts in place of the security of tenure which normally applies in the Health Service. It will be a condition of eligibility for the new arrangements, including the rates of pay, that general managers should give up any contractural rights relating to their previous National Health Service appointments. The renewal of all general manager appointments will be on the new basis.

The new pay structure is intended to recognise the commitment to a performance-related contract which is now expected of general managers and the loss of security of tenure. It provides for the general management function at unit, district and regional level in nine different grades in place of the present structure of well over 50 grades. There are no incremental scales in the new structure. At a later date a scheme of performance-related pay will be introduced which will reward those general managers whose performance is of a sufficiently high level. Performance will be assessed in relation to pre-established objectives and targets.

The new grading structure and pay rates replace, as previously promised, interim arrangements which have been in force since 1984 and will be effective from 1 February 1986. The cost of introducing the new arrangements will be met within health authorities' existing management cost limits.

Grading criteria		*Grade*	*Grade rate*
Teaching or non-teaching	*Revenue £ million*		£
Region		RGM	33,200
District			
Teaching	45 or more	DGM 1	31,600
Non-teaching	60 or more		
Teaching	45 or less	DGM 2	30,200
Non-teaching	30 to 60		
Non-teaching	30 or less	DGM 3	28,800
Unit			
Teaching	20 or more	UGM 1	26,400
Teaching	10 to 20	UGM 2	24,100
Non-teaching	15 or more		
Teaching	5 to 10	UGM 3	21,700
Non-teaching	10 to 15		
Teaching	5 or less	UGM 4	18,900
Non-teaching	3 to 10		
Non-teaching	3 or less	UGM 5	15,600

Note:

The grade rate for district and unit posts has been based on the size of their revenue and the presence or absence of teaching responsibilities. In addition other local factors can have a significant effect on the weight of each post. To reflect these differences in job weight, the grade rate may be varied at the discretion of the Authority concerned, subject to regional and central approval.

Correspondence

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the approximate time it takes his Department to reply to a letter from an hon. Member; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Fowler [*pursuant to his reply*, 20 May 1986]: we aim to reply to the majority of letters within four weeks. In 1985, Ministers here replied to nearly 35,000 letters—an increase of about 50 per cent. on the previous year. Nevertheless, we continue to seek ways of improving the speed of our replies.

Photosensitivity

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will ask the Committee on Safety of Medicines to assess the incidence and seriousness of photosensitivity as an adverse reaction to medical drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The committee continuously monitors all reports of suspected adverse drug reactions that are made to it, including reports of photosensitivity, and considers their incidence,

seriousness and implications in deciding whether any recommendations should be made to the licensing authority.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what research is being funded by his Department into ways of alleviating or curing photosensitivity resulting from an adverse reaction to medical drugs.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The Department is not supporting any research in this field.

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many adverse reaction reports there were in 1985 to the Committee on Safety of Medicines of a photosensitivity reaction to medical drugs; and which drugs were the most commonly involved.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: In 1985 the Committee on Safety of Medicines received 290 reports of photosensitivity, 19 of allergic photosensitivity and two of toxic photosensitivity as suspected adverse reactions to drugs. In some cases these reports made in 1985 relate to events occurring in earlier years. No deaths were reported. The most commonly involved drugs currently licensed were azapropazone, piroxicam and amiloride. The committee also continued to receive reports about benoxaprofen, relating to periods before August 1982 when the licence was suspended, and the product was later withdrawn from the market.

It is very important bear in mind, first, that a report does not necessarily indicate a causal relationship between a product and a reported reaction; and, second, that in considering reports account must be taken of various factors, including the extent and duration of use of the product.

Cancer

Dame Jill Knight asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has reached a decision on the Government's response to the proposed European action programme on cancer research and treatment due on 29 May; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The proposal from the European Commission, which I will be discussing with my Community colleagues in Brussels on 29 May, is for a programme of action on cancer prevention rather than research and treatment. Its objectives of enhanced co-operation among member states with a view to a reduction in cancer mortality do, in my view, merit strong support with my colleagues to resolve outstanding issues and reach early agreement.

Women's Hospital, Liverpool

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the waiting list for private patients at the Women's hospital, Liverpool.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The number of private patients awaiting treatment at 31 March 1986 was five.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many National Health Service patients have received treatment at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, in each of the past three years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The information is as follows:

	Number of cases treated		
Year	*In-patients*	*Out-patients*	*Day cases**
1983	3,308	19,353	7,340
1984	2,961	18,073	8,358
1985	3,181	16,350	8,436

* Includes ward attenders, i.e. patients receiving treatment on a ward but not occupying a bed.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what was the waiting list at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, at the latest date for National Health Service patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The number of National Health Service patients awaiting treatment at 31 March 1986 was 566. This figure is the lowest for 12 months.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many private patients have received treatment at the Women's hospital, Liverpool, in each of the past three years.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: The information is as follows:

	Number of cases treated	
Year	*In-patients*	*Day cases**
1983	130	60
1984	116	43
1985	111	21

* Includes ward attenders, i.e. patients receiving treatment on a ward but not occupying a bed.

Hospital Waiting Lists (Merseyside)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what was the waiting list at the Mersey regional health authority at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1983;

(2) what was the waiting list at the Liverpool district health authority (teaching); and what were the figures for May 1983.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member information in precisely the form he seeks. Waiting list figures are collected centrally at the end of March, September and December each year. The available information is given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the health authorities concerned for the figures for May 1983.

Numbers of persons on NHS in-patient waiting list

	31 March 1983	*30 September 1985*
Mersey Regional Health Authority	36,187	30,141
Liverpool District Health Authority	8,308	7,921

South Killingholme

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people live within a 20-mile radius of South Killingholme.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 21 May 1986]: In 1981, the latest date for which figures are available, there were about 750,000 living within a 20-mile radius of South Killingholme.

Written Answers to Questions

Friday 23 May 1986

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Staff Training

Mr. Sheerman asked the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed as representing the House of Commons Commission what is the average time spent by employees in each Department of the House in on-the-job and off-the-job training.

Mr. Beith: With the exception of certain off-the-job training courses provided to staff on a House-wide basis, details of which are given at the end of this answer, training is arranged by each House Department according to its individual requirements. Statements of each Department's arrangements appear below. For the reasons indicated in those statements, it is not possible to give figures of average time spent by employees in training activities.

Department of the Clerk of the House

Training is principally on-the-job. Throughout a probationary period (two years for Clerks, one year for others), and for longer if necessary, employees work under the close supervision of more senior staff. During the period a training programme informs them about the work of different Offices within the Department, and of other Departments. From time to time staff also participate in courses at the Civil Service College, language training at the Diplomatic Language Training Centre, Civil Service secretarial proficiency courses and commercial computer courses. Total time spent on formalised or off-the-job training was estimated at 824 hours in 1985.

Department of the Serjeant at Arms

Staff of the Department have attended courses on the following subjects:

Employment Law
Occupational Health
First Aid at Work
Interview Techniques
Building Security
Secretarial Proficiency Courses
Internal Mail Handling

In addition to the above, Attendant staff receive training in the operation of copying machines.

The following courses are in prospect:

Chairing meetings
Searching techniques

Due to the specialised nature of the work in the House of Commons, much of the training must be carried out at work. The Department is actively seeking to broaden the range of courses attended within the constraints of the manning levels required.

Department of the Library

Training tends to be concentrated on staff at the earlier stages of their careers, so it would not be very meaningful to compute an average using the total staff as a denominator. Estimates for the readily quantifiable forms of training for the calendar year 1985 are as follows:

	Courses/ Trainees	*Trainee Days**
Introductory courses arranged by the Administration Department	8	16
Word processor training (secretaries)	5	16
Secretarial Proficiency training	2	4
Civil Service College Courses	9	13
Other externally provided training	16	20
Programme of visits to Library Sections (recent recruits)	11	19
Training and re-training on the Library's POLIS data-base	66	52
Training on other data-bases (eg BLAISE, LEXIS)	7	8
First-aid training	4	4
Study leave and examination leave (further education and training scheme)	3	13
Pre-licentiate (Library qualification) training	2	31
Other internally provided training	3	5
TOTAL	136	201

* Numbers of trainees multiplied by the length of the course.

"On-the-job" training continues for as long as is necessary for the individual member of staff, i.e. until he or she is capable of carrying out his/her duties without close supervision. Its length varies with the grade of post and with the previous experience of the post-holder and it is not therefore possible to provide even approximate figures.

In the *Vote Office*, all training to date is given on-the-job. It is carried out in a four-year cycle as follows:

First Year—Parliamentary Section documentation.
Second Year — Non-Parliamentary and Northern Ireland documentation.
Third Year—European documentation.
Final Year—Sale Office, photo-reproduction micro-fiche.

In addition there are proposals to nominate a number of more senior staff for training in computer skills and management, but this is dependent on when the Office's proposed microcomputer system becomes operational.

Administration Department

It is impossible to state the average time spent by staff in the Administration Department in on-the-job training. Such training is given according to an individual's needs and depends upon his previous experience and the demands of the work to which he is from time to time assigned.

Off-the-job training is also provided to meet the needs of the individuals according to the work to which they are currently assigned, and since this varies according to the frequency of any changes in duties which become necessary, it is not possible to provide a realistic average figure of this form of training for all staff.

Staff of the Administration Department have attended both functional and grade related (e.g. management skills) off-the-job training courses run by the Civil Service College and other outside organisations. During the last two years 212 staff days have been devoted to participation in such training courses.

Department of the Official Report

The training programme for Trainee Reporters is normally two years under the Stenograph system, of which at least the first year is taken up with full-time training. The training time for a transcriber is normally a year, but that is wholly 'on-the-job' training.

Currently 13 reporters out of an establishment of 19 are receiving training, nine full time and four in post, and nine transcribers out of an establishment of 27 are in training.

Refreshment Department

It is the policy of the Refreshment Department to recruit professional staff who are adequately qualified academically and fully experienced. From time to time, however, this may be supplemented through specialised external training course, e.g. City and Guilds course in catering. At the moment three staff are attending day-release courses of this nature. One member of staff, who is a union representative, is attending a day-release course in aspects of union procedure. The Catering Accountant last year attended a Civil Service College course in Government accounting.

Off-the-job training provided to staff on a house-wide basis co-ordinated by the establishment office

Number and Grades of Staff	*Type of course*	*Where held*	*Length in days*
All newcomers to staff of the House irrespective of grade	Introduction Course	House of Commons	2
66 (to date) volunteer First-Aiders on House staff	First Aid Training		
	(i) Initial Training Course	St. John Ambulance Association	3
	(ii) Requalification Course (once every 3 years)	St. John Ambulance Association	2
	(iii) Refresher Training (once every year)	St. John Ambulance Association	1
All Secretarial and Typing Grades	Typing Training Course	DOE Typing Training Centre	2
	Shorthand or Audio Training Course	DOE Typing Training Centre	2
Various Grades (as and when required—10 to date)	Selection Interviewing Techniques Course	Civil Service College	3
	Promotion Board Interviewing Techniques Course	Civil Service College	3

Further Education

On a House-wide basis, co-ordinated by the Establishments Office, staff are encouraged to undertake courses of further education and training. For approved courses, staff are given assistance towards the cost of fees, board and travelling, and in addition may be given time off for study and to take examinations. The length of time over which assistance is given varies greatly, e.g. from one year for an O-level course in one subject to several years for an Open University degree course.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Krugerrands

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what action Her Majesty's Government will take to preclude the import of Krugerrands and other South African gold coins.

Sir Geoffrey Howe: Following the commitment given by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Nassau last October, we have been considering what action might be possible to preclude the import of Kruggerands. Account has been taken of the fact that South Africa is now minting the new Protea coin.

We have now decided that the import of all gold coins originating in South Africa, and consigned to the United Kingdom from that country, shall be prohibited with effect from midnight tonight. A copy of Notice to Importers 2086, detailing these arrangements, is being placed in the library of the House.

Syria

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement about his policy on the issue of visas to citizens of Syria.

Mr. Eggar: Following the unjustified expulsion by the Syrian Government of three members of the British Embassy in Damascus, including the Vice-Consul, the issue of visas at Damascus has had to be suspended until the Embassy is adequately staffed. Procedures for the issue of visas to Syrians have also been reviewed. They will normally be required to attend for interview and their applications will be referred to London. All Syrians seeking to enter the United Kingdom in transit, even if they propose to remain here less than 24 hours, will in future be required to obtain transit visas.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Further Education College Students

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what percentage of further education college students are engaged on courses funded out of the education budget; and what information he has as to the percentage who are taking courses, the funding of which comes under the responsibility of other Government Departments.

Mr. Walden: Full information on the funding of courses in further education establishments is not available. Five per cent. of students on full-time and sandwich courses and thirteen per cent. of students on part-time day courses were on MSC schemes in maintained, assisted and grant-aided further education establishments in November 1984.

University of Dacca (Awards)

Mr. Allan Roberts asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the reasons for his Department's decision no longer to accept degree awards from the University of Dacca as suitable qualifications for the granting of a Department of Education and Science (teaching) number.

Mr. Chris Patten: My Department has not made such a decision. If the hon. Member has a particular case in mind and will write to me with the details I will be glad to consider them.

Initial Teacher Training

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science whether he will list in the *Official Report (a)* all those initial teacher training institutes which fully satisfy all the criteria that he sent to the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North and *(b)* all the initial teacher training institutes which have failed to satisfy all the criteria and have been given the opportunity to meet the criteria fully, indicating those criteria which have not been met.

Mr. Chris Patten: The criteria referred to by the hon. Member are a summary of the main principles that informed the planning of initial teacher training intakes. My right hon. Friend's provisional decisions are based on an overall judgement of how intakes can best be deployed to ensure the most effective provision of initial teacher training in the public sector as a whole, taking account of those principles and the proposals received from the training institutions and others concerned.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proposals he has for primary initial teacher training in Humberside in the degree of bachelor of education and postgraduate certificate of education.

Mr. Chris Patten: I refer the hon. Member to my right hon. Friend's Answer of 14 May at column 457.

University Academics (Pay)

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will state for each 12-month period beginning 2 October 1979, the percentage rise in university academics' pay and the comparable rise in the retail prices index.

Mr. Walden: The information requested is as follows:

*Period**	*University non-clinical academics Pay rise per cent.*	*Retail Prices Index (per cent. increase)*
2 October 1979 to 1 October 1980	†25·2	15·4
2 October 1980 to 1 October 1981	‡3·2	11·7
2 October 1981 to 1 October 1982	5·0	6·8
2 October 1982 to 1 October 1983	‖4·7	5·0
2 October 1983 to 1 October 1984	¶4·8	5·0
2 October 1984 to 1 October 1985	•5·25	5·4

Notes

* Salary incremental date was 1 October up to 1980, 1 March in 1981, and 1 April thereafter.

† Consists of 17 per cent. phased Clegg-equivalent award paid on 1 April and 1 October 1980, plus 8·2 per cent. paid on 1 October 1980 which was the first part of a two-part settlement extending over 18 months.

‡ Second part to two-part settlement paid on 1 March 1981 consisting of 3 per cent. on all scale points plus £100 on the maximum of the lecturer scale and on the corresponding point of the senior lecturer scale.

‖ 4·6 per cent. on all scale points plus increase of 0·1 per cent. arising from elimination of bottom point of lecturers scale, £75 to be added to first seven points of lecturers scale, and the 26 age point on the lecturers scale to be replaced by a 27 age point one point up the scale.

¶ 4·6 per cent. on all scale points plus £150 to the maximum of the lecturer scale.

• 5·2 per cent. on all scale points plus £110 on first 4 points of the lecturers scale.

NATIONAL FINANCE

National Savings Certificates

Mr. J. Enoch Powell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer why National Savings certificates are no longer after this week to be able to be purchased through banks in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Lawson: Banks in Northern Ireland are still able to arrange for their customers to buy National Savings certificates. All that has changed is that the Department for National Savings is introducing a new system of issuing National Savings certificates directly from their Durham office by post to savers throughout the United Kingdom. This means that agent banks will no longer hold stocks of certificates. Under the new system Northern Ireland banks will no longer have to arrange for their branches or associate branches in Great Britain to send National Savings certificates to their customers in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland banks can obtain application forms either from their associates in Great Britain, or from the Department for National Savings office in Durham, from where the certificates will be sent directly to customers.

Departmental Staff

Mr. Arnold asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will list the responsibilities of each of the deputy secretaries in his Department and the number and ranks of staff reporting to each.

Mr. Brooke: The information at 1 May 1986 is as follows:

DEPUTY SECRETARY (GRADE 2), OVERSEAS FINANCE

Responsibilities:

- European Community Group
- Aid and Export Finance Group
- Senior United Kingdom Director of the European Investment Bank
- United Kingdom representation at international financial and economic meetings

Two Grade 3, four Grade 5 and 43 other staff.

DEPUTY SECRETARY (GRADE 2), PUBLIC FINANCE

Responsibilities:

- Fiscal Policy Group
- Home Finance Group
- Public Sector Finance Group
- North Sea Development and Policy
- Finance Economic Unit

Three Grade 3, six Grade 5 and 90 other staff.

DEPUTY SECRETARY (GRADE 2), INDUSTRY

Responsibilities:

- Public Enterprise Group
- Industry, Agriculture and Employment Group

Two Grade 3, six Grade 5 and 68 other staff.

Deputy Secretary (Grade 2), Public Expenditure

Responsibilities:

- Local Government Group
- Social Services and Territorial Group
- Home Transport and Education Group
- Treasury Officer of Accounts and Purchasing
- Central Computer and Telecommunications Agency
- Financial Management Co-ordination
- Staff Inspection and Evaluation
- Running Costs and Management
- Treasury/MPO Joint Management Unit

Chairman of the Public Expenditure Survey Committee
Chairman of the Procurement Policy Committee
Six Grade 3, 17 Grade 5 and 662 other staff.

DEPUTY SECRETARY (GRADE 2), PAY
Responsibilities:
General Pay issues
Civil Service Pay and Allowances
Public Sector Superannuation
Civil Service Industrial Relations
Civil Service Catering Organisation
One Grade 4, four Grade 5 and 1,148 other staff including 816 industrial civil servants at CISCO.

DEPUTY SECRETARY (GRADE 2), DEPUTY CHIEF ECONOMIC ADVISER
Responsibilities:
Micro economic analysis, special studies
Expenditure Support Group
Public Enterprises Analytic Unit
Economics of Taxation and Social Security Division
Statistics and Computing Services
One Grade 3, six Grade 5 and 58 other staff.

Establishments and Organisation Group, the Central Unit, the Information Division and the Rating of Government Property Department (1,055 staff), report direct to the Permanent Secretary: the Defence Policy and Materiel Group and General Expenditure Policy Group (78 staff) to the Second Permanent Secretary (Public Expenditure); the Forecast and Analysis Group and the Medium Term and Policy Analysis Group (34 staff) to the Chief Economic Adviser; the External Finance Group (22 staff) to the Second Permanent Secretary (Overseas Finance); and the Accountancy Advice Group (44 staff) reports to the Accountancy Adviser to the Treasury and the Head of the Government Accountancy Service.

Ships (Capital Allowances)

Mr. Ottaway asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what estimate he has of the cost of restoring capital allowances to owners of British-registered vessels and vessels built in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: I assume my Hon. Friend has in mind the restoration of 100 per cent. first year allowances in place of the present system of writing down allowances. The additional direct revenue cost of such a change for capital expenditure from 1986 onwards on British-registered vessels, including those built in the United Kingdom, could be some £100 million in the first full year declining to about £50 million a year by the end of the decade.

CIVIL SERVICE

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister for the Civil Service whether the Prime Minister's Office in No. 10 Downing Street, the Cabinet Office and the Management and Personnel Office correctly completed and submitted the applications for data protection registration on time.

Mr. Luce: All applications for data protection registration for 10 Downing Street, the Cabinet Office and the Cabinet Office (MPO) were completed and submitted within the correct time limits. Acknowledgements of receipt for the registrations have been received from the Registrar.

THE ARTS

Museums (Loans)

Mr. Latham asked the Minister for the Arts when loans to provincial museums will be resumed by the Tate Gallery and the National Gallery.

Mr. Luce: I am happy to say that agreement has now been reached with the two galleries on a form of words which clarifies the arrangements for considering compensation in the event of loss or damage to items loaned from the collections. On this basis the galleries have indicated that they are ready to resume loans to provincial museums without the prior requirement of commercial insurance.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Boundary Commission (Information Technology)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will increase the resources made available to the Boundary Commissions so as to enable them to accommodate modern developments in information technology.

Mr. Mellor: The Parliamentary Boundary Commissions have not so far requested any increase in their resources for this purpose. Any request which might be made in the future would be considered on its merits, taking account of the Government's general desire to ensure that the Parliamentary Boundary Commissions have sufficient resources to comply with their statutory duties.

Fire Services

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what performance indices he uses to monitor the comparative performanceof different fire brigades.

Mr. Giles Shaw: My concern is that brigades provide effective, efficient and economical fire protection. We look accordingly to professional advice on, amongst other things, the characteristics of particular brigade areas and on the ratio of firefighters to pumping and other appliances; the ratio of management and supervisory staff to firefighters who ride on appliances; on the staffing of fire prevention departments; and on training provision.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what changes in the numbers of firemen, supervisory grades and management grades have occurred in the West Yorkshire fire services since 1974; and during this period what changes have occurred in the number of fires attended and the average response time.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The available information is shown in the table. Information on the number of fires attended by each fire brigade has been published annually since 1976 by the Home Office in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom" (in the supplements to the main volumes before 1982). The number of such fires shown in the table excludes chimney fires. Information on average response times could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

West Yorkshire Fire Service

Year	*Whole time operational strength (as at 31 December)*	*Retained operational strength (as at 31 December) in 24 hour units*	*Number of fires attended*
1974	1,431	332	na
1975	1,554	289	na
1976	1,591	275	15,722
1977	1,596	269	9,618
1978	1,696	263	9,146
1979	1,849	268	9,905
1980	1,808	319	11,029
1981	1,774	305	10,314
1982	1,802	328	11,941
1983	1,805	316	11,369
1984	1,802	281	15,606
1985	1,858	264	na

na means not available.

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how statistics of incidents attended by fire brigades are collated; and what measures are taken to ensure that double counting of incidents does not occur when more than one fire station is called out.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Statistics of incidents attended by local authority fire brigades are compiled by the Home Office from reports submitted by the brigades. Information for England and Wales is published annually in "Fire Statistics United Kingdom", and in the report of Her Majesty's inspector of fire services. The guidance provided to brigades by the Home Office as to who completes a fire report should prevent double counting where more than one station attends the same fire. The report is usually completed by the person in charge of fire fighting at the scene of the fire or by a person deputed to do so.

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, further to his answer of 15 May 1985, *Official Report*, column *516*, when he intends to provide the information sought on foreign visitors.

Mr. Waddington: As soon as the necessary analysis of the available records relating to Libyans has been completed.

North Wales Police Force

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many *(a)* police officers and *(b)* special constables there were in the north Wales police force for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The information is as follows:

North Wales Police

On 31 December	*Police Strength*	*Special Constables*
1976	1,238	586
1977	1,239	550
1978	1,251	219
1979	1,271	421
1980	1,290	256
1981	1,288	193
1982	1,303	164
1983	1,275	201
1984	1,281	200
1985	1,251	215

Between December 1982 and December 1985 the strength of the north Wales police dropped by 52 but civilian staff numbers increased by 73. Thirty-seven additional police posts have been approved for the force since May 1979; the police establishment is currently 1,316, and police strength on 30 April 1986 was 1,261.

Immigration

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on how many occasions in the past 12 months officers from the immigration service have refused entry to people in receipt of entry clearance letters.

Mr. Waddington: The available information relates to persons refused and removed from the United Kingdom who held an entry clearance or work permit on arrival. In the 12 months to March 1986, there were 74 cases of such removals.

Local Government Boundaries

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will bring forward legislation to permit partial reviews of local government boundaries.

Mr. Mellor: The Local Government Act 1972 already permits the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to review any part of the boundaries of a county, district or London borough. However, there is no power to make partial changes in electoral arrangements, except in consequence of such a review. My right hon. Friend has no plans for legislation on this matter.

Naturalisation

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many applications have been made by refugees from south-east Asia for naturalisation in each year since Her Majesty's Government's policy of admission for Vietnamee refugees was instituted;

(2) how many applications have been received for naturalisation and how many accepted in each of the last seven years for which figures are available, listed by way of ethnic origin or country of origin or other similar categorisation.

Mr. Waddington: Details of the previous nationality of those naturalised in each of the last seven years for which figures are available have been published in the following papers:

Year	*Cmnd. Papers*
1978	7637
1979	7998
1980	8325
1981	8627
1982	9009
1983	9331
1984	—*

* Home Office Statistical Bulletin 21/85 published 29 August 1985.
The other information requested in not available.

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list the criteria and process of

naturalisation applications by refugees from south-east Asia; if it is invariable practice that all applicants are interviewed; what standard of use of English is required; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Applications from those who are refugees are considered like other applications for naturalisation as quickly and as economically as possible and in accordance with the criteria set out in section 6 and schedule 1 to the British Nationality Act 1981. Proper account is taken of the particular circumstances of refugees in exercising discretion under the Act. Not all applicants for naturalisation are interviewed. Applicants for naturalisation other than those applying as the spouses of British citizens are required under paragraph 1(1)*(c)* of schedule 1 to have sufficient knowledge of the English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic language. The standard is that an applicant should have sufficient knowledge of the language to mix easily in the society in which he lives and to fulfil his duties as a citizen.

Drugs

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's contribution to the Council of Europe's moves to increase international co-operation in combating drugs, making special reference to the Pompidou group.

Mr. Mellor: The United Kingdom plays a very active part in stimulating European co-operation on drugs issues through its chairmanship of the Council of Europe co-operation group to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs (the Pompidou group). We have obtained agreement to a meeting of the group at ministerial level to be held next January, in order to give further impetus to its work. That meeting will also provide a valuable opportunity to follow-up any recommendations which emerge from the discussion of the penal aspects of drug abuse and control by Council of Europe Justice Ministers at their conference in Oslo on 17-19 June.

Radio Services

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the British Broadcasting Corporation the suspension of its activities concerning further development of local radio pending the publication of the Green Paper on local radio referred to in his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *206-7*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have no plans to do so.

Mr. Temple-Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will discuss with the Independent Broadcasting Authority the suspension of its activities concerning the development of an independent national radio pending the publication of the Green Paper concerning the future of radio services as whole and referred to in his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, columns *206-7*.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The Independent Broadcasting Authority is developing plans for the introduction of an independent national radio service (which would require legislation to supplement the preparatory provisions in. 48 of the Cable and Broadcasting Act 1984) and has discussed preliminary proposals with my right hon. Friend and others. We do not propose to discourage public debate on the nature and organisations of such a service: indeed, we have made it clear that its development will figure in the Green Paper referred to in the answer of 8 May.

Crossbows

Mr. John Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress he has made in his consultations about preventing crossbows from falling into the wrong hands.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I refer the right hon. and learned Member to the reply given to my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble, (Mr. Atkins) on 24 April at column *186*. A number of meetings with interested parties have taken place. We shall report our conclusions to the House as soon as possible.

Police Operations (Wapping)

Mr. Gould asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements have been made for allocating the cost of the police operations at Wapping between the different forces involved.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that only the Metropolitan and City of London police forces have been involved in policing marches and demonstrations at or in connection with the News International plant at Wapping. Under a long-standing agreement between the Commissioners of Police of the two forces, the policing costs of events which are jointly policed lie where they fall.

Conservative Party Conference (Policing Costs)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he is now prepared to make additional financial resources available to Lancashire county council towards policing costs involved for the 1985 Conservative party conference.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No. My right hon. Friend gave very careful consideration to the points put to him by the Lancashire police authority but he concluded that there was insufficient justification for departing from the normal arrangements for meeting police expenditure.

Traffic Law Enforcement

Mr. Waller asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made with his study of the extent to which there is a need for further increases in police resources for road traffic law enforcement; what applications he has received from police authorities for increases in establishment on the basis of demonstrated need in this area; and whether his recent accouncement concerning an increase in police manpower takes account of this factor.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Two police authorities, Hertfordshire and Surrey, have applied for increases in their police establishments for motorway policing duties. My right hon. Friend shall consider these, and other applications for increases in police establishments, on the basis of proven need and in the light of advice from H.M. inspectors of constabulary. The day-to-day deployment of police officers is the responsibility of the chief officer of police concerned, and it is for him to decide how best to allocate manpower and other resources locally.

Refugees (Hong Kong)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what representations he has received from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on his admission policy for refugees from Hong Kong; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: I shall reply as soon as possible.

Police Complaints Authority

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether any additional appointments are to be made to the Police Complaints Authority.

Mr. Douglas Hurd: I am pleased to announce that Mr. Gerry Gillman, formerly General Secretary of the Society of the Civil and Public Servants, has accepted my invitation to serve as an additional member of the authority. He will be taking up his appointment at the beginning of June. The need for an additional member arises from the authority's high level of activity, and the vigour with which it is approaching its task.

Magistrates' Courts

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what percentage of contested cases were acquitted in the magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 1983, 1984 and 1985, respectively;

(2) what percentage of all cases were convicted in magistrates' courts in England and Wales in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *17*]: Reliable information on plea is not available. Information on defendants acquitted in magistrates' courts is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary Tables" (volume I in table 1.1(A)). The proportion of defendants who were convicted (regardless of plea) was 93 per cent. in 1983 and 91 per cent. in 1984. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Parades

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what is the estimated number of people participating in the republican parades during the Easter adjournment for which the required statutory notice was not given to the police; and against how many people prosecutions have been initiated as a result;

(2) what is the estimated number of people participating in the Loyalist parades during the Easter adjournment, which were held in contravention of a prohibition under Article 4(3) of the Public Order (NI) Order 1981; and against how many people prosecutions have been initiated as a result.

Mr. Scott: During the Easter adjournment (27 March to 8 April) approximately 2,100 people took part in four republican parades for which no statutory notice had been given to the police. Seventy-five people have already been identified with a view to prosecution and another 36 still have to be interviewed by the police.

Between 3,000 and 3,500 people participated in the loyalist parades which took place in Portadown on 31 March in contravention of a prohibition under article 4(3) of the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1981. Twenty-nine people have been charged in connection with the parades and associated disorder, and another 60 still have to be interviewed by the police.

This was the only prohibition under the Public Order (Northern Ireland) Order 1981 during the Easter adjournment.

Drunkenness

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of drivers involved in accidents in Northern Ireland with a positive breath test or failure to provide a specimen in each of the past seven years; if he will further break each figure down by the numbers of these which relate to each of the periods—04.00 to 10.00 hours, 10.00 to 16.00 hours, 16.00 to 22.00 hours and 22.00 hours to 04.00 hours.

Mr. Scott: Information in the form requested is not available.

Mr. Hume: asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the Royal Ulster Constabulary's policy in regard to cautioning drunkenness offenders; and whether he has given advice comparable to the advice to chief officers in Britain contained in Home Office Circular 14/1985.

Mr. Scott: At present no instructions on the cautioning of drunkenness offenders exist within the force but the Royal Ulster Constabulary has always exercised a discretion in prosecuting offenders for simple drunkenness or less serious cases of aggravated drunkenness.

As a general rule, the infrequent offender is detained until sober, released and proceeded against by way of summons or caution. No hard and fast rule exists in relation to the cautioning or prosecution of persistent offenders and the course of action taken in any particular case will depend on the circumstances.

The advice contained in Home Office circular 14/85 has not been communicated to the force as yet in relation to drunkenness but the cautioning of adults generally in accordance with the Home Office circular is presently under consideration.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining arrangements which the Royal Ulster Constabulary has with health authorities, social services or non-statutory alcohol agencies to help with drunkenness offenders who come to the notice of the police frequently.

Mr. Scott: No special arrangements exist between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and health authorities, social services or non-statutory alcohol agencies to assist drunkenness offenders who come to the notice of the police frequently. Consultations on an ad hoc basis do, however, take place in appropriate cases.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement outlining the number of drunken driving offences in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years, further indicating the numbers of these which occurred in the Christmas and new year period.

Mr. Scott: The following table gives the number of prosecutions for drunken driving offences during the years 1981-1985.

Number of Prosecutions

	Number
1981	1,924
1982	1,916
1983	1,917
1984	1,794
1985	2,014

Information on the number of prosecutions for drunken driving over the Christmas and new year period is not available. However, during the seven-week period for Christmas 1984 to new year 1985 there were 243 detections in respect of major drunk in charge offences and positive excess alcohol offences. The figure for the same period in 1985-86 was 202.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what figures are available to indicate the proportion of traffic fatalities in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years in which excess alcohol consumption might have been a factor.

Mr. Scott: The following table gives the number of accidents involving death and injury, the number in which alcohol was a principal factor and shows the percentage of all death/injury accidents.

	Total number of accidents involving death or injury	*Accidents involving death or injury due to alcohol*	*Percentage of all death injury accidents*
1981	5,245	358	6·8
1982	5,551	358	6·4
1983	5,425	363	6·7
1984	5,978	362	6·1
1985	5,725	292	5·1

Youth Training

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the employment record of people coming off the youth training programme, by sector and area.

Dr. Boyson: In the financial year 1985-86, 57 per cent. of young people who left YTP full-time training schemes and whose destinations were known entered employment immediately on completion of training.

A recent sample survey has shown that 82 per cent. of young people completing a year of employment with training in YTP workscheme remained in employment either with their training employer or another employer.

This statistical information is not available on a sectoral or area basis.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, what figures are available to indicate the number of people on the youth training programme in further education colleges who are pursuing in whole or in part the same course as further education students.

Dr. Mawhinney: In whole, none; in part, approximately 2,000.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many acts of intimidation have been reported since 1 January and in which cases these acts were against Protestants, and in which cases against Catholics, showing what organisation was responsible, where this is known, and how many people the incidents involved.

Mr. Scott [pursuant to his reply, 8 May 1986, c. *225*]: The information is not available in the form requested, but 450 acts that one thought to have been intimadatory or sectarian in intent have been recorded during the first four months of this year excluding ones directed against members of the security forces. Information is not readily available as to the organisations responsible for these acts. Nor are statistics collated in such a way as to indicate the religious affiliation or the numbers of persons involved.

TRANSPORT

Air Fares

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to bring about the ending of the Saturday night rule as it applies to cheap air fares to European destinations.

Mr. Michael Spicer: Our aim is to secure freedom for airlines to introduce new types and levels of air fares, in accordance with their commercial judgment, rather than to prohibit particular conditions (like the Saturday night rule) which airlines may choose to apply to some tickets. This freedom is a feature of the liberal aviation arrangements which we now have with five European countries and is something for which we are pressing in current EC negotiations.

Driving Tests

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the current average regional waiting times for car and motorcycle driving tests; and what are the comparable figures for six months and one year ago, respectively.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: Waiting times are currently lower in almost all traffic areas than they were six months and a year ago. The figures are as follows:

Average waiting periods (weeks)

Traffic area	*L tests (motor cars and part II motorcycle tests)*			*Part I motorcycle tests*		
	26 April 1985	*25 October 1985*	*24 April 1986*	*26 April 1985*	*25 October 1985*	*24 April 1986*
North East (Newcastle)	8½	9½	7	12	8	13
North-East (Leeds)	19	20	14½	15	15	15
North-Western	12	12	11	8	10	10
West Midland	17½	19	14½	16	9	6
Eastern (Nottingham)	13	15	13½	15	15	12
Eastern (Cambridge)	17	18	17½	10	13	12

Traffic area	L tests (motor cars and part II motorcycle tests) 26 April 1985	25 October 1985	24 April 1986	Part I motorcycle tests 26 April 1985	25 October 1985	24 April 1986
South Wales	18	23½	13	14	10	5
Western	14	18	13	17	16	16
South-Eastern	16½	19	14½	12	15	11
Scotland	16	19	19	14	14	9
Metropolitan	25½	18	16½	12	14	14
National average	18	18	15	13	12	11

M20 (Service Areas)

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the current plans for the provision of motorway service areas on the M20 motorway.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I shall reply to my hon. Friend shortly.

Marine Pilots (Compensation)

Mr. Thornton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the terms of the statutory compensation scheme to be made available to marine pilots for whom there will no longer be work following the proposed transfer of responsibility for pilotage to the harbour authorities.

Mr. Moore: My right hon. Friend, the then Secretary of State for Transport, confirmed on 24 March, in answer to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol, East (Mr. Sayeed) that the Government intend to bring forward as soon as possible legislative proposals for the reform of pilotage administration. Those proposals will include provision for a compensation scheme, to be funded by the industry, for those licensed pilots whose services are not required by the harbour authorities once they have taken over responsibility for pilotage.

Although attempts to obtain agreement among the parties concerned on the terms of compensation payments have previously been unsuccessful, it was considered right to make one further attempt, and at my right hon. Friend's request Mr. James Davidson, the chairman of the Pilotage Commission, held discussions with representatives of the pilots, the shipowners and the harbour authorities about the terms of a compensation and linked early retirement scheme. He has also held discussions with the Pilots National Pension Fund whose board of management has agreed to make available £15 million from the fund's surplus towards the cost of early retirement.

Mr. Davidson has now reported that he has been able to secure the agreement in principle of the United Kingdom Pilots Association (Marine) and of the British Ports Association to terms which he has drawn up; however, the General Council of British Shipping has not been prepared to agree them.

Under the terms proposed by Mr. Davidson, any pilots over the age of 50 whose services were not required would receive a lump sum payment equivalent to one year's recommended level of earnings set for 1984 for his district under the former Letch agreement, increased by RPI until the scheme takes effect. Payments in districts not formerly covered by the Letch agreement would be related to the equivalent earnings for 1984, subject to the same increases. For pilots over the age of 60, the sum would be reduced by one-fifth for each year by which the pilot exceeded the age of 60. I understand that the rules of capital gains tax will apply to the lump sum payments.

As regards pension arrangements, Mr. Davidson has reported that although the board of management of the PNPF had taken no decision as to the precise benefits to be applied to individuals, they had prepared a scheme under which surplus pilots aged 55 and over would be able to retire with an immediate pension determined on the basis that:

i the abatement factor on the pensions of those retiring early applied under the normal PNPF rules would be removed;

ii credits of $^{1}/_{60}$ per year to cover the years to age 60 and, for those due to retire at 65 or over double credits to age 65 would be added;

iii pre-membership service credits of ½ per cent per month would be added in respect of expected service from age 60 to 65 (with a maximum of 30 per cent);

iv the maximum additional credits under ii and iii above would be $^{15}/_{60}$ per man and the Inland Revenue limit on the size of pension would of course apply.

Any pilots aged between 50 and 55 who are surplus to requirements would receive similar benefits save that the abatement factor referred to in (i) above of ½ per cent. per month would apply. Mr. Davidson has advised me that in his view the sum allocated by the PNPF would be adequate to meet the early retirement on this basis of such pilots as are surplus when the new legislation takes effect, and also any further surpluses over the ensuing three years.

I know that some may regard the lump sum and pension terms set out above as generous, and it is indeed unusual for such payments to be made to people who are classified as self-employed. However, in view of the fundamental change which our proposed legislation will cause to the circumstances and expectations of many pilots, I accept that there is an obligation to ensure that they are fairly treated, and it is my intention that the statutory scheme to be introduced in association with the new legislation will provide for compensation on the basis which the representatives of the pilots and of the harbour authorities have now agreed.

I am grateful to Mr. Davidson for his efforts in bringing forward these proposals.

SCOTLAND

Geriatric Beds (Occupancy)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the rate of occupancy of geriatric beds in *(a)* Strathclyde and *(b)* Scotland.

Mr. John MacKay: The rates of occupancy are as follows:

	30 September 1984	30 September 1985 (provisional)
Strathclyde	94·6	94·3
Scotland	95·2	95·2

Nurses (Establishment Levels)

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those hospitals in Scotland which have applied the Aberdeen formula for deciding nursing levels and the extent, in percentage terms, to which they applied it in each case; and what were the results compared with the actual nursing establishments in each hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: In September 1984 89 per cent. of hospitals in Scotland had calculated nurse staffing requirements for some or all specialties by means of the Aberdeen formula. Fifty-eight per cent. of hospitals had then used the formula as the basis for funded nurse staffing establishments, but 46 per cent. of hospitals had adopted the results only in part. The following table shows those hospitals where the percentage of the formula used is known. The actual nursing establishments before the application of the formula are not known.

Hospital	*Per cent. of Aberdeen Formula*
Royal Alexandra Infirmary	85·0
Inverclyde Royal Hospital	85·0
Thorn Hospital, Elderslie	85·0
Royal Alexandra Infirmary Annexe	85·0
Johnstone Hospital, Paisley	85·0
Barshaw Hospital, Paisley	85·0
Bridge of Weir Hospital	85·0
Paisley Maternity Hospital	85·0
Hawkhead Hospital, Paisley	85·0
Dykebar Hospital, Paisley	85·0
Elderslie Hospital	85·0
Broadfield Hospital	85·0
Caldwell House Hospital	85·0
Merchiston Hospital	85·0
Royal Victoria Eye Infirmary	85·0
Heathfield Hospital (New Units)	85·0
War Memorial, Isle of Arran (New Units)	81·0
Davidson Cottage Hospital	100·0
Crosshouse Hospital	87·0
Ballochmyle Hospital (General and Geriatric wards)	85·0
Biggart Hospital, Prestwick	*100·0
Ravenspark Hospital	76·0
Holmhead Hospital, Cumnock	100·0
Ayrshire Central Hospital (Maternity wards)	69·0
Ayrshire Central Hospital (other wards)	86·0
Peel Hospital, Galashiels	100·0
Garrick Hospital	†88·9
Dumfries and Galloway Royal Infirmary	‡86·0
Castle Douglas and District Hospital	†86·0
Lochmaben Chest Hospital	†86·0
Newton Stewart Hospital	†86·0
Thomas Hope Hospital	†118·0
Thornhill Hospital	100·0
Crichton Royal Hospital (Psycho-Geriatric and Mental Illness wards)	85·0
Nithbank Hospital	†89·0
Dalrymple Hospital	†85·0
Cresswell Maternity Hospital and Glenoch Maternity Ward, Dalrymple Hospital	†80·0
Adamson Hospital and Cupar Health Centre	100·0
Milesmark Hospital	91·0
Randolph Wemyss Memorial Hospital	99·0
Dunfermline and West Fife Hospital	85·0
Northern Hospital, Dunfermline	90·0
Glenrothes Hospital	100·0
Netherlea Hospital	100·0
Cameron Hospital	100·0
Craigtoun Hospital, St. Andrews	100·0
Victoria and Hunter Hospitals	93·0
Forth Park and Craigtoun Hospitals	100·0
Falkirk and District Royal Maternity Hospital	100·0
Stirling Royal Infirmary (Maternity wards)	100·0
Aberdeen Royal Infirmary	95·0
Woodend Hospital	94·0
Dr. Gray's Hospital, Elgin	89·0
Royal Aberdeen Children's Hospital	87·0
Leanchoil Hospital	92·0
Jubilee Hospital, Huntly	94·0
Peterhead Cottage Hospital	93·0
Chalmers Hospital and Maternity Annexe	94·0
Fraserburgh Hospital	95·0
Turner Memorial Hospital	86·0
Seafield Hospital, Buckie	89·0
Inverurie Hospital	94·0
Insch War Memorial Hospital	96·0
City Hospital, Aberdeen	88·0
Tor-na-Dee Hospital/Roxburgh House	89·0
Woodend Hospital Site, (Glenburn Wing)	89·0
Morningfield Hospital, Aberdeen	78·0
Woodcot Hospital, Stonehaven	91·0
Maud Hospital	100·0
Ugie Hospital, Peterhead	99·0
Campbell Hospital	93·0
Turriff Cottage Hospital	96·0
Fleming Cottage Hospital, Aberdeen	89·0
Spynie Hospital, Elgin	95·0
Stephen Hospital, Dufftown	86·0
Aboyne Hospital	87·0
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital (including Summerfield and Fonthill)	86·0
Kincardine O'Neil War Memorial Hospital, Torphins	73·0
Maryhill Maternity Hospital, Elgin	100·0
Glen O'Dee Hospital	93·0
Bilbohall Hospital, Elgin	100·0
Woolmanhill OPO	98·0
Stobhill Hospital (General wards)	85·0
Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Glasgow	75·0
Duke Street Hospital including Carfell House (Geriatric wards)	100·0
Belvidere Hospital	85·0
Lightburn Hospital	85·0
Blawarthill Hospital	85·0
Lenzie Hospital	100·0
Cowglen Hospital	100·0
Knightswood Hospital	85·0
Glasgow Royal Maternity Hospital	85·0
Queen Mother's Hospital (including Community Midwives)	85·0
Rutherglen Maternity Hospital and Community Midwives	85·0
Royal Samaritan Hospital	85·0
Ruchill Hospital	100·0
Duntocher Hospital	85·0
Royal Northern Infirmary	84·0
Raigmore Area General Hospital	83·0
Raigmore Area 2—Maternity	100·0
Bignold Hospital, Wick	100·0
Lawson Memorial Hospital, Golspie	100·0
Mackinnon Memorial Hospital, Isle of Skye	92·0
Belford Hospital (General and Maternity Wards)	92·0
Caithness Central Hospital, Wick	100·0
Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall	94·0
Portree Hospital	97·0
Ian Charles Hospital, Grantown-on-Spey	100·0
Town and County Hospital, Nairn	84·0
Hilton Hospital, Inverness	90·0
County Hospital, Invergordon	89·0
Glencoe Hospital	100·0
Gesto Hospital, Skye	93·0
Migdale Hospital, Bonar Bridge	100·0
Cambusavie Hospital, by Dornoch	100·0
Dunbar Hospital, Thurso	100·0
Culduthel Hospital	90·0
Town and County Hospital, Wick	100·0
Nicolson Mackenzie Hospital, Strathpeffer	100·0
Hairmyres Hospital	85·0
Stonehouse Hospital	85·0

Hospital	Per cent. of Aberdeen Formula
Law Hospital	85·0
Cleland Hospital	90·0
Roadmeetings Hospital	90·0
Wishaw Hospital	94·0
Strathclyde Hospital	100·0
Coathill Hospital	100·0
Kello Hospital, Biggar	90·0
Victoria Cottage Hospital, Kilsyth	95·0
Bellshill Maternity Hospital	95·0
Motherwell Maternity Hospital	100·0
William Smellie Memorial Maternity Hospital	95·0
Udston Hospital	95·0
Hartwood Hospital (Psycho-Geriatric wards)	78·0
Lochart Hospital and Hozier House, Lanark	90·0
Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh	85·0
Western General Hospital	85·0
City Hospital	85·0
Deaconess Hospital	85·0
Bangour General Hospital	85·0
Bangour General Maternity Hospital	85·0
Eastern General Hospital	90·0
Eastern General Maternity Hospital	85·0
Leith Hospital	95·0
Roodlands Hospital	90·0
Chalmers Hospital	85·0
Royal Victoria Hospital	85·0
St. Michael's Hospital	85·0
Drumshoreland Hospital	85·0
Tippethill Hospital	85·0
Belhaven Cottage Hospital	95·0
Corstorphine Hospital	85·0
Royal Edinburgh Hospital	97·0
Astley Ainslie Hospital	85·0
Edenhall Hospital	83·0
East Fortune Hospital	75·0
Northern General Hospital	85·0
Balfour Hospital, Kirkwall	98·0
Eastbank Hospital, Kirkwall	98·0
Gilbert Bain Hospital, Lerwick	95·0
Montfield Hospital	92·0
Lewis Hospital, Stornoway	92·0
Daliburgh Hospital, South Uist	92·0
County Hospital, Stornoway	92·0
Lochmaddy Hospital, North Uist	92·0

* Approximately.
† 100 per cent. night duty.
‡ 100 per cent. day duty for specialised departments and night duty.

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list those hospitals in Scotland which have applied the Telford consultative approach for deciding nursing levels and the extent, in percentage terms, to which they applied it in each case; and what were the results compared with the actual nursing establishments in each hospital.

Mr. John MacKay: In 1984, 26 hospitals in Scotland had calculated nurse staffing requirements for some or all specialties by means of the Telford consultative approach. Of these, nearly half had used the approach as the basis for funded nurse staffing establishments but only three hospitals specified the percentage of the Telford formula results which they had used. These are as follows. The actual nursing establishments before the application of the Telford consultative approach are not known.

Hospital	Per Cent of Telford
Ballochmyle Hospital (Mental Illness Wards)	85·0
Crichton Royal Hospital (Mental Illness Wards)	100·0
Duke Street Hospital including Carfell House (Mental Illness Wards)	100·0

Women's Refuges

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what information he has as to how many women live in women's refuges in Scotland at present: and what was the figure for each year since 1979;

(2) what information he has as to how many women at present living in women's refuges in Scotland have been living there for 10 weeks or more in each of the local authority areas in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: The information requested is not held centrally.

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, if he will make a statement on his Department's guidelines to local authorities in Scotland for re-housing women who have left home due to domestic violence, and who are living in temporary accommodation.

Mr. Ancram: The allocation of council houses is primarily the responsibility of the housing authority concerned, and the Scottish Development Department has not issued guidelines on this specific subject. The 1980 report by a sub-committee of the Scottish Housing Advisory Committee on the "Allocation and Transfer of Council Houses" made general recommendations for local authority allocation policies and included, at chapter 4, advice on housing separated spouses. In addition the Housing (Scotland) Bill makes amendments to the Tenants' Rights Etc (Scotland) Act 1980 which will prevent discrimination against applicants for council housing on the grounds of their marital status.

Radioactivity

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the locations of the three areas of highest rainfall in Scotland for which samples of rainfall have been analysed to detect levels of radiation since the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will publish a full record of the date and time of readings, and the level of each of the various forms of radioactivity which were recorded, together with the normal level and the lower emergency reference level for each such type of radioactivity.

Mr. Ancram: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when the first check was made in Fife for radiation levels after the Chernobyl incident.

Mr. Ancram: As part of the monitoring put in hand in Scotland in connection with the Chernobyl accident, measurements were made in Fife of the gamma dose rate and of the concentration of radioactivity in air from 28 April and 1 May respectively.

Hill Livestock Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many producers eligible for hill livestock compensatory allowances had not received full payment of their 1986 balances by 22 May.

Mr. John MacKay: Claims are still being received, but on the basis of last year's experience we expect about 19,000 applications in total. By 22 May, full payment had been made to 12,646 producers. A further 1,636 payments will be made in the week commencing 26 May, leaving payments to be made to some 4,700 producers, most of whom have, of course, already received 75 per cent. of their entitlement. The majority of outstanding payments will be made within the next three weeks.

WALES

Housing

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish a list showing for each of the housing authorities in Wales *(a)* the total income they have received in each of the past six years from the sale of council houses, *(b)* the money from such sources that each local authority has spent up to the latest date for which this information is available, *(c)* the residual balance of funds from the sale of council houses held by those councils on that date and *(d)* the amount of money from these sources each council will be allowed to spend or commit during the present financial year.

Mr. Mark Robinson: The information requested is as follows:

(a) The income received by each local authority from the sale of council houses for the financial years 1980-81 to 1984-85 is given in the following table. The comparable information for 1985-86 is not yet available.

(b) and (c) This information is not held centrally.

(d) This information is not available since precise cash figures are not held centrally however during the present financial year each council will be allowed to enhance its capital spending allocation by the addition of 15 per cent. of the value of any accumulated capital receipts which have not already been used in this way.

Receipts from council house sales 1980-81 to 1985-86

Local authority	*1980-81 (£000)*	*1981-82 (£000)*	*1982-83 (£000)*	*1983-84 (£000)*	*1984-85 (£000)*
Alyn and Deeside	773	528	218	262	258
Colwyn	565	728	663	529	415
Delyn	820	753	436	318	301
Glyndwr	28	782	890	456	254
Rhuddlan	19	409	316	326	299
Wrexham Maelor	—	1,997	1,244	467	464
Carmarthen	772	1,631	1,269	919	880
Ceredigion	459	1,562	1,858	1,141	783
Dinefwr	—	700	544	276	220
Llanelli	137	1,562	1,545	1,813	974
Preseli	137	2,548	1,326	1,376	822
South Pembroke	—	277	1,110	1,416	562
Blaenau Gwent	47	935	1,313	756	507
Islwyn	6	1,652	8,274	2,702	1,615
Monmouth	485	690	864	1,326	1,431
Newport	308	1,217	1,421	1,726	1,727
Torfaen	405	2,668	2,750	1,921	2,137
Aberconwy	—	1,080	1,206	697	464
Arfon	27	1,006	639	457	491
Dwyfor	—	526	506	235	129
Meirionnydd	—	569	1,081	618	293
Ynys Môn	—	1,081	974	382	344
Cynon Valley	—	529	1,048	461	465
Merthyr Tydfil	—	1,361	1,732	978	670
Ogwr	—	1,229	2,982	1,614	1,370
Rhondda	—	362	171	191	132
Rhymney Valley	—	1,884	2,487	1,711	1,258
Taff Ely	45	1,056	936	1,694	1,378
Brecknock	—	1,838	830	915	831
Montgomeryshire	—	1,779	1,183	698	452
Radnor	—	692	658	655	246
Cardiff	187	1,312	5,089	2,239	583
Vale of Glamorgan	917	1,127	1,836	1,936	1,485
Port Talbot	17	803	1,483	1,607	1,197
Lliw Valley	—	598	1,262	508	401
Neath	—	1,604	970	417	536
Swansea	49	1,067	1,629	1,267	1,139
TOTAL WALES	6,203	42,142	54,743	37,010	27,513

Senior House Officer Vacancies

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in ear, nose and throat in Wales, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of senior house officer vacancies in ophthalmology in Wales, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in anaesthetics in Wales, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(4) if he will publish in the *Official Report*, the number of senior house officer vacancies in trauma in Wales, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Hospitals (Statistics)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of those hospitals in Wales that have, during the last two years, reduced night-time, emergency or casualty cover in *(a)* ophthalmology, *(b)* anaesthetics, *(c)* trauma and *(d)* ear, nose and throat, giving the reason as shortage of specialist staff.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not held centrally.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales when he expects the report on facilities for radiotherapy treatment for carcinoma of the cervix to be available.

Mr. Mark Robinson: A review of the provision of radiotherapy treatment in South Wales is presently being undertaken and I expect to have the results within the next three months.

Dwyfor District Council

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has as to how many complaints have been received by the local government Ombudsman in Wales concerning alleged maladministration by Cyngor Dosbarth Dwyfor; and how many of these were upheld.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: I have no information about the numbers of complaints against individual local authorities. The information that the hon. Member seeks would be available from the Commissioner for Local Administration in Wales who is independent of Central Government.

Inatrogenesis

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Wales what information he has on the numbers of patients admitted to hospital in Wales as a result of inatrogenesis.

Mr. Mark Robinson: This information is not available centrally.

Radiation Monitoring

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will publish the locations of the two areas of highest rainfall in Wales from which samples of rainfall have been analysed to detect levels of radiation; and if he will publish a full record of the date and time of readings, and of the level of each of the various forms of radioactivity which were recorded, together with the normal level and the lower emergency reference level for each such type of radioactivity.

Mr. Mark Robinson *[pursuant to his reply,* 19 May 1986, c. *39]:* The information for iodine 131 and caesium 137, radiologically the most significant radionuclides found in British rainwater following the Chernobyl accident, from samples taken during May at the Wylfa and Trawsfynydd nuclear power stations is as shown in the following table, expressed in becquerels per litre:

	Iodine 131		*Caesium 137*	
Date	*Trawsfynydd*	*Wylfa*	*Trawsfynydd*	*Wylfa*
May 3	2,845	552	220	‡
May 4	1,533	57	128	‡
May 5	112	*	25	*
May 6	52	*	<13	*
May 7	*	*	*	*
May 8	20	*	<7	*
May 9	15	95	<17	†
May 10	9	†	<11	†
May 11	<7	*	<10	*
May 12	<8	†	<7	†
May 13	*	*	*	*
May 14	*	*	*	*
May 15	<7	†	<9	†

The normal background levels for the sum of these radionuclides are less than 1 becquerel per litre. The following concentrations (initial ones measured following the incident measured in Bq L^{-1}) are those at which substitution of drinking water supply would be required to avoid receiving doses in excess of either the annual effective dose limit of 5 millisieverts or 50 millisieverts to an individual organ were the water to be drunk for the appropriate period of time:—

Period	Iodine 131	Caesium 137
2 days	11,000	51,000
7 days	3,700	15,000
14 days	2,400	7,300
100 days	‖1,700	**1,000

* no rain
† no activity detected
‡ trace
‖ thyroid limit
** effective limit

PRIME MINISTER

Quangos

Mr. Ernie Ross asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will list the quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations established by Her Majesty's Government;

(2) how many quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisations have been abolished since 1979.

The Prime Minister: From 1979 to April 1985, 756 non-departmental public bodies (quangos) have been abolished, rationalised or substantially reduced. In the same period 242 bodies have been created. The net reduction is therefore 514. Listed below are those bodies created since April 1983. Similar information for earlier years was not compiled centrally and could now only be reconstructed at disproportionate cost.

Non-Departmental Public Bodies established April 1983-April 1985

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (10)
- Agricultural Dwelling House Advisory Committee
- Area VII White Fish Industry Advisory Committee
- Food Advisory Committee
- 6 Priorities Boards for Research and Development in Agriculture and Food
- Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Office of Arts and Libraries (2)
- Science Museum
- Victoria and Albert Museum

Ministry of Defence (3)
- Meteorological Office Research Sub-Committee
- Royal Naval Museum, Portsmouth
- Royal Navy Submarine Museum, Gosport

Department of Education and Science (8)
- Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
- Economic and Social Research Council
- Open University Visiting Committee
- Schools Curriculum Development Committee
- Secondary Examinations Council
- Visiting Committee for Cranfield Institute of Technology
- Visiting Committee for the Royal College of Art
- Voluntary Sector Consultative Council

Department of Employment (7)
- Advisory Committee on Genetic Manipulation
- 5 Area Manpower Boards
- National Steering Group for Local Collaborative Projects Under the Adult Training Strategy

Department of Energy (1)
- Renewable Energy Advisory Committee

Department of the Environment (6)
- Audit Commission for Local Authorities in England and Wales
- Black Country Limestone Advisory Panel
- Board of Trustees for the Amouries
- Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England
- London and Metropolitan Government Staff Commission
- 1 Region Council for Sport and Recreation

Department of Health and Social Services (17)
- Cardiology Liaison Committee
- Computers in Dentistry Steering Group
- Expert Advisory Group on AIDS
- Joint FPC Working Group on Personnel
- Joint FPC Working Group on Financial Arrangements
- Joint Group on Performance Indicators
- Medical Boarding Centres (Respiratory Diseases)
- National Property Advisory Group
- Neurosciences Liaison Committee
- Review of Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres
- Review of Child Care Law Working Party
- Social Security Appeal Tribunals
- Steering Committee on Review of Health and Personal Social Services Works Function and Review Team
- Supraregional Services Advisory Group
- Training Allowance Advisory Committee
- Working Group for the Revision of the Electrical Safety Code for Hospital Laboratory Equipment
- Working Party on Continuing Education for General Practitioners

Home Office (28)
- Office of the Data Protection Registrar
- 27 Parole Board and Local Review Committees

Northern Ireland Office and Departments (10)
- Clinical Engineering and Medical Physics Services Advisory Committee
- Clinical Imaging Services Advisory Committee
- Committee for Centre for Education Management
- Committee for Nature Conservation
- 3 Committees for the Employment of Disabled People
- Fair Employment Appeals Board
- General Consumer Council for Northern Ireland
- Laboratory Services Advisory Committee

Scottish Courts Administration (2)
- Lands Tribunal for Scotland
- Pensions Appeal Tribunal for Scotland

Scottish Office (3)
- 1 Local Review Committee for Her Majesty's Prisons and Young Offenders Institutions
- Scottish Vocational Education Council
- Scottish Tertiary Education Advisory Council

Office of Telecommunications (3)
- 3 Advisory Committees on Telecommunications (for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.)

Department of Trade and Industry (2)
- London Regional Passengers' Committee
- Persons hearing Estate Agents Licensing Appeals

Department of Transport (2)
- Honorary Medical Advisory Panel for Driving and Disorders of the Nervous System
- Panel of Advisers on Disability

Her Majesty's Treasury (2)
- Nurses', Midwives' and other NHS Professions' Review Body
- Pharmacists' Review Panel

Welsh Office (5)
- All Wales Advisory Panel on Development of Services for Mentally Handicapped People
- Committee for Under Fives Initiative
- Health Education Advisory Committee for Wales
- Perinatal Mortality Survey Group
- Welsh Computer Strategy Committee

Family Policies

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Prime Minister if she will list those policies implemented by her Government in each year since 1979 which are designed to fulfil the commitment of the Government to support the traditional family as the fundamental unit of society.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Mr. Soames) on 20 February, at columns *263-65*.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister what representations she has received from ACTS (Against Channel Tunnel Schemes) relating to the proposed Channel tunnel; what reply she has sent; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend the Minister of State, Department of Transport has received a letter from ACTS and will reply in due course.

Korea

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if the question of human rights, democracy and the peaceful re-unification of Korea was discussed on her recent visit to Korea; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I did discuss progress towards fuller democracy and peaceful reunification during my visit to the Republic of Korea from 2-4 May. I had talks with the President and Prime Minister and met other prominent Koreans. I also visited the demilitarised zone between south and north and laid wreaths at the Korean and United Nations cemeteries, and at the memorial to the Glorious Glosters.

ENERGY

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will make a statement as to the comparative safety performance of advanced gas-cooled reactors and Magnox nuclear reactors; and what equivalent information he has about the RBMK reactor systems of the type used at Chernobyl and about the comparative arrangements for the containment within these different reactor types of a failure of the nuclear component of the plant.

Mr. Goodlad: The Magnox and AGR stations operating in the United Kingdom have an excellent safety record. There has been no incident involving significant radiological hazard to the public in the 29 years since the commissioning of the first Magnox station. They are regularly inspected by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the HSE.

No equivalent information is available on the safety record of the RBMK system used at Chernobyl, which is quite different in design from any reactor in use or proposed for use n the United Kingdom. I am advised that in Magnox Reactors, which have strong primary containments, the coolant is a gas, which never becomes more than mildly radioactive and secondary means for containing coolant in the event of a leak have been judged unnecessary. Any water-cooled reactor proposed for licensing in the United Kingdom would require not only a strong primary containment but also an adequate secondary containment to prevent the escape of radioactive coolant to the environment. The Chernobyl RBMK reactor appears to have had some containment, both of reactor and for escaped coolant, but of inadequate strength.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessment he has made of the extent to which the Magnox reactors and the advanced gas-cooled reactors at Hinkley Point, Trawsfynydd, Heysham and Hunterston meet those of the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate's safety standards which have been introduced since those reactors were first constructed.

Mr. Goodlad: In the United Kingdom, the operation of commercial nuclear power stations is regulated by a comprehensive set of regulations. The responsibility of ensuring that nuclear power stations are safe rests with the licensees, within the terms of the site licences issued by the Health and Safety Executive. The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the HSE carries out a continuous programme of assessment and inspection to ensure that each station is operated in accordance with the conditions attached to the site licence. In addition to this continuous programme of assessment the NII has required the operators of the Magnox nuclear power stations to carry out long-term safety reviews of their stations at about 20 years' operating life. The objectives of these long-term reviews are to confirm that the stations are safe for continued operation; to identify any potential life-limiting factors; and to compare the installations with modern safety standards in order to determine if any improvements should be introduced. The long-term safety reviews of the Magnox power stations at Hinkley Point, Trawsfynydd and Hunterston are being carried out by their licensees at present and the results of the reviews will be examined by the NII. The conclusions will be published in due course.

The AGR power stations at Hinkley Point, Heysham and Hunterston are or modern design with advanced safety features and there is no immediate need to re-examine their standards.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many of Britain's Magnox and advanced gas-cooled reactors have facilities for complete secondary containment.

Mr. Goodlad: Britain's Magnox reactors, which are gas-cooled, and advanced gas-cooled reactors have strong primary containments. Secondary means for containing coolant in the event of a leak have been judged unnecessary because the gas never becomes more than mildly radioactive.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the safety assessment of a nuclear reactor of the type akin to that at Chernobyl.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall place in the Library of the House a copy of the Report "The Russian Graphite Moderated Channel Tube Reactor" NPC(R)1275 prepared in 1976 by the Nuclear Power Company Limited, predecessor of the present National Nuclear Corporation Limited.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many people and how many children under five and under 18 years, respectively, live within five, 10, 25 and 50 miles, respectively, of power generating nuclear reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member with available information as soon as possible.

Berkeley Nuclear Power Station

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Energy when the 20-year safety review on Berkeley nuclear power station will be completed.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB's long term reviews of Berkeley nuclear power station are complete apart from a

few remaining sections which are expected to be submitted shortly to the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate of the Health and Safety Executive for consideration.

Power Output

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing *(a)* the maximum power output available in the United Kingdom assuming use of all existing power stations by means of (i) coal (ii) oil/gas (iii) nuclear and (iv) hydro, *(b)* the additional power projected as available in the feasibility studies tidal barrages at (1) Severn (2) Mersey (3) Solway and (4) Morecambe and *(c)* the average and maximum demands for power in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Walker: The information is as follows:

(a) Plant capacity of the public electricity supply industry at the end of 1985

	Capacity Megawatts sent out
(i) Coal fired stations	36,672
(ii) Oil/gas*	14,354
(iii) Nuclear	6,399
(iv) Conventional hydro	1,295
(v) Pumped storage	2,788
(vi) Dual/mixed firing	2,286
Total declared capability	63,794
Output available†	54,225

* Includes conventional oil fired steam raising, gas turbine and diesel plant.

† Assuming notional availability of 85 per cent. (actual availabilities in each category at the time will have differed from this figure, which is used in planning). The public electricity supply industry also imports small amounts of power from stations operated by others; no allowance for this is made in the table. Reserve capacity is excluded from the total.

*(b) Power projected as available from tidal barrages**

	Power Megawatts
(i) Severn	7,200
(ii) Mersey	621
(iii) Solway Firth	7,200
(iv) Morecambe Bay	3,000
Total output rating	18,021
Firm capacity credit†	2,753

* *Sources:* Severn Barrage Committee Report 1981 except for Mersey, from the Merseyside County Council Report 1986.

† Includes a calculation which takes into account that demand may occur at any state of the tide, on which capability depends.

(c) Average and maximum demands for power on the public electricity supply system in the last three years

	Megawatts	
	Average	*Maximum*
1983	27,813	48,595
1984	28,345	52,970
1985	29,879	52,255

Dungeness B Power Station

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Energy, further to his answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *336*, what has been the output of each reactor at Dungeness B in MW hours in each year since commissioning.

Mr. Goodlad: Total output from Dungeness B reactor 1, which was synchronised to the grid in April 1983, has been:

Megawatt hours

	Output
April to December 1983	350,000
January to December 1984	620,000
January to December 1985	2,430,000
January to April 1986	690,000

Since this reactor was commissioned on 1 April 1985 total output has been 2,500,000 Megawatt hours.

Reactor 2 is expected to be commissioned during 1986. Total output since synchronisation on 29 December 1985 until end April 1986 was 510,000 Megawatt hours.

EMPLOYMENT

Tourism

Mr. Ray Powell asked the Paymaster General what information he has about the number of proposed visits to the United Kingdom in the current year by tourists from *(a)* the United States of America and *(b)* other countries which have been cancelled since 15 April; what information he has as to the principal reasons given for these cancellations; and what estimate is available to him of their cost to the United Kingdom tourist industry and to the United Kingdom economy.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: We have no detailed or reliable information on the number of cancellations by prospective tourists since 15 April. Some sources in the industry have suggested that the number of tourists from the United States of America could be down this year by around 15 per cent. as a result of growing fears since the beginning of the year of terrorist activity and other causes such as exchange rates. Such a reduction could lead to a drop in tourist spending in the United Kingdom of around 3 per cent. I can assure the hon. Member that we are taking every opportunity to convey the message to prospective visitors that Britain is a safe destination. There is no evidence of any cancellations from any other countries at present.

Youth Training

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General what research work his Department and the Manpower Services Commission have undertaken, giving references to published work, on the operation and effect of the YTS, the community programme and the young workers scheme.

Mr. Lang: The information requested is:

YOUTH TRAINING SCHEME

MSC Research

Regular follow-up of YTS Trainees to be published over the Summer as

The Youth Training Scheme—the first 3 Years

MSC Research and Development Series No. 34.

YTS Provider Survey—results published in a short note in the Employment Gazette of April 1985, p. 163 and a full article in August 1985.

Ethnic Minorities and YTS

MSC Research and Development Series No. 20.

Review of the Information Technology Centre Programme

MSC Research and Development Series No. 27.

The Youth Training Schemes: A study of non-participants and early leavers

Research and Development Series No. 34, Summer 1986.

YTS Trainee Follow-Up of Non-Respondents Interview Survey

Reports made available to the House of Commons Library.

School Leavers Cohort Survey—Sheffield and Bradford Pilot

Four Publications are available from the MSC:

1. Choices at 16; Report No. 1—Young peoples views on YTS
2. Choices at 16; Report No. 2—Staying on
3. Choices at 16; Report No. 3—The Gender Gap
4. Futures in Black and White—Two studies of the experience of young people in Sheffield and Bradford.

Report on the 1984 pilot of the Scottish Young Peoples Survey

Available from MSC.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMME

MSC Research

Surveys of CP participants and ex participants, were undertaken Autumn 1983, Spring 1984 and Autumn 1984. Partial follow-up surveys of CP participants were carried out in 1984 and 1985.

Social and Community Planning Research have published one report "Survey of CP Participants 1984". (SCPR ref: 01/797).

A survey of CP sponsors was undertaken in 1984. Copies of reports on the other surveys have been made available to the House of Commons Library but not published elsewhere.

The report of an efficiency review conducted by the Cabinet Office entitled "Value for Money in the Community Programme" was published on 14 April 1986 and is available free direct from the Department. An article entitled "After the Community Programme — Results of the First Follow-Up Study" was published in the *Employment Gazette* in January 1985.

The MSC has also produced a report entitled "Training Linked to the Community Programme" outlining good practice, copies of which are available from the MSC.

YOUNG WORKERS SCHEME

DE Research

Young Workers Scheme Survey of Employers 1983
Young Workers Scheme Survey of Employers 1985
Young Workers Scheme Survey of Participants 1985

All three surveys were conducted for the Department by Social and Community Planning Research. A continuous postal survey of employers claiming payments was managed within the Department.

A summary of this material has been published in the *Employment Gazette* of May 1986 in an article entitled "Evaluation of the Young Workers Scheme".

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will show, for each year or operation of the youth opportunities scheme and the YTS, the level of the allowance payable under the schemes, both in current prices and in constant 1986 prices.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Expressed in terms of prices in March 1986 the following shows the level of allowance each year from April 1978 until March 1986:

	Allowance £	*Allowance at 1986 prices* £
April 1978	19·50	38·24
March 1979	20·55	37·24
March 1980	23·50	35·56
March 1981	23·50	31·58
March 1982	25·00	30·44
March 1983	25·00	29·09
March 1984	25·00	27·64
March 1985	26·25	27·36
March 1986	27·30	27·30

With the introduction of two year YTS, trainees in their second year of training will receive an enhanced allowance of £35·00. Allowance levels must reflect the fact that trainees are only learning, and YTS provices substantially upgraded training compared with the youth opportunities programme.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will indicate the number and proportion of workers on *(a)* the YTS scheme and *(b)* the young workers scheme, who are engaged in wages council sectors.

Mr. Lang: I regret that the information requested is not available for young people engaged on YTS.

A survey conducted by Social and Community Planning Research (SCPR) in 1985 found that 33 per cent. of those employed under support of the young workers scheme were covered by a wages council or board that set statutory minimum rates of pay. However the survey asked about "statutory" bodies but replies included many references to non-statutory bodies.

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish available information about the earnings of those who remain in employment following the completion of a place under the YTS or support under the young workers scheme.

Mr. Lang: The Manpower Services Commission conducts a regular follow-up survey of leavers from YTS three months after they leave their programmes. The latest results are for young people who left YTS in November 1985. The survey gives the following information on the weekly net take home pay of leavers during the period April to November 1985, who were in full-time employment at the time of the survey.

YTS leavers in the period April to November 1985

Weekly take home pay	*Percentage of leavers**
Up to £20	0·1
£20 to £40	24·2
£40 to £60	55·8
£60 to £80	16·3
£80 to £100	2·7
£100 and over	0·8

* In full-time employment at time of survey.

From research carried out by social and community planning research (SCPR) for my Department, those youngsters who were employed after young workers scheme support had ended, had received average increases of 30 per cent. over their pay at the time of entry. However this evidence is based on a very small sample of youngsters.

Wages (Arrears)

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish a table showing for each year from 1979 to 1985 *(a)* the amount of arrears assessed by the Wages Inspectorate as due to workers covered by wages councils but not recovered, *(b)* the amount where recovery was not considered practicable, *(c)* these amounts expressed as percentages of the arrears actually recovered, *(d)* the number of workers in respect of whom arrears were assessed but not recovered, *(e)* the number of workers for whom recovery of arrears was not considered practicable and *(f)* both numbers as percentages of the number of workers to whom arrears were actually paid.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is given in the following table:

		1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
(a) Arrears assessed but not recovered	£	143,246	195,597	263,980	425,110	556,243	559,037	719,694
(b) *(a)* above as a percentage of arrears paid		†9·5	†9·3	†2·9	†22·8	†29·9	†29·8	†41·2
(c) Arrears which it was considered not practicable to pursue	£	*143,246	*195,597	263,980	174,849	243,507	267,015	365,272
(d) *(c)* above as a percentage of arrears paid		*9·5	*9·3	†12·9	[illegible]	†13·1	†14·3	†20·9
(e) Workers for whom arrears were assessed but not recovered		766	941	1,365	1,844	2,338	2,242	2,670
(f) *(e)* above as a percentage of workers paid arrears		†3·4	†3·3	†5·6	†9·9	†12·6	†14·2	†18·7
(g) Workers for whom it was considered not practicable to pursue arrears		*766	*941	*1,365	851	1,111	1,193	1,450
(h) *(g)* above as a percentage of workers paid arrears		†3·4	†3·3	†5·6	†4·6	†6·0	†7·5	†10·1

* These figures include data relating to arrears waived. Information concerning arrears which it was considered not practicable to pursue is not separately identifiable for 1979, 1980 and 1981.
† per cent.

Home Workers

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish for each year from 1979 to 1985 the total number of home workers in respect of whom the Wages Inspectorate examined employers records; and in how many cases the accuracy of the employers' records were checked, the total number of home workers found to be underpaid and the total amount of arrears collected for home workers.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is given in the following table.

	1979	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Homeworkers whose pay was checked	3,570	2,565	1,665	1,358	1,974	1,883	1,606
Homeworkers found to have been underpaid	101	160	91	113	59	122	21
Arrears paid £s	4,065	5,326	4,815	10,221	8,325	25,814	2,242

In every establishment inspected where work was given out a sample of homeworkers was selected for visit to confirm the accuracy of the employers' records.

Wages Orders

Ms. Clare Short asked the Paymaster General if he will publish for each year from 1979 to 1985 the total number of establishments where employers were found by the Wages Inspectorate not to have displayed copies of wages orders as a percentage of the establishments visited by the inspectorate.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: The information requested is given in the following table.

Establishments not displaying wages council notices as a percentage of establishments visited.

	per cent.
1979	24·5
1980	26·5
1981	27·9
1982	18·2
1983	28·0
1984	32·1
1985	31·9

Restart Courses

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General on what basis the 30 providers were chosen for the pilot restart courses.

Mr. Lang: In choosing providers of restart courses in the nine pilot areas, the Manpower Services Commission sought a wide variety of providers from both the public and the private sector.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if the providers in the pilot schemes for restart courses include any individuals with particular experience in work with the ethnic minorities.

Mr. Lang: Information about individual tutors on restart courses is not held by the Manpower Services Commission but most training providers in areas where there are significant ethnic minority populations have such experience.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if the restart scheme provides opportunities of training and benefit for the various constituent sections of the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme will provide opportunities for all categories of long-term unemployed people.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what short courses are being offered under the restart scheme; and how they relate to those which are offered within the Manpower Services Commission-funded wider opportunity scheme.

Mr. Lang: The short courses offered under the restart scheme are of one week's duration with a further drop-in facility of one day per week for up to 13 weeks. The courses will concentrate on re-motivation and re-assessment of skills, strength and potential as well as improving techniques of job search, application and interview. They are shorter than most courses run under the wider opportunities training programme although the two programmes have many shared aims. Every effort will be made to develop the relationship between the two programmes in the light of operational experience.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General if the Manpower Services Commission will give consideration to providing special provision for the needs of minority groups in the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: The Manpower Services Commission's policy is to make its services available equally to all regardless of sex, ethnic origin or disability. In developing its programmes the Commission aims to target provisions in areas of greatest need and provide courses particularly for ethnic minorities where they have special needs or where they are under-represented in particular skills or occupations.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what consideration has been given, when providing for the needs of minority groups within the long-term unemployed in the restart schemes, in respect of *(a)* location, *(b)* course content, *(c)* training methods and *(d)* choice of training agency.

Mr. Lang: Jobcentres are being asked to take account of the needs of minority groups in the provision of restart courses. Location, course content, training methods and choice of training agency are all important.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what arrangements the Manpower Services Commission has made in Lancashire with local training providers to meet the increased demand for training arising from the introduction of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: It is too early to predict the exact number of people who may be advised to consider training as a result of participation in the restart scheme. However, I expect that referrals for training can be contained within the expanding range of adult training provision currently supported in Lancashire by the Manpower Services Commission. Officials of the Manpower Services Commission's training and employment services divisions will be monitoring closely the relationship between people counselled under the restart programme and intake both to the restart course and other training schemes to ensure that adequate training opportunities are provided for the people concerned.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how special provision has been made in Lancashire for the increase in numbers of ethnic minority adults requiring training as a result of the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: No special provision has been made. The Manpower Services Commission will closely monitor general and specific training needs stemming from the extension of restart to see how they are being met by existing provision and whether any additional arrangements should be made. The MSC will continue to encourage take up of suitable training by ethnic minority or other groups.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what analysis his Department made, prior to introducing the restart scheme, of previous experience and special needs relating to minority groups within the long-term unemployed.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme was piloted in nine areas of the country. Two of these areas, Ealing and Huddersfield have significant ethnic minority populations. The national restart programme is based on experiences learned from the pilots.

Short Training Courses

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General (1) how the £50 million which has been made available to the Manpower Services Commission to fund short training courses through local training providers in 1986-87 will be distributed;

(2) of the additional £50 million to be allocated to the Manpower Services Commission to fund short training through local training providers, what percentage is to be allocated to the north-west.

Mr. Lang: The money made available to the Manpower Services Commission will be distributed roughly in proportion to the numbers of long-term unemployed people in each part of the country and the demand that might arise for such courses in each locality.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what short training courses under the restart programme are being funded in Lancashire; and who are the local training providers.

Mr. Lang: Negotiations are currently taking place throughout Lancashire with potential providers. No contracts have yet been signed.

Area Manpower Boards

Mr. Wainwright asked the Paymaster General if he will now take steps to gather information as to how many members of area manpower boards are registered unemployed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I see no useful purpose in collecting such information since employment status is not necessarily a factor in nominating people to area manpower boards (AMBs).

Labour Statistics

Mr. Hickmet asked the Paymaster General which constituency in Great Britain has reduced its unemployment level the most in absolute terms between April 1984 and April 1986; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. Between April 1984 and April 1986 the number of unemployed claimants in the Glanford and Scunthorpe parliamentary constituency fell by 568. This comparison is marginally affected by the change in the method of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986.

Ex-Mineworkers (Circular)

Mr. Skinner asked the Paymaster General if he will now withdraw his Department's circular dated 15 April, entitled "Ex-mineworkers — Enquiries about Claiming Unemployment Benefit"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Oldham, West (Mr. Meacher) on 19 May at column 48.

We have no plans to withdraw this circular.

Income Maintenance Payments and Allowances

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Paymaster General if he will update to 1984-85 and 1985-86 his answer to the hon. Member for Kensington, *Official Report*, 14 February 1985, columns *248-50*, showing the costs in those years of all the income maintenance payments and allowances for which his Department is responsible, distinguishing between the different schemes, showing the rates of allowance paid, and also the full costs of each scheme, with sub-totals for administration.

Mr. Lang: I will write to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Duty Solicitor Scheme

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Attorney-General what are the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the local 24-hour duty solicitor schemes in the Metropolitan police area.

The Attorney-General: There are substantial variations in coverage of the 24-hour scheme within the Metropolitan Police Area. South of the Thames coverage is 75 per cent. overall; in the two regions north of the river it is 15 per cent. and 31 per cent. overall respectively. This is due to a shortage of solicitors in these areas prepared or available to participate. I understand that the Law Society, which is responsible for administering the scheme, is now confident that it is making substantial progress in overcoming these difficulties.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Furnishings (Inflammability)

Mr. Rathbone asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he has completed his review of regulations concerning the inflammability of furniture and furniture coverings sold in Britain; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The review is almost completed and I shall be making a statement shortly.

Telecommunications (Consumer Representations)

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he is satisfied with the operation of the regional and local consumer representation and consultation set up under the terms of the Telecommunications Act 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: Yes. The Advisory Committees on Telecommunications are providing useful advice on the consumer interest to the Director General of Telecommunications. The local advisory committees are active in pursuing local consumer problems with the public telecommunications operators and are currently taking part in surveys of call boxes and domestic telephones organised by the Office of Telecommunications.

Regional Aid

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much regional aid in total has been paid or committed to how many companies, firms or individuals in the Glanford and Scunthorpe parliamentary constituency since June 1983; and what effect this has had on unemployment.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information is available on a constituency basis for the new regional development grant scheme (RDG II) and regional selective assistance (RSA) but for the old regional development grant scheme (RDG I) figures relate to the Scunthorpe employment office area. The number of companies in receipt of RDG I payments is not available. The information relating to the period since June 1983 is as follows:

Payments of RDG I in amounts over £25,000 (£ thousands)	11,478
RDG II Number of companies	83
Value of payments (£ thousands)	2,130
RSA Number of offers	18
Value of offers (£ thousands)	3,364

Only RDG II and RSA grants are related to jobs. The number of new jobs created or to be created as a result of the above projects amount to over 1,600.

Krugerrands

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to make arrangements to identify Krugerrands separately from other imported gold coins.

Mr. Butcher: At present, I have no plans to separate Krugerrands from other gold coins in the "Overseas Trade Statistics."

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Wool

Mr. Colin Shepherd asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he is able to announce the guaranteed price for wool for the 1986-87 marketing year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: Together with the Secretaries of State for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, I have reviewed the state of the wool market and prospects for the 1986 clip. When last year we increased the wool guarantee by 9p/kg to 129p/kg, the price of British wool stood at about 143p/kg, well above the new level of the guarantee. The longer-term prospects for wool also looked good. In the event, however, this situation lasted only a few months. As sterling strengthened against the major wool trading currencies, the auction prices for British wool fell and prices are now 22 per cent. lower than a year ago. As a result, the deficit in the Board's stabilisation fund (which had been reduced from £18·8 million to £8·6 million between December 1983 and July 1986) has risen again, and now stands at £12·9 million. Further Exchequer

advances to the fund will also be necessary until the Board's remaining stocks of wool from the 1985 clip have been sold.

My colleagues and I are however aware of the need to provide stability in producer returns and an adequate incentive to maintain and improve the quality of British wool. We have therefore decided that the guarantee should be maintained at its present level of 129p/kg for the 1986 clip. For the future however producers should recognise that, until there has been a substantial reduction in the deficit in the stabilisation fund, they should not look for any increase in the level of the guarantee.

Food From Britain

Mr. Harris asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the future structure of Food From Britain.

Mr. Jopling: The current Agricultural Bill, when enacted, will provide for the maximum membership of the FFB council to be expanded from 15 to 21. Within the new limit, and after consultation with the interests concerned, I envisage a restructuring of the council in September when many current appointments expire. The new council would include appropriate representation of the farmers' unions and of food manufacturers, a representative of each of the milk, meat and cereals sectors and of retailers and also others with particularly relevant qualifications. In addition it is widely agreed that the work of FFB in the home market, in the export market, and for co-operation should be supervised by three Boards appointed by the council, chaired by a member of it, and composed of individuals expert in the area in question.

Milk

Mr. Alexander asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much milk and milk products New Zealand exported to the United Kingdom which originated in countries other than New Zealand or the United Kingdom, in the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Gummer: None in the years 1983 to 1985. But after arrival in the United Kingdom some of the butter imported from New Zealand is blended with other butters for marketing under the Acorn label. I understand that United Kingdom butter is frequently used in this blend, but that butter from elsewhere in the European Community may be included from time to time.

EC Budget

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will bring up to date, including the forecast outturn for 1986, the table published in the *Official Report* in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Great Grimsby dated 9 May 1985, *Official Report*, column *500*, concerning the share of the EEC budget taken by the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund.

Mr. Gummer: The percentage share of total Community expenditure taken by the guarantee section of the European agricultural guidance and guarantee fund since 1984 is as follows:

	per cent.
1984	70
1985	*70
1986	†63

* Budget

† Budget adopted by the European Parliament

Final outturn figures for total expenditure in 1985 are not yet available. The Commission are expected to propose a supplementary and amending budget for 1986 which would reduce the above figure to 62 per cent.

Cereals

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will list in the *Official Report* the measures which have been taken to curb protection since the written reply dated 11 April 1984, *Official Report*, column *334*, concerning the effect of the EEC budget settlement on the production of cereals, the production and consumption figures for 1984 and 1985 together with the forecast for this year; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: Since April 1984 a number of measures have been taken in the Community to curb the overproduction of cereals. Details of these measures are contained in notes on the outcome of the 1985 and 1986 CAP price settlements which have been deposited in the Library of the House.

Cereals production and consumption figures are given in the table below:

EC-10 total cereals—(million tonnes)

	August to July		
	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86* (forecast)*
Production	123·7	151·3	160·7
Consumption	113·2	117·4	141·9

* EC-12.

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Evennett asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what discussons his Department has held with the promoters of the Channel fixed link concerning the control of rabies and what preventive measures have so far been agreed.

Mrs. Fenner: Several meetings have taken place at official level between the Ministry and representatives of Eurotunnel, the promoters of the channel fixed link. In these discussions we have set out the physical and operational requirements to minimise disease risk. These cover the detailed specifications relating, for example, to sealed trains, grids and disinfestation procedures. The promoters have agreed to incorporate these factors in the design of the link.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its applicatins for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My Department correctly completed and submitted its application for data protection registration on time.

Whiting Fishery

Mr. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is seeking to secure a derogation from the proposed European Economic Community mesh size increase so as to allow the North Sea whiting fishery to continue.

Mr. Gummer: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

ENVIRONMENT

Urban Housing Renewal (Hyndburn)

Mr. Hargreaves asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he has reached a decision on proposals submitted to the urban housing renewal unit by the borough of Hyndburn; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I hope to make an early decision on this scheme.

European Regional Development Fund

Mr. Tony Lloyd asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give details of total European regional development fund moneys for each year since 1979 for *(a)* England, *(b)* the north-west region, *(c)* Greater Manchester, *(d)* the city of Manchester and *(e)* the borough of Telford.

Mr. Tracey: The following information gives the annual amounts of European regional development fund grant aid in £ sterling awarded to local and public authorities carrying out infrastructure works under the main project-financing section of the Fund:

	(a) *England* £	*(b)* *North West Region* £	*(c)* *Greater Manchester* £	*(d)* *City of Manchester* £	*(e)* *Telford** £
1979	52,713,360	14,606,290	243,060	45,300	—
1980	33,337,900	7,831,740	4,073,640	3,164,340	—
1981	65,536,005	11,771,100	2,500,800	—	—
1982	84,145,943	25,995,800	6,881,400	2,756,100	—
1983	100,969,300	36,629,860	3,412,200	—	—
1984	180,207,976	46,600,900	22,066,300	10,798,800	—
1985	138,337,071	34,526,897	15,949,964	2,888,964	8,433,500
1986	5,371,150	1,123,350	87,500	—	—

* Telford only became eligible for ERDF grants following the Government's review of regional aid announced in November 1984.

In addition, the total grant awarded under the non-quota section of the fund since its introduction in 1982 is as follows:

(a) *England* £	*(b)* *North West Region* £	*(c)* *Greater Manchester* £
15,754,471	9,306,606	1,287,232

Information on annual allocations is not readily available. The city of Manchester and Telford do not qualify for grant under the non-quota measures.

The figures exclude ERDF aid committed in 1985 to the Mersey Basin (£39,123,500) and the Shildon-Newton Aycliffe-Bishop Auckland (£6,580,000) programmes. They also exclude grant awarded under the fund's industry section, which is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry.

Departmental Circulars (Photocopying)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what advice he gives to local authorities and other bodies on photocopying departmental circulars.

Mrs. Rumbold: My Department does not issue formal advice to local authorities and other bodies on photocopying Departmental circulars. Advice is given as and when the need arises. Most cases are referred to Her Majesty's Stationery Office in whom Crown copyright is vested and who, as Government publishers, issue the majority of my Department's circulars.

Where a circular is available only from my Department, permission to reproduce it is usually give to local authorities and others where the photocopying is required for their use alone. In future, these circulars will be imprinted with a notice to this effect.

Rate Support Grant

Mr. Clelland asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his policy in giving reasons for particular decisions taken by him in relation to rate support grant.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have written to the hon. Member today explaining why I do not think it right to give reasons in declining requests for disregards.

Chess (Funding)

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the policy of the Sports Council regarding the funding of chess; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: The Sports Council is given powers under its royal charter to foster the knowledge and practice of sport and physical recreation. Chess is not judged by the council to be a physical recreation and is thus not recognised for grant or services. I regard that judgment as one for the council itself to take. Some chess bodies are funded by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science.

Conservative Party Conference (Policing Costs)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consideration he has given to excluding for grant penalty purposes the additional costs incurred,

net of police grant, by Lancashire county council for additional policing costs for the 1985 Conservative party conference.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Secretary of State considered Lancashire county council's request that he disregard this item of expenditure for grant abatement purposes in 1985-86, and decided not to agree to its request. He will of course reconsider the representations before signing further supplementary reports for the year in question.

Enterprise Zones (Glanford and Scunthorpe)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many companies have received benefits or are eligible to receive benefits from the three enterprise zones in the Glanford and Scunthorpe parliamentary constituency and at what present cost and projected cost to the Exchequer.

Sir George Young: There were 11 businesses in the enterprise zones in Glanford and Scunthorpe at September 1984, the date of the most recently published survey of enterprise zones. The cost to the Exchequer of rates exemptions for these zones from designation to the end of the financial year 1985-86 was £1,034,519. The projected cost of this exemption for 1986-87 is £1·7 million.

Parking Fines

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide an analysis of the 157 parking fines incurred by the Department of Energy in 1985 and paid by the Department of the Environment; and how many of the fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles.

Sir George Young: During 1985, 155 parking offences occurred in the Millbank/Thorney street area of London. One parking offence occurred at London airport. One parking offence occurred in Knightsbridge. All 157 parking fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide an analysis of the 167 parking fines incurred by the Scottish Office in 1985 and paid by the Department of the Environment; and how many of the fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles.

Sir George Young: During 1985 164 parking offences occurred in Whitehall. Two parking offences occurred in Little College st. W1. One parking offence occurred in Greek street W1. All 167 parking fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles.

Rates

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the average amount paid by domestic ratepayers in 1985-86 in *(a)* Leeds, *(b)* Sheffield and (c) Bradford.

Mrs. Rumbold: The average unrebated domestic rate bills in 1985-86 were:

	£
Leeds	263
Sheffield	370
Bradford	253

Local Authority Chief Officers (Pay)

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to the pay scales of local authority chief officers with education responsibilities; when these were last increased and by how much; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs Rumbold: The pay scales of local authority chief officers with education responsibilities are determined from within the salary range agreed by the joint negotiating committee for chief officers of local authorities. Details of these pay scales are available from the local authorities' conditions of service advisory board. The salaries of chief officers were last increased by 5 per cent. from 1 July 1985, with a further increase from 1 April 1986 — calculated on 30 June 1985 levels — of between 1 per cent. and 4·2 per cent. depending on the population range within which the salary is based.

Chernobyl Disaster

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many telephone calls his Department received on the hot line following the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Waldergrave: The inquiry unit in my Department received 3,771 calls about the Chernobyl accident between the 7 and 21 May. The busiest day was Thursday 8 May when the unit logged 991 calls.

Industrial Waste

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is Her Majesty's Government's policy on the importation of polychlorinated biphenyls in the United Kingdom for disposal as industrial waste.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the Government's view it is legitimate to trade internationally in waste materials provided that the disposal proceeds in accordance with United Kingdom controls.

Radiation

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the maximum permitted level of exposure to radiation *(a)* in the United Kingdom and *(b)* in other countries for which the information is available.

Mr. Waldegrave: In the United Kingdom the nuclear industry works to a target of public exposure one tenth of the 5 milliseivert per annum limit recommended by the ICRP and in the case of disposal sites one fiftieth of the limit. In other countries limits are expressed in different ways but standards of protection are similar.

Housing Expenditure

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total public expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom as a proportion of the gross domestic product in each year from 1976 to the latest year from which figures are available;

(2) what was the total private expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom as a proportion of the gross domestic product in each year from 1976 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his answer*, 13 May 1986, c. *428*]: Total public expenditure and total private expenditure on housing in the United Kingdom from 1976 to 1984 are shown in the table as percentages of gross domestic product at factor cost. Private expenditure is net of public grants, loans, subsidies (including housing benefit) and tax relief, and includes purchases of houses from public authorities. Public expenditure includes capital formation, grants, loans, and housing benefit; capital formation is shown gross before deducting house sales. The sum of the percentages in any one year does not exactly equal the percentage of total expenditure on housing, public and private, because: (i) expenditure on purchase of houses from public authorities is included in private expenditure but not netted against public expenditure; and (ii) private expenditure is net of tax relief, but tax relief is not treated as being part of public expenditure.

	Private expenditure on housing as percentage of gross domestic product	*Public expenditure on housing as percentage of gross domestic product*
1976	7·3	3·9
1977	6·9	3·6
1978	6·7	3·4
1979	7·5	3·5
1980	8·1	3·5
1981	8·9	2·6
1982	9·5	2·5
1983	9·0	2·8
1984	9·5	2·8

* Discontinuity between 1982 and 1983 is due to introduction of housing benefit and consequent exclusion of rent from supplementary benefit paid by tenants.

Okehampton Bypass

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps he intends to take to ensure the South-West water authority has access to all the information from the supplementary soil tests currently being conducted along the proposed route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *552*.]: I refer the hon. Member to the the reply by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport on 15 May, at column 509 in the *Offical Report*.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, following the letter of 26 March from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Mitcham and Morden (Mrs. Rumbold) to Lady Sayer, what consultations he intends to have with the South-West water authority on the possible contamination by arsenic of the rivers East and West Okement arising from the construction of the Okehampton bypass on the southern route.

Mrs Rumbold [*pursuant to her answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *552-53*]: The quality of the rivers East and West Okement is a matter for the South-West water authority. My officials will maintain liaison with the authority.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what consultations he has had with the South-West water authority about the possible contamination of the rivers West and East Okement by metals, including arsenic, during the construction of the Okehampton bypass along the southern route.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *553*]: Any such discussions are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport.

Dr. David Clark asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the correspondence he has had with the South-West water authority on the subject of the metallic contamination of water courses in the vicinity of the southern route of the Okehampton bypass.

Mrs. Rumbold: [*pursuant to her answer*, 15 May 1986, c. *553*.]: There has not been any such correspondence.

Napoleonic Barracks, Modbury

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) when he hopes to reply to the letter sent by the hon. Member for South Hams to his Department on 23 April, regarding the condition of the barracks wall at Modbury, south Devon;

(2) what steps the Government are taking to ensure the continued preservation of the Napoleonic barracks wall at Modbury, south Devon; and when he hopes to reply to the letter sent by the hon. Member for South Hams on 28 April outlining the current situation.

Mr. Tracey: My hon. and noble Friend the Minister for Planning and Regional Affairs will be replying to the letters shortly. As that reply will make clear, it is for the South Hams district council to take whatever action it considers appropriate (for example, under the Town and Country Planning Acts) to secure preservation of the barracks wall at Modbury.

Data Protection

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department correctly completed and submitted its application for data protection registration on time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waldegrave: My Department's applications for data protection registration, including that for the Property Services Agency, were submitted by the due date following due consultation wih the registrar to ensure acceptability.

Radiation

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the figure laid down by the International Atomic Energy Agency as being the level of radioactivity in milk at which official action is recommended; and to what factors he attributes differences between any of these figures and the relevant figure for the United Kingdom.

Mrs. Fenner: I have been asked to reply.

We are advised by the National Radiological Protection Board that they are not aware of any emergency reference levels published by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The National Radiological Protection Board action levels used by this Department have been derived from recommendations published by the International

Commission on Radiological Protection. We have not been officially notified of the levels employed in Denmark and the Netherlands.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what risks to health are posed by natural background radiation; and to what extent this varies in different parts of England.

Mr. Hayhoe I have been asked to reply.

The risk to health from natural background radiation for the country as whole has been estimated to be in the order of one in 100,000 of developing fatal cancer. As the dose to the public from background radiation outdoors in different parts of the country varies by a factor of approximately 10, in theory the risk will vary by the same amount. In practice however, epidemiological studies have not demonstrated that this occurs.

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what steps have been taken to ensure that the present accepted levels of whole body exposure to radiation are safe; whether there are any plans to reduce them further; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have been asked to reply.

The levels are based on recommendations made by the International Commission on Radiological Protection and, as such, have international recognition. In the United Kingdom, the National Radiological Protection Board advises Government on the implementation of the ICRP recommendations, and has endorsed its recommendations in this area. In this regard; the effective dose limit for members of the public has recently been reduced from 5 millisievert to 1 millisievert per annum. There are no plans to reduce the present levels further at present, but both the ICRP and the NRPB review their advice whenever new scientific evidence becomes available.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Unemployed Persons (Benefits)

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will present a table showing the total payments to, and the number of unemployed people receiving, housing benefit in Great Britain for each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

London Teaching Hospitals (Resources)

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what response he has sent to senior surgeons and physicians who have written to him about the effects on the resources available to London teaching hospitals as a result of the transfer of financing from London health authorities to increase National Health Service provision to the midlands and the north; if he will give urgent consideration to their request for resources to prevent the proposed closures and withdrawal of treatment facilities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have received no such letter.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Deakins asked the Secretary of State for Social Services why the National Health Service management side in the Whitley council for administrative and managerial staff did not make a flat rate offer in response to the trade union's flat rate pay claim.

Mr. Hayhoe: Negotiations are a matter for the Whitley council, and it is for the management side to determine the nature of offers it makes.

Deaths (Statistics)

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give the number of deaths among those aged *(a)* 60 to 69 years, *(b)* 70 to 79 years and *(c)* 80 years and over for each complete six-monthly period from 1 April 1976 to 31 March 1986, for England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe: The available information is shown in the table.

Number of deaths of persons aged 60 and over by age group and by six-monthly periods, 1 April 1976 to 30 September 1985—England and Wales

Period	Age Group		
	60-69	*70-79*	*80 and over*
1 April 1976-30 September 1976	56,086	83,985	79,921
1 October 1976-31 March 1977	63,623	99,578	97,102
1 April 1977-30 September 1977	56,243	87,194	83,608
1 October 1977-31 March 1978	62,822	101,675	100,466
1 April 1978-30 September 1978	54,448	87,894	82,065
1 October 1978-31 March 1979	61,382	104,655	103,726
1 April 1979-30 September 1979	52,658	88,841	83,997
1 October 1979-31 March 1980	58,348	101,304	99,862
1 April 1980-30 September 1980	52,526	88,774	85,433
1 October 1980-31 March 1981	57,706	101,403	104,203
1 April 1981-30 September 1981	51,003	87,722	86,298
1 October 1981-31 March 1982	57,808	104,422	110,338
1 April 1982-30 September 1982	51,151	88,023	88,605
1 October 1982-31 March 1983	57,482	103,202	110,941
1 April 1983-30 September 1983	50,765	88,331	90,264
1 October 1983-31 March 1984	54,512	98,956	106,859
1 April 1984-30 September 1984	49,190	87,007	91,720
1 October 1984-31 March 1985	55,657	102,670	117,664
1 April 1985-30 September 1985	48,927	88,249	96,511
1 October 1985-31 March 1986	information not yet available		

Maternal Deaths

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the maternal deaths reported to the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths in England and Wales in 1979 to 1981 were of women of non-caucasian origin; and if he will subdivide these into *(a)* direct maternal deaths, *(b)* indirect maternal deaths, *(c)* fortuitous maternal deaths and *(d)* late maternal deaths.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information is as follows:

	Number
Direct maternal deaths	38
Indirect maternal deaths	15
Fortuitous maternal deaths	5
Late maternal deaths	6

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the maternal deaths reported to the confidential inquiry into maternal deaths in England and Wales in 1979 to 1981 were of women born in *(a)* the United Kingdom, *(b)* the Republic of Ireland, *(c)* the New Commonwealth and Pakistan, *(d)* India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, *(e)* the West Indies, *(f)* Africa, *(g)* Gibraltar, Malta and Cyprus, *(h)* New Commonwealth countries not included in *(d)* to *(g)*, *(i)* foreign countries not included in *(a)* to *(h)* and *(j)* country unstated; and if he will subdivide these into (i) direct maternal deaths, (ii) indirect maternal deaths, (iii) fortuitous maternal deaths and (iv) late maternal deaths.

Mr. Hayhoe: Information about the birthplace of the mothers concerned was not collected as part of the inquiry.

National Radiological Protection Board

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment the National Radiological Protection Board has made of *(a)* its available staff and *(b)* its available telephone lines to cope with a nuclear emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The National Radiological Protection Board reviews annually the number of staff allocated to each of its areas of work, including emergency arrangements, in order to ensure that it has adequate staff in each area, taking account of priorities and available resources. Staff are taken from other work to meet short-term demands when necessary. The board's headquarters at Chilton is served by 16 telephone lines; additional lines are provided temporarily when required. The board is undertaking a review of its communication facilities.

Health Expenditure, Leeds

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, in respect of the Leeds East district health authority, what were the totals for 1978-79 and 1985-86, respectively, of *(a)* capital spending in cash and real terms, *(b)* revenue spending, in cash and real terms, *(c)* nurses and midwives, *(d)* doctors and dentists and *(e)* patients treated.

Mr. Hayhoe: Returns for 1985-86 are not yet available centrally. Figures for 1978-79 are not comparable with those for the years following the 1982 reorganisation because prior to then Leeds eastern health authority formed part of the old Leeds area health authority. My hon. Friend may therefore wish to contact the chairman of Leeds eastern health authority direct for any information he requires.

Heating Additions

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the annual expenditure on estate-rate heating additions for each of the last three years in *(a)* England and Wales, *(b)* the Yorkshire and Humberside region and *(c)* the Calderdale metropolitan borough.

Mr. Newton: I regret that the full information requested is not available. We estimate that current net annual expenditure for Great Britain is of the order of £10 million.

Heating Allowance

Mr. Steel asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects the review of the cold weather heating allowance to be published; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are considering the provision to help with extra fuel costs during exceptionally severe weather further in the light of last winter's experience. It is, however, too early to say when that consideration will be completed.

Computer Bed Bank (West Midlands)

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Social Services further to the answer of 22 April, *Official Report*, column *135*, to the hon. Member for Mid-Staffordshire about the pilot scheme for the introduction of a computer bed bank in the West Midlands regional health authority, if he will indicate *(a)* when his Department first conveyed its decision to introduce the scheme to the West Midlands regional health authority, *(b)* when precisely the project co-ordinator was appointed, *(c)* what were the terms of the project co-ordinator's appointment, *(d)* what are the qualifications and experience of the project co-ordinator, *(e)* when doctors in the participating districts were first requested to provide relevant information, *(f)* the names of the 100 selected practitioners and *(g)* the names of the selected districts.

Mr. Hayhoe: The possibility of a pilot project was first raised with the region in a letter in April 1982. Interviews for the post of project co-ordinator were held in February 1985 and the successful candidate took up her post in April 1985. I understand that all districts in the region, with the exception of Rugby, will participate in the project by providing information on waiting times. The selected general practitioners are located in the following districts: north Staffordshire, Mid-Staffordshire, east Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Herefordshire, Kidderminster, Sandwell, Dudley, west Birmingham, Worcestershire, central Birmingham and Shropshire.

My hon. Friend may wish to write direct to the chairman of the regional health authority for the further information he requires on the project and its co-ordinator.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what are the number of *(a)* single payments and *(b)* urgent needs payments, weekly and one-off, paid to

claimants who are (i) under pensionable age and are not required to register for work, (ii) persons under pensionable age required to register for work and (iii) persons over pensionable age; and what is *(x)* the average rate per 1,000 claimants in i, ii and iii, *(y)* the average payment made to claimants in i, ii and iii and *(z)* the number of claimants in i, ii and iii with dependent children for the latest available year at Doncaster, Wath-on-Dearne and Mexborough Department of Health and Social Security offices.

Mr. Major: The table shows, for the categories of claimants specified, numbers of single payments and urgent needs payments made in the year up to 8 April 1986 by the Doncaster and Wath-on-Dearne offices.

The office at Mexborough does not deal with supplementary benefit claimants who are handled by Wath-on-Dearne office.

Comparable information about the number of claimants with dependent children is not available.

A—Single payments

	Doncaster East	*Doncaster West*	*Wath-on-Dearne*
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work			
Number of payments	5,615	8,030	4,972
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	1,675	1,968	2,050
Average amount	£82·65	£85·91	£78·10
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work			
Number of payments	7,916	17,156	5,933
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	1,466	1,623	1,572
Average amount	£78·19	£86·63	£79·97
Claimants over pensionable age			
Number of payments	901	1,034	1,160
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	314	298	587
Average amount	£50·65	£63·92	£46·53

*B—Urgent needs payments**

	Doncaster East	*Doncaster West*	*Wath-on-Dearne*
Claimants under pensionable age not required to register for work			
Number of payments	247	259	142
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	74	63	59
Claimants under pensionable age required to register for work			
Number of payments	398	230	162
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	74	33	43
Claimants over pensionable age			
Number of payments	6	3	3
Average rate per 1,000 claimants	2	1	2

* The amounts of urgent needs payments are not recorded.

The number of awards of single payments and urgent needs payments for the year ending April 1986 have been set against the count of live cases in action as at 12 February 1986 to arrive at a rate per 1,000 claimants. These are the latest available figures.

Benefits

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of claimants in receipt of *(a)* sickness benefit, *(b)* invalidity benefit/pension, *(c)* industrial disablement benefit and *(d)* non-contributory invalidity pension/housewives' non-contributory invalidity pension or severe disablement allowance for the latest available year at Doncaster, Wath-on-Dearne and Mexborough Department of Health and Social Security offices.

Mr. Major: Wath-on-Dearne local office deals only with claims for supplementary benefit. The number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit/pension and severe disablement allowance as at 8 April 1986, and in receipt of industrial disablement benefit as at 11 February 1986 (the latest dates for which information is available) at the Doncaster (East), Doncaster (West) and Mexborough Department of Health and Social Security offices is as follows:—

	Doncaster East	*Doncaster West*	*Mexborough*
Sickness and Invalidity Benefit/Pension	3,457	4,805	1,642
Severe Disablement Allowance	513	925	195
Industrial Disablement Benefit	1,556	2,510	747

Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit/pension.

Child Benefit

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the additional cost of awarding child benefit payments to all parents of students in full-time higher education whose children are disqualified from receiving grants by virtue of the level of their parents' income.

Mr. Newton: The additional cost would be £25 million a year, on the basis that entitlement to child benefit would extend beyond the present age limit of 19, and that no provision was made for those students receiving grants tapered according to the level of their parents' income.

General Practitioners

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what has been the total cost to the National Health Service of fees and reimbursements paid to general practitioners in each of the years since 1960;

(2) what information he has concerning *(a)* the net average annual income and *(b)* the gross average annual income of general practitioners in each of the years since 1960.

Mr. Hayhoe: The information requested is as shown in the table. Information for Wales is the responsibility of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Financial year	*Intended average net remuneration per general practitioner (Great Britain)*	*Average gross remuneration paid per general practitioner (England)*	*Total expenditure (England)*
	£	£	£ million
1960-61	2,425	4,655	86·782
1961-62	2,425	3,929	74·284
1962-63	2,425	3,962	75·401
1963-64	2,765	4,187	79·825
1964-65	2,765	4,279	81·204
1965-66	2,775	4,810	90·349
1966-67	3,006	5,217	97·104
1967-68	3,700	6,067	112·953
1968-69	3,775	6,372	119·367
1969-70	4,000	6,825	129·008
1970-71	4,800	8,250	157·567
1971-72	5,185	8,861	171·675
1972-73	5,575	9,431	186·497
1973-74	5,750	10,113	202·226
1974-75	6,286	11,745	237·482
1975-76	8,735	14,963	304·903
1976-77	8,963	16,735	343·931
1977-78	9,313	17,777	369·699
1978-79	10,230	20,231	425·663
1979-80	12,867	24,563	524·586
1980-81	16,955	31,616	689·613
1981-82	17,970	35,480	791 337
1982-83	18,990	39,244	894·215
1983-84	20,288	41,605	967·482
1984-85	21,615	46,411	1,097·146

* Review Body reports did not identify average net remuneration between 1 April 1966 and 31 March 1971. The rates shown are those assessed as appropriate by the Review Body in its 1971 report. The rates from 1 January 1960 to 31 March 1965 include unspecified amounts from hospital or other official sources.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what information he has concerning the number of general practitioners in each of the regions of England and Wales in each year since 1960, (2) what information he has concerning the average size of general practitioners' patient lists in each of the regions of England and Wales in each of the years since 1960.

Mr. Hayhoe: Time series data showing the number of unrestricted principals and average list sizes separately for England and Wales are published in "Health and Personal Social Services Statistics", copies of which are available in the Library. The data for 1963 to 1973 are analysed by standard regions (1974 edition); for 1973 to 1977 by standard region and by regional health authority (1978 and 1982 editions); for 1978 onwards by regional health authority only (1982 and 1985 editions).

Cervical Screening

Dr. Roger Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will take steps to increase the general facilities for cervical cytology to reduce the interval between tests from five to three years and to promote improved screening for younger age-groups; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Improvements to cervical cancer screening programmes have been made a service development priority for all health authorities, including implementation of computerised call and recall systems no later than April 1988 and ensuring that laboratories avoid backlogs. The screening interval and the call and recall of women under 35 are currently under review.

Hospitals (Statistics)

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report*, a list of those hospitals in England that have, during the last two years, reduced night-time, emergency or casualty cover in *(a)* ophthalmology, *(b)* anaesthetics, *(c)* trauma and *(d)* ear, nose and throat, where the reason given was shortage of specialist staff.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information the hon. Member requests is not held centrally.

Overseas Doctors

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many overseas doctors applied for limited registration in order to work in Britain in *(a)* 1975, *(b)* 1980, *(c)* 1984 and *(d)* 1985; and what is the latest available figure for 1986.

Mr. Hayhoe: The category of limited registration was introduced by the Medical Act 1978 and superseded the former category of temporary registration. Numbers of registrations granted by the General Medical Council are published in its annual reports and the available figures are set out in the table. Other information may be available from the council.

Registration of Doctors qualified Overseas

	1975	*1980*	*1984*	*1985*
Initial grants of limited registration*	1,934	1,682	1,123	1,024
Full registration†	2,741	2,990	1,696	1,869

* Temporary registration in 1975.

† 1980-85 figures exclude doctors qualified in the European Community.

House Officer Vacancies

Mr. Gareth Wardell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in ophthalmology in each health authority in England, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(2) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in anaesthetics in each health authority in England, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(3) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in trauma in each health authority in England, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled;

(4) if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of senior house officer vacancies in ear, nose and throat in each health authority in England, together with the mean, median and mode of the number of days that the vacancy has remained unfilled.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks, as it is not collected centrally.

Supplementary Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many recipients of supplementary benefit have *(a)* claimed and *(b)* received assistance towards mortgage interest payments in each year from 1976 to 1985; what was the total cost of such payments; and what was the average payment per claimant.

Mr. Newton: Information is not available in the precise form requested. Information on the number of supplementary benefit recipients where the assessment of their benefit includes an allowance towards mortgage interest and or ground rent together with the average weekly payment and the estimated total cost of these payments for each year since 1976 is as follows:

Year	*Claimants*	*Average weekly amount (£)*	*Total cost (£ million)*
1976	123,000	4·22	27
1977	124,000	5·12	33
1978	105,000	4·81	26
1979	98,000	5·96	31
1980	134,000	10·18	71
1981	196,000	12·18	124
1982	235,000	13·87	170
1983	242,000	12·12	150
1984	277,000	n.a.	n.a.
1985	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.

* Provisional.

† Mortgage interest has only been collected as a separate item since 1983. Previous estimates were based on owner occupiers' residual housing costs (that is, after the deduction of rates, water rates, and repairs insurance) and included an element for ground rent.

n.a. Not yet available.

Hospital Closures

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a list of the hospitals within the North-West Thames regional health authority which have been closed since 1980, together with their bed complement and, where sold, the price paid by the purchaser and the percentage of that sum which was allocated to the district health authority concerned.

Mr. Hayhoe: Details of hospitals in the North West Thames regional health authority approved for complete closure between 1 January 1981 and 30 June 1985, the latest date for which information is available centrally, are shown in the table.

I regret that the further information asked for is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the North West Thames regional health authority for the information.

Area/District	*Hospital*	*Amounts received £ million*	*Number of beds*
Bedfordshire	Daneswood Convalescent Home	0·262	44
Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow	Temple Hill House	0·777	18
Brent	Leamington Park	—	95
Barnet	West Hendon	6·7	134
North Hertfordshire	North Hertfordshire Maternity	—	85
Victoria	All Saints	—	45
Victoria	Vincent Square Day	—	18
Paddington and North Kensington	Chepstow Lodge	*2·75	47
	Hereford Lodge		43
Hounslow and Spelthorne	St. John's	0·62	33
Hillingdon	St. John's	—	102
North Bedfordshire	Park	—	38
South Bedfordshire	Priory	—	36

* Includes property at Pembridge Square.

Family Credit

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what assessment he has made of the implications of European legislation or of decisions of Community institutions with regard to any decision by Her Majesty's Government as to whether family credit should be payable on a sexually defined basis.

Mr. Newton: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

Income Support

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the transitional protection of supplementary benefit

claimants on the introduction of the income support scheme, in particular the proposal to limit such protection to an amount fixed in cash terms and advocating the introduction of provisions to maintain the protection when receipt of benefit is interrupted, respectively; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We are considering recent representations received from organisations representing disabled people and the suggestions made by the hon. Member and other hon. Members during the debate in Standing Committee B on 29 April 1986.

Westminster Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of cancer patients treated in the radiotherapy and onocology department at Westminster hospital in each of the last three years; what was the number of clinical and other staff at present employed; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that I cannot give the hon. Member all the information he seeks. The information available centrally is given in the table. The hon. Member may wish to write to the chairman of the Riverside district health authority for the other information requested.

Westminster Hospital

Specialty	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
RADIOTHERAPY			
In-patient cases	540	522	494
Day cases	nil	1	1
Total out-patient attendances	*	12,042	12,801
MEDICAL ONCOLOGY			
In-patient cases	864	1,077	966
Day cases	2	2	6
Total out-patient attendances	3,109	3,284	3,713

* Not available.

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services until when he proposes to postpone further consideration of the proposals to close Westminster hospital; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Riverside health authority has under review the future pattern of services in the district. It is considering a range of options for the way services are provided and where, including those at present provided by the three district general hospitals (St. Stephen's, Westminster and Charing Cross Hospitals). Decisions on future service provision will be taken in the light of this work. There is no presupposition that one of these three hospitals must close.

Cancer Treatment (North-East Thames)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the proposals in the Coopers and Lybrand review of cancer treatment services for the North-East Thames regional health authority in the light of the material which has been sent to him by the hon. Member for Brent, South.

Mr. Hayhoe: Following full public consultation and consideration of all views expressed, North East Thames regional health authority on 19 May adopted a policy of moving toward a pattern of care for cancer patients focussed on district general hospitals, supported by larger, better equipped specialist cancer treatment centres. The regional health authority has commissioned further research to consider all relevant evidence and will be considering recommendations on the choice of sites for the treatment centres at its July meeting. Any proposals to change the disposition of existing services will be subject to full public consultation under normal National Health Service procedures, including, if the relevant community health council objects, the referral of any final decision to Ministers. If would not therefore be appropriate for Ministers to comment further at this stage.

Health Authorities (Land Sales)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his policy on the consideration to be given to the development needs of other health authorities when one health authority plans to sell land located within the boundaries of a neighbouring regional and district health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: Where surplus property is situated within another region the disposing authority is required to notify both the neighbouring regional and appropriate district heath authorities in case they have a need for it.

South London Hospital for Women

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for the Social Services (1) whether he has sanctioned the sale on the open market of the site of the South London hospital for women;

(2) whether he had prior notice that the West Lambeth district health authority had notified the Wandsworth health authority of its interest in acquiring part of the site of the South London hospital for women to provide services for patients to be discharged into the community from its own long-stay hospitals designated for closure;

(3) whether he will take steps to ensure full consultation between the Wandsworth and West Lambeth health authorities on the future disposal and use of the site of the former South London hospital for women;

(4) whether he will make a statement on the future use of the site of the former South London hospital for women.

Mr. Hayhoe: The sale of the South London hospital site is subject to normal disposal procedures on the open market and does not require the Secretary of State's involvement. Bids were closed by the South West Thames regional health authority on 16 May. They consulted the other Thames regions on the sale of the site but no interest was registered.

West Lambeth DHA (Land Purchase)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has of the needs of the West Lambeth district health authority to purchase land to provide services for patients to be discharged into the community from its own long-stay hospitals designated for closure.

Mr. Hayhoe: I am aware of the need of West Lambeth health authority to purchase land to house patients discharged from its long stay hospitals. I understand from

the regional health authority that the district is at present involved in negotiations to purchase two local sites on which suitable facilities can be built.

Ambulance Service (London)

Mr. Stuart Holland asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether, pursuant to the answer of 18 February, *Official Report*, column *116*, he will make a statement on the future of London's ambulance services following the consideration given to this service by the South West Thames Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since February there have been improvements in response and activation times on emergency calls by the London ambulance service. There continue to be problems for the non-emergency service but these too are being tackled and an accelerated recruitment programme has provided 78 more ambulance persons for non-emergency work than in March. Sixty five more recruits are in training and will become operational in the next few weeks. Further interim measures are also in hand. The South West Thames regional health authority is continuing to review the situation.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he proposes to issue a correction slip to paragraph 1 of chapter 4 of the Green Paper on primary care.

Mr. Hayhoe: The error does not affect the conclusions reached and there are no plans to issue a correction slip.

Potassium Iodate

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many potassium iodate tablets would be required to prevent radioactive iodine collecting in the thyroid of five, 10 and 18 year-olds, respectively, at levels of radiation reported within five miles of Windscale in 1957 and within five, 10 and 20 miles of Chernobyl in 1986.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Health Authorities (Revenue Allocations)

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will give for each district health authority wholly or partly in Greater London including the special health authorities, the total revenue allocations they have received in each year since 1978-79 at 1979 prices calculated by the National Health Service deflator.

Mr. Hayhoe: It is not appropriate to revalue district health authority expenditure by reference to centrally assessed movements in pay and prices because the composition of that expenditure can differ substantially from the national average. For other information on health authority expenditure in the Greater London area I refer the hon. Member to my reply to him on 17 December 1985 at columns *145-148*.

Prisoners of War (Compensation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how much compensation has been paid to ex-prisoners of war by the Japanese Government to date; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Under articles 14 and 16 of the treaty of peace with Japan, just over £4·6 million was received from Japan and about £175,000 from Thailand. During the early 1950s about £4·25 million of the total was distributed to some 59,000 former prisoners of war and civilian internees through the then Ministry of Pensions and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Apart from £3,000 held to meet possible future claims, the remainder is now held in a trust fund administered by the Far East (Prisoners of War and Internees) Fund.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what will be the housing benefit paid to *(a)* a single pensioner under 79 years, *(b)* a single pensioner over 80 years, *(c)* a pensioner couple under 79 years, *(d)* a pensioner couple over 80 years, *(e)* a single parent, working, with one child under 16 years, *(f)* a couple, one working, with one child under 16 years, *(g)* a single parent, working, with two children under 16 years and *(h)* a couple, one working, with two children under 16 years where the rent and rates are (i) 25 per cent. below average, (ii) average and (iii) 25 per cent. above average and gross weekly income is (x) at the level of unemployment benefit and (y) earnings of £45, £55, £65, £75, £85, £95, £110 and £125 a week, under the current provisions and under the assumptions set out in the technical annex to Cmnd. 9691, including the 20 per cent. contribution to rates; and in each case at what level of income the entitlement to housing benefit would disappear.

Mr. Newton [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *382*]: The information requested is given in the following tables.

Amounts of weekly housing benefit under current scheme
Table 1A: Pensioner households

	Weekly gross income level								*Income level at which HB no longer payable*
	£45	*£55*	*£65*	*£75*	*£85*	*£95*	*£110*	*£125*	
Single pensioner 65-79									
(i) Average rent and rates	13·89	8·69	4·49	0·61	—	—	—	—	75·40
(ii) 75 per cent. average	[P] 11·04	5·84	1·44	—	—	—	—	—	68·26
(iii) 125 per cent. average	16·74	11·54	7·34	2·68	—	—	—	—	82·54
Single pensioner 80+									
(i) Average rent and rates	13·89	8·69	4·49	0·61	—	—	—	—	75·40

	Weekly gross income level							Income level at which HB no longer payable
	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	
(ii) 75 per cent. average	11·04	5·84	1·44	—	—	—	—	68·26
(iii) 125 per cent. average	16·74	11·54	7·34	2·68	—	—	—	82·54
Pensioner couple 65-79								
(i) Average rent and rates	19·00	19·00	15·64	9·74	5·54	1·35	—	97·90
(ii) 75 per cent. average	14·25	14·25	12·79	6·89	2·69	—	—	90·76
(iii) 125 per cent. average	23·75	23·75	18·49	12·59	8·39	4·19	—	105·04
Pensioner couple 80+								
(i) Average rent and rates	19·00	19·00	15·64	9·74	5·54	1·35	—	97·90
(ii) 75 per cent. average	14·25	14·25	12·79	6·89	2·69	—	—	90·76
(iii) 125 per cent. average	23·75	23·75	18·49	12·59	8·39	4·19	—	105·04

Notes:

1. Average rent is assumed to be £13·80 per week and average rates £5·20 per week.
2. In each case the pensioners' income is assumed to be unearned.
3. No account has been taken of possible entitlement to housing benefit supplement.

Table 1B: Working households (with one wage-earner)

	Unemployment benefits	Weekly gross earnings level								Earnings level at which HB no longer payable
		£45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	
Single parent, 1 child										
(i) Average rent and rates	21·60	21·60	21·60	21·16	18·06	14·76	11·05	4·75	—	120·61
(ii) 75 per cent. average	16·20	16·20	16·20	16·20	14·82	11·52	7·81	1·26	—	112·64
(iii) 125 per cent. average	27·00	27·00	26·74	24·60	21·30	18·00	14·29	7·99	1·53	125·16
Couple, 1 child										
(i) Average rent and rates	21·60	21·60	21·60	21·52	19·56	16·26	12·96	6·66	0·54	125·16
(ii) 75 per cent. average	16·20	16·20	16·20	16·20	15·94	13·02	9·72	3·42	—	117·19
(iii) 125 per cent. average	27·00	27·00	27·00	26·30	22·80	19·50	16·20	9·90	3·60	133·13
Single parent, 2 children										
(i) Average rent and rates	22·80	22·80	22·80	22·80	21·26	17·96	14·66	8·62	2·06	130·39
(ii) 75 per cent. average	17·11	17·11	17·11	17·11	17·05	14·54	11·24	5·20	—	121·86
(iii) 125 per cent. average	28·51	28·51	28·51	28·51	24·68	21·38	18·08	12·04	5·74	138·93
Couple, 2 children										
(i) Average rent and rates	22·80	22·80	22·80	22·80	22·48	19·46	16·16	10·54	4·24	134·94
(ii) 75 per cent. average	17·11	17·11	17·11	17·11	17·11	16·05	12·75	7·13	0·91	126·41
(iii) 125 per cent. average	28·51	28·51	28·51	28·36	26·19	22·89	19·59	13·97	7·67	143·48

Notes:

1. The following average rent and rate levels have been assumed: £15·40 and £6·20 per week respectively for households with 1 child, and £16·50 per week and £6·30 per week for households with two children.
2. Child benefit and one-parent benefit have been assumed to be in payment, in addition to the earnings levels shown in the table, at November 1985 rates. The final column shows the earnings level at which housing benefit is no longer payable for consistency with the rest of the table; child benefit/one-parent benefit should be added to these figures to find the income level at which housing benefit is no longer payable.
3. No account has been taken of possible entitlement to FIS/Family Credit.

II: Amounts of weekly housing benefit under proposed scheme

Table 2A: Pensioner households

	Weekly gross income level							Income level at which HB no longer payable
	£45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	
Single pensioner 65-79									
(i) Average rent and rates	14·44	7·23	0·55	—	—	—	—	—	67·52
(ii) 75 per cent. average	9·95	2·30	—	—	—	—	—	—	59·30
(iii) 125 per cent. average	18·93	11·72	6·12	0·80	—	—	—	—	75·73
Single pensioner 80+									
(i) Average rent and rates	16·24	9·03	3·42	—	—	—	—	—	70·73
(ii) 75 per cent. average	11·75	4·54	—	—	—	—	—	—	62·52
(iii) 125 per cent. average	20·73	13·52	7·92	2·15	—	—	—	—	78·94
Pensioner couple 65-79									
(i) Average rent and rates	17·96	17·96	16·56	8·56	1·32	—	—	—	86·97
(ii) 75 per cent. average	13·47	13·47	12·07	4·07	—	—	—	—	78·75
(iii) 125 per cent. average	22·45	22·45	21·05	13·05	5·81	0·57	—	—	95·19

	Weekly gross income level								Income level at which HB no longer payable
	£45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	
Pensioner couple 80+									
(i) Average rent and rates	17·96	17·96	17·96	10·32	2·64	..	..	..	90·12
(ii) 75 per cent. average	13·47	13·47	5·83	..	..	..	..	..	81·90
(iii) 125 per cent. average	22·45	22·45	22·45	14·81	7·57	1·89	..	..	98·33

Notes:

1. The first two notes to table 1A also apply to this one.
2. November 1985 tax rates and allowances have been assumed and the current minimum benefit level of 50 pence has been used throughout. Pensioners are assumed to be over 65 for income tax purposes. Other assumptions are based on the illustrative figures used in the Technical Annex to Cmnd. 9691 including tapers of 60 per cent. (rents) and 20 per cent. (rates) and a minimum contribution towards domestic rates of 20 per cent.

Table 2B Working households (with one wage-earner)

	Unemployment benefit	Weekly gross earnings level							Earnings level at which HB no longer payable
		£45	£55	£65	£75	£85	£95	£110	£125	
Single parent, 1 child										
(i) Average rent and rates	20·36	20·36	20·36	20·36	16·93	11·89	8·37	0·92	..	111·16
(ii) 75 per cent. average	15·27	15·27	15·27	15·27	11·84	6·80	3·28	..	..	100·65
(iii) 125 per cent. average	25·45	25·45	25·45	25·45	22·02	16·98	13·47	6·14	..	121·68
Couple, 1 child										
(i) Average rent and rates	20·36	20·36	20·36	20·36	20·36	19·05	15·53	8·21	0·80	125·84
(ii) 75 per cent. average	15·27	15·27	15·27	15·27	15·27	13·96	10·44	3·12	..	115·32
(iii) 125 per cent. average	25·45	25·45	25·45	25·45	25·45	24·14	20·63	13·30	5·98	136·36
Single parent, 2 children										
(i) Average rent and rates	21·54	21·54	21·54	21·54	20·59	15·55	12·03	4·71	..	119·25
(ii) 75 per cent. average	16·16	16·16	16·16	16·16	15·21	10·17	6·65	..	..	107·99
(iii) 125 per cent. average	26·93	26·93	26·93	26·93	25·98	20·94	17·42	10·10	2·52	130·53
Couple, 2 children										
(i) Average rent and rates	21·54	21·54	21·54	21·54	21·54	21·54	19·19	11·87	4·55	133·92
(ii) 75 per cent. average	16·16	16·16	16·16	16·16	16·16	16·16	13·81	6·49	..	122·66
(iii) 125 per cent. average	26·93	26·93	26·93	26·93	26·93	26·93	24·58	17·26	9·94	145·21

Notes:

1. The notes to table 1B also apply to this one.
2. November 1985 tax rates and allowances, and national insurance rates have been assumed. The current minimum benefit level of 50 pence has been used throughout. Other assumptions are based on the illustrative figures used in the Technical Annex to Cmnd. 9691 including tapers of 60 per cent. (rents) and 20 per cent. (rates) and a minimum contribution to rates of 20 per cent.
3. The children are assumed to be aged 15 (one child), and 10 and 15 (two children).

Community Psychiatric Nurses

Mr. Meacher asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many whole-time equivalent community psychiatric nurses have been employed by each district health authority in each year from 1974 to the latest available date, broken down by *(a)* registered MNs, *(b)* RMNS, *(c)* SEN-M, *(d)* SEN-MH, *(e)* others and *(f)* total in England and Wales.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *390*]: Figures for Wales are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales.

Tables giving such information as is available centrally for England without incurring disproportionate cost have been placed in the Library.

DEFENCE

Oil Prices (Cost Savings)

Mr. Redmond asked the Secretary of State for Defence what cost savings there are to his Department as a result of the fall in oil prices for the 1986-87 Budget.

Mr. Stanley: At current prices the volume of liquid fuel and lubricants provided for in the 1986-87 defence estimates will cost something of the order of £130 million less than was assumed when those estimates were prepared. The outturn will, of course, depend on future price levels, exchange rates and the actual volume purchased. The defence votes are managed as a block cash limit and so savings arising from lower oil prices may be used to offset pay and price increases elsewhere in the defence budget higher than allowed for in the estimates.

6 Airborne Brigade

Mr. Wilkinson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement about the future compositon and role of 6 Airborne Brigade.

Mr. Stanley: On current plans the trial of 6 Airmobile Brigade in the airmobile role will finish in 1988, when it is due to commence remechanisation as part of the armoured re-equipment programme in BAOR. We plan to equip the brigade with armoured personnel carriers for both its infantry battalions and to strengthen it by the addition of the new in-theatre armoured regiment, the formation of which was announced in the 1985 "Statement on the Defence Estimates".

Shipbreaking (Naval Contracts)

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make it his policy that naval contracts for shipbreaking are offered only to British yards.

Mr. Lee: No. In view of the higher receipts that are likely to accrue to the defence budget it was decided last year to widen the scope of tendering for shipbreaking contracts to include overseas companies.

Jetfoil

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence if the evaluation of the use of jetfoils by the Royal Navy included analysis of staff requirements in relation to the use of the jetfoil in various operational modes; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Since the acquisition of the jetfoil HMS Speedy in 1979 extensive consideration has been given to her use for various roles stemming from the relevant operational requirements. She is not however considered suitable for any of the roles examined and plans for her disposal by sale are proceeding.

Point Defence Gunnery Anti-Aircraft System

Mr. Speed asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is his policy towards the provision of point defence gunnery anti-aircraft systems to defend RAF airfields in the United Kingdom and abroad.

Mr. Stanley: The Skyguard anti-aircraft gun system, which was captured in the Falklands conflict, is in service at RAF Waddington. We have at present no plans to purchase any further anti-aircraft gun system for the defence of RAF Airfields.

Nuclear Installations (Evacuation)

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will outline the contingency planning for evacuating either the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment Aldermaston or Royal Ordnance Factory Burghfield in the event of serious nuclear mishap.

Mr. Stanley: Emergency plans at both establishments specify the actions to be taken and include the provision for the evacuation of single buildings, groups of buildings or the entire site as appropriate. Such evacuation would be carried out under the control of the establishment directors.

In addition to these plans, comprehensive liaison arrangements exist with outside authorities, including the Health and Safety Executive, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of the Environment, the Thames valley police, and Berkshire county council Emergency Planning Department and the local authorities.

Emergency plans are kept under constant review, and are tested and exercised periodically and up-dated as necessary.

HMS Tiger

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the shipbreaking contract for HMS Tiger; and if he will list the companies which have been invited to tender.

Mr. Lee: Tenders are now under consideration for the sale of HMS Tiger for scrap. Limitations on resale and, if the vessel is to be broken overseas, security and political factors will be considered before a contract is selected. Subject to that a contract will be awarded to the highest acceptable bidder.

Tenders were invited from the following:

1. F. A. Ashmead and Sons Ltd., Avonmouth, Bristol.
2. Belcon Shipping and Trading Co. Ltd., Putney, London.
3. Mr. N. Betteridge, B. and B. Marines Ltd., Brotherton, Near Nottingley, West Yorkshire.
4. Birds Commercial Metals Ltd., Stratford-on-Avon, Warwicks.
5. Davies and Cann Ltd., Plymstock, Plymouth.
6. G. and T. Services Ltd., Barking, Essex.
7. Gulf Marine and Shipping Ltd., London.
8. Harland and Wolff, Belfast.
9. Lambert Bros. Offshore, London.
10. Liguria Maritime Ltd., Sittingbourne, Kent.
11. M. Lynch and Sons (Metals) Ltd., Rochester, Kent.
12. Medway Metals Ltd., Gillingham, Kent.
13. H. E. Moss and Co. Ltd., Liverpool.
14. Oldham Bros. Ltd., Liverpool.
15. Mr. J. Perkins, Stockport, Cheshire.
16. Pounds Marine Shipping Co., Havant, Hants.
17. W. and A. Roberts, Dumbarton, Scotland.
18. Romamet Ltd., Rochester, Kent.
19. Salvesen Diving, Liverpool.
20. Seaforth Maritime Ltd., Aberdeen.
21. Steel Supply Co. (Western) Ltd., Swansea, W. Glamorgan.
23. Shipbreaking (Queenborough) Ltd., Queenborough, Kent.
23. L. Todd (Swanscombe) Ltd., Swanscombe, Kent.
24. W. Visick and Sons Ltd., Truro, Cornwall.
25. West of Scotland Shipbreaking Co. Ltd., Troon, Ayrshire.
26. Westcroft Demolition Ltd., Co. Durham.
27. Jas. A. White and Co. Ltd., Inverkeithing, Fife.
28. Winchester Metals Ltd., Winchester, Hants.
29. Yorkthistle Ltd., Rochester, Kent.
30. S. C. Chambers and Co. Ltd., Shipbrokers, Liverpool.
31. H. Clarkson and Co. Ltd., London.
32. Jacques Bakker and Zonen, Brugge.
33. Jade Stahl GMBH, Wilnelmshaven, Germany.
34. C. H. Rugg and Co., London.
35. Simpson Spence and Young Shipbrokers Ltd., London.
36. Smit Tak International, Rotterdam.
37. Andover Shipping Co., London.
38. Terry Bell International Shipping, London.
39. Deans Marine, Maidstone, Kent.
40. Naval Technical Services, Bicester.
41. Marine Systems Ltd., Zurich.
42. Mr. R. H. Wright, London.
43. Cycone Contractors, Bedhampton.
44. Bianchi of London Ltd., London.
45. Cairns and Byles, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
46. American General Resources Inc., Connecticut, USA.
47. Viscount Offshore Services, Edinburgh.

Admiralty Shipbreaking Contracts

Mr. Gordon Brown asked the Secretary of State for Defence what has been the total value of Admiralty shipbreaking contracts since 1975.

Mr. Lee: About £5·7 million.

National Crisis (News Broadcasts)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Defence what agreements exist between his Department and the broadcasting authorities for dealing with news in times of national crisis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: Arrangements with the broadcasting authorities are a matter for my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary. I understand, however, that in discussions in the early 1960s the BBC gave assurances that in a time of national crisis it would, without prejudice to its

independence of editorial judgement, act with a full sense of responsibility and in consultation with the Government. In their response in Cmnd. 9499 to the Beach report on the protection of military information immediately prior to and during the conduct of operations, the Government agreed that compulsion of the media would be neither practical nor desirable and that voluntary co-operation should be the guiding principle. The Government also accepted that circumstances could arise where additional powers need to be taken for the control of information or special arrangements needed for the live reporting of Parliament. But such matters must be for the Government and Parliament of the day.

Written Answers to Questions

Tuesday 3 June 1986

SCOTLAND

Labour Statistics

Mr. David Marshall asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the total number of *(a)* persons unemployed and *(b)* persons employed in the Glasgow travel-to-work area in June 1979; and what are the latest available figures.

Mr. Allan Stewart: In June 1979 the total number of person registered as unemployed in the Glasgow travel-to-work area, as defined prior to the 1984 review of travel-to-work areas, was 53,980. The number of unemployed claimants in April 1986 in the current Glasgow travel-to-work area was 113,579. Information on employment for the same dates is not available; the latest estimate of the number of employees in employment, again for pre-1984 Glasgow travel-to-work area, is 479,700 in September 1981.

Road Accidents (Hospital Treatment)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children have been treated in hospital in Scotland for injuries arising out of road accidents during each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. John MacKay: The following table refers to emergency admissions to hospitals in Scotland following motor vehicle accidents in the latest five years for which information is available. Statistics for out-patient attendances resulting from injuries do not separately identify those caused by road traffic accidents.

	Number of Hospital Admissions				
	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Men	4,858	5,207	4,885	4,171	4,093
Women	2,023	2,056	2,007	1,704	1,692
Boys aged 14 and under	874	842	872	873	822
Girls aged 14 and under	445	464	448	395	417
	8,200	8,569	8,212	7,143	7,024

Unemployment (Greenock and Port Glasgow)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish in the *Official Report* the latest available unemployment figures for the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow by electoral ward.

Mr. Allan Stewart: The number of unemployed people claiming benefit in the parliamentary constituency of Greenock and Port Glasgow by electoral ward on 10 April 1986, the latest date for which information is available, is as follows. This information is also available in the House of Commons Library.

Electoral Ward	*Male*	*Female*	*All*
Port Glasgow East	632	198	830
Port Glasgow South	487	192	679
Clune Brae	437	218	655
Port Glasgow West	259	120	379
Gibshill	698	206	904
Blairmore	362	113	475
Bellville	392	167	559
Greenock East Central	534	136	670
Broomhill	254	102	356
Gateside	222	108	330
Bow	461	155	616
Larkfield	409	176	585
Upper Larkfield	554	182	736
Greenock South	392	146	538
Greenock West Central	214	116	330
Greenock West End	113	90	203
TOTAL Greenock and Port Glasgow	6,420	2,425	8,845

Hospital Beds

Mr. Maxton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the number of beds currently not in use in hospitals in Scotland that have been opened since 1979.

Mr. John MacKay: Comprehensive and up-to-date information is not held centrally in the form requested. Hospital facilties may be built under the major or the minor building programme. While the planned size of hospitals and hospital extensions built under the major building programme and opened since 1979 is known centrally, their commissioning and the current use of beds is a matter for individual health boards, as is the management of the minor building programme.

Town and Country Planning

Mr. George Robertson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to amend the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1972 in the light of the Property Advisory Board's report on the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972, in relation to England and Wales; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend will consider the need for a revision of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1973 in the light of the outcome of the further consultations to be undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for the Environment on changes to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1972 which were announced in the White Paper "Building Businesses . . . Not Barriers" (Cmnd 9794).

Police Establishment

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will give the authorised police establishment in Scotland for each of the last 10 years.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Authorised police establishment: Scotland

	Number
31 December 1976	13,163
31 December 1977	13,144
31 December 1978	13,166
31 December 1979	13,274

	Number
31 December 1980	13,259
31 December 1981	13,262
31 December 1982	13,267
31 December 1983	13,321
31 December 1984	13,371
31 December 1985	13,465

Since 31 December 1985, the authorised police establishment has risen to 13,564.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what information he has as to whether the European Commission official who has made an inspection visit to Scotland in connection with the extension of sheep annual premium to untupped gimmers visited north Sutherland and west Caithness to inspect Lairg type North Country Cheviots and the conditions under which they are produced.

Mr. John MacKay: The visit has been rescheduled for this week. The itinerary includes northern Scotand where Cheviots will be among the breeds inspected.

Bilderberg Conference

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what were the costs to public funds of the policing of the Bilderberg conference.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *1*]: I understand from the chief constable of Tayside police that, excluding the costs of policing inside Gleneagles hotel and its grounds which were reimbursed by the conference organisers, his force incurred costs amounting to just over £57,400 in relation to this conference.

Radioactivity

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish locations of the three areas of highest rainfall in Scotland for which samples of rainfall have been analysed to detect levels of radiation since the Chernobyl disaster; and if he will publish a full record of the date and time of readings, and the level of each of the various forms of radioactivity which were recorded, together with the normal level and the lower emergency reference level for each such type of radioactivity.

Mr. Ancram [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1986, c. *346*]: It is not possible to predict where rainfall will be highest and the normal practice, which was used in monitoring rainfall over Scotland following the Chernobyl accident, is to sample at representative locations.

Details of the sampling locations were given in the answer which I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes) on 21 May at column *228*.

Radionuclides detected in rain have included ruthenium 103, ruthenium 106, iodine 131, iodine 132, caesium 134, caesium 137 and barium 140. The more significant in radiological terms are iodine 131 and the radiocaesium nuclides. Details of the three samples showing the highest concentrations of these are given in the following table, together with the lower derived emergency reference levels for these radionuclides. I will arrange for details of the other radionuclides in these samples and in other samples monitored following the Chernobyl reactor accident to be placed in the Library.

The levels of radioactivity due to fallout present in rainfall in the United Kingdom are monitored routinely as part of a joint programme by the National Radiological Protection Board (NRPB) and the Harwell laboratory of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA). Concentrations of caesium 137 reported are generally less than 0·02 becquerel per litre; the shorter lived radionuclides associated with the fallout for the Chernobyl accident are not normally detectable in rainfall.

Concentrations in rainfall

Becquerel/litre

Location	*Date*	*Iodine 131*	*Caesium 134*	*Caesium 137*
Glasgow	4 May	9,400	1,650	2,560
Caithness	1-5 May	4,500	n.a.	770
Chapelcross	1-5 May	1,200	130	250
DERL		2,400	6,200	7,300

n.a.=not analysed.

Voluntary Bodies (Grants)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland (1) what was the total amount of money offered to voluntary bodies under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 for the financial year 1985-86; and, of this, what amount was capital and what revenue;

(2) if he will list each voluntary organisation that was offered grant assistance under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, and the title of each project so assisted for 1985-86;

(3) if he will list the amount of capital and the amount of revenue offered under section 10 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, by project, for 1985-86.

Mr. John MacKay [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986]: The information requested is set out in the table. Grant assistance under section 10(1) of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 was offered in 1985-86 towards expenditure by voluntary organisations on ongoing activities (core expenditure) and towards the costs of specific projects. The table is divided between core expenditure grants; grants for specific mainstream projects; and grants for projects funded under the current care in the community and drug abuse initiatives.

Grant payments in 1985-86 will not equate exactly with offers of grant made in the same year because of the lead time normally occurring between an offer and take up of

grant and the standard practice of retaining a small percentage of the amount offered until audited accounts are presented.

	Revenue (£)	Capital (£)
1. GRANTS OFFERED TOWARDS CORE EXPENDITURE		
(a) Voluntary agencies other than local councils		
Aberdeen and North East Association for Mental Health	14,309	
Age Concern Scotland	36,000	17,621 (Computer and Office Equipment)
Alzheimers Disease Society	8,000	—
British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering	28,000	1,875 (Audio Visual Equipment)
British Association for Service to the Elderly	500	—
Brittle Bone Society	5,000	—
Community Service Volunteers	16,100	—
Crossroads (Scotland)	20,900	2,479 (Office Equipment)
Cruse	5,042	—
Epilepsy Association for Scotland	7,275	—
Gingerbread	23,200	—
Intermediate Treatment Resource Centre	110,000	1,831 (Word Processor)
L'Arche	2,800	—
National Association for Outdoor Education	3,420	—
National Childminding Association	2,700	—
National Foster Care Association	6,500	—
National Playbus Association	10,000	1,168 (Photocopier)
National Schizophrenia Fellowship	10,050	—
Play Matters	2,100	—
Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	40,000	—
Samaritans	6,500	—
Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders	50,000	5,150 (Computer)
Scottish Association for the Deaf	9,250	12,000 (Database)
Scottish Association for Interpreters of the Deaf	5,880	—
Scottish Association of Victim Support Schemes	14,000	—
Scottish Association for Mental Health	26,350	—
Scottish Catholic Marriage Advisory Council	5,062	—
Scottish Child and Family Alliance	30,700	5,433 (Office Equipment)
Scottish Council for Community and Voluntary Organisations	321,500	43,000 (Computer and Rewiring of Office)
Scottish Council on Disability	191,528	—
Scottish Council for Opportunity in Play Experience	92,050	8,616 (Office Equipment and Computer)
Scottish Council for Single Homeless	8,000	—
Scottish Council for Single Parents	28,000	200*
Scottish Downs Syndrome Association	9,115	—
Scottish Family Conciliation Service	22,666	1,108 (Computer)
Scottish Marriage Guidance Council	38,890	2,370 (Office Equipment and external overhaul of premises)
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped	5,484	—
Scottish Spina Bifida Association	16,500	—
Scottish Spinal Cord Injury Association	9,800	—
Scottish Women's Aid	25,300	—
Special Equipment and Aids for Living (SEQUAL)	2,100	—
St. Euphrasia's (Good Shepherd Centre)	180,000	—
(b) Local Councils of Social Service		
Arran Council of Social Service	9,200	—
Association for Community Action (Clackmannan District)	12,100	100
Association of Local Voluntary Organisations (Lanark)	8,550	—
Barra and Vatersay Council of Social Service	10,500	—
Berwickshire Council of Social Service	8,100	411
East Lothian Council for Voluntary Service	7,500	—
East Sutherland Council of Social Service	8,300	—
Ettrick and Lauderdale Association of Voluntary Service	7,400	—
Federation of Borders Councils of Social Service	1,310	—
Federation of Voluntary Community Development Organisations in the Highland and Islands	2,025	—

	Revenue (£)	Capital (£)	
Gordon Rural Action Information Network	10,700	250	
Harris Council of Social Service	7,650	—	
Inverness Voluntary Organisations Group	13,500	219	
Islay Council of Social Service	12,000	3,000	(Offset Printing Press)
Levenmouth Council of Social Service	1,935	137	
Lewis Council of Social Service	17,050	2,049	(Photocopier and Filing Cabinet)
Lochaber Voluntary Organisations Group	2,175	—	
Midlothian Council of Social Service	3,450	1,030	(Office equipment and redecoration)
Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Service	4,500	200	
North and West Sutherland Council of Social Service	7,720	—	
Perth and Kinross Association of Voluntary Service	10,760	265	
Ross and Cromarty Council of Voluntary Service	13,650	477	
Roxburgh Association of Voluntary Service	8,000	—	
Shetland Council of Social Service	16,300	495	
Skye and Lochalsh Council of Social Service	12,650	—	
Speyside and District Council of Social Service	12,250	—	
Stewartry Council of Social Service	6,500	799	
Stirling District Council of Social Service	17,800	100	
Tweeddale Association of Voluntary Organisations	6,000	903	(Central Heating and Office Equipment)
Uist Council of Social Service	14,800	1,777	(Photocopier)
Voluntary Association of Nairn Groups	3,100	—	
Voluntary Services Orkney	13,500	—	
West Lothian Council of Social Service	10,750	—	
2. GRANTS OFFERED TOWARDS SPECIFIC PROJECTS			
Aberlour Child Care Trust: Stirling (Intermediate Treatment) Project	26,500	22,000	(Building Renovation)
Aberlour Child Care Trust: (Bellyeoman Road Unit)	—	11,092	(Minibus)
Age Concern Scotland: Fundraising Project	10,000	—	
Albyn House Association: Designated Place and Support Hostel for Drunken Offenders	110,000	—	
Blantyre Volunteer Group: DLVA Initiative†	1,970	—	
Broadcasting Support Services Parent Programme	4,000	—	
Burnfoot Project (Intermediate Treatment)	6,000	—	
Call Centre: Research Project into new technology to meet the needs of disabled people	10,000	—	
Church of Scotland: Simpson House Drugs Project	25,000	3,500	(video equipment)
Annan House	80,000	20,000	(Alterations to premises)
Deeford House	11,500	10,000	(Conversion Works)
Edinburgh Prison Liaison Worker	12,500	—	
Clydesdale Project (Intermediate Treatment)	30,000	15,945	(Landrover refurbishment and equipment)
Community Service Volunteers: Independent Living Scheme Scotland	10,856	—	
Cowdenbeath Befriending Scheme (Intermediate Treatment)	12,730	—	
Dixon Centre for Retired Citizens: Respite Care Project	—	21,000	(Building Conversions etc . . .)
Dr. Barnardo's: West Lothian Family Support Team	11,250	—	
Dumfries Community Project (Intermediate Treatment)	20,000	5,600	(Refurbishments)
Dundee Children's Trust: Mars Project (Intermediate Treatment)	35,000	—	
East Wigtown Youth Project (Intermediate Treatment)	15,000	—	
Family Care: Development of Scottish Adoption Registry and Associated Parents Register	16,940	22,800	(Computer)
Galashiels Youth Project (Intermediate Treatment)	5,000	—	
Glasgow Volunteer Centre	—	5,658	(Computer System)
Machars Action: DLVA Initiative†	6,855	—	
Mary Slessor Centre: Youth Project (Intermediate Treatment)	33,000	—	
Motherwell Community Transport Project	—	49,500	(four vehicles)

	Revenue (£)	Capital (£)
National Cyrenians: Travelling Expenses of Fieldworker's visits to Scotland	500	—
National Foster Care Association: Establishment of Scottish Branch	17,000	—
National Schizophrenia Fellowship: Dublin Street Project	5,000	—
Perth Volunteer Befriending Scheme (Intermediate Treatment)	16,000	—
Pilton Youth Programme (Intermediate Treatment)	23,000	—
Quarriers Homes: Overbridge Project (Units for deaf blind young persons)	—	50,000 (Construction Costs, Furnishings and fittings)
Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty for Children: Special Unit	30,270	1,706 (Car and equipment)
Scottish Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders:		
Central Region: Accommodation Centre	12,000	—
Lothian Region: Epworth Hall Day Centre	26,800	7,452 (Building)
Strathclyde Region: Renfrew Street Centre	—	2,403 (Building)
Tayside Region: Visitor Centre at Perth Prison	1,500	—
Scottish Association for Mental Health: Supported Accommodation Unit	10,220	—
Scottish Council on Alcoholism: Drinkwise '85 Campaign	—	10,000
Scottish Women's Aid: Children's Worker	12,200	505
Stranraer Youth Project (Intermediate Treatment)	20,000	3,000 (Building Renovation)
Strathkelvin Project (Intermediate Treatment)	45,000	1,200 (General Refurbishment)
Voluntary Service Aberdeen: Solvent Abuse Project	22,113	—
3. GRANTS OFFERED UNDER THE CARE IN THE COMMUNITY INITIATIVE		
Age Concern Scotland: Glasgow Project for Dementia Sufferers	33,000	7,426 (Office Equipment)
Alzheimers Disease Society		
Kirkaldy Project	10,428	1,630 (Office Equipment)
Paisley Project	21,586	2,160 (Office Equipment)
Archdiocesan Council for the Mentally Handicapped:		
Duffy House Respite Care Scheme	30,000	1,516 (Household Equipment)
British Red Cross Society (Scottish Branch): Home Reach Project for Young Chronic Sick	6,000	37,700 (Equipment for Specialised Unit)
Bute Telephone Neighbour Support Scheme	500	—
Carrickvale Community Centre	622	387
Craigshill Good Neighbour Network	2,913	934 (Recreation Equipment)
Crossroads Care Attendant Scheme:		
Nairn Project	5,000	—
Ross and Cromarty Project	16,815	950
Dundee Association for Mental Health: Kandahar House Project	9,330	9,200 (Office Equipment and Building Work)
Edinburgh University Settlement	12,000	3,139 (Office Equipment)
Levenmouth Council for Social Service: Day Centre for the Confused Elderly	15,000	—
National Schizophrenia Fellowship: Stafford Centre for Schizophrenics	11,000	8,650 (Building Work)
North Edinburgh Action Group: Area 5	964	—
Perth Associaton for Mental Health (Link Club): Day Centre for the Mentally Handicapped	18,500	5,962 (Office Equipment and Building Work)
Scottish Society for the Mentally Handicapped: Dunfermline Respite Care Scheme	8,500	—
SENSE in Scotland	10,000	459
Skye and Lochalsh Committee for Disability: Activity Centre for the Mentally Handicapped	4,500	—
The Thistle Foundation: Respite Care Project for the Severely Disabled	8,200	22,800 (Specialised Equipment)
Three Villages Community Care Project	300	—

	Revenue (£)	Capital (£)
4 GRANTS OFFERED UNDER THE DRUG ABUSE INITIATIVE		
Aberdeen Community Drug Advice and Counselling Service	50,000	—
Drug Problem Resource Group, Kilmahew House Drugs Project	22,000	—
West Edinburgh Support Team	1,000	—
Inverclyde Drugline: Telephone Helpline	4,000	—
The Candle Centre: Addiction Centre	35,000	5,000 (Furnishings and Fittings)
"The Place" Possilpark, Glasgow: Drugs Project	4,000	—
Scottish Churches House, Dunblane: Drug Training Project Seminar	1,500	—
5 OTHER PROJECT RELATED GRANTS		
Grants to organisations to meet the replacement salary costs of staff under training	180,624	—
Scottish Office Contribution to the Family Fund	602,134	—
Volunteer Development Scotland	—	2,103 (Office)Equipment)
Total	3,614,224	487,840

NOTE 1: Capital grants of less than £1,000 not itemised relate to office equipment, furnishings etc.

NOTE 2: The DVLA initiative was financed jointly with the voluntary services unit, Home Office, for the purpose of research into different methods of developing local voluntary action. The two projects listed comprised the Scottish elements in this project.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what departmental business took a ministerial car to Greek street, W1, in 1985 which led to a parking ticket being issued.

Sir George Young: I have been asked to reply. I shall answer this question shortly.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Nissan Cars

Mr. Roger King asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column *45*, he will raise during exploratory talks with Nissan UK the discrepancy between the 1986 agreed inclusive United Kingdom import and phase 1 Washington assembly quota, and the combined sales targets of all Nissan UK dealers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Nissan UK sales targets are a commercial matter for the company itself, but through its membership of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders it is a party to the talks between that organisation and the Japanese Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) about the size of the UK new car market, as is the Nissan Motor Company by virtue of its membership of JAMA.

Multi-fibre Arrangement

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he intends to seek to exempt Bangladeshi clothing imports from any new multi-fibre arrangement; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The mandate agreed by the Foreign Affairs Council in March provides for particularly liberal treatment in the MFA for the least developed exporters, including Bangladesh. The Commission has subsequently opened discussions with Bangladesh about arrangements to succeed the present bilateral agreement which expires in December. These discussions are continuing.

BSC and BS (Grants and Loans)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has of the total amount of aid in grants and loans provided to *(a)* the British Steel Corporation and *(b)* British Shipbuilders in respect of their operations in the northern region (i) since 1979 and (ii) since 1983.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Regional Aid

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how much has been spent in regional aid in the northern region since 1983; and how many jobs are estimated to have been *(a)* created or *(b)* preserved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Printing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what information he has on the production and employment trends in the United Kingdom printing industry; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to my hon. Friend as soon as possible.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what has been the total value of the output of the United Kingdom printing industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what is this figure as a percentage of total industrial output in each of those years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Information in respect of the printing and publishing industry (group 475 of the standard industrial classification 1980) is as follows:

Year	Current value of net output £ million	Percentage of total industrial* output Per cent
1981	6,950	4·5
1982	7,980	4·3
1983	8,770	4·1
1984	10,130	4·3
1985	†11,160	†4·2

* Division 1 to 4 of the SIC (1980).
† Provisional.

Trade Statistics

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what are the basic differences between the means of calculation used in determining trade deficits in manufactures with the European Economic Community as set out in his answers to the hon. Member for Southend, East on 14 May, *Official Report*, column *473* and on 20 May; which form of calculation reflects most accurately the trade situation; whether his Department uses the overseas trade statistics at the customary form of calculation; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: The figures quoted in the reply dated 20 May were on the Overseas Trade Statistics (OTS) basis, as the question stipulated; those in the earlier reply were on the balance of payments (BOP) basis.

Detailed monthly trade data are compiled on the OTS basis by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise; the value of imports, but not exports, includes the costs of freight and insurance. These figures thus overstate the value of imports compared with exports and the "crude" balances derived from them are affected accordingly—surpluses are smaller and deficits bigger. The insurance and freight charges, where due to non-United Kingdom residents, are transferred to the appropriate headings in the invisibles account when the current account of the balance of payments is compiled.

Where possible, visible trade figures are given on the BOP basis, derived by my Department from the OTS figures, but in less detail. BOP figures of trade with the European Community are available quarterly.

Shotguns (Import)

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he plans to take steps to control the import of semi-automatic shotguns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Butcher: No, since there are already such controls, the operation of which reflects the provisions concerning possession of these guns in the Firearms Act 1968 and the Firearms (Northern Ireland) Order 1981.

Wedgwood (Takeover)

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry whether he has received any recent representations opposing the proposed takeover of Wedgwood by the London International Group.

Mr. Howard: Yes. My right hon. Friend and I have received some representations opposing this proposed takeover, which, in accordance with our normal practice, have been drawn to the attention of the Director General of Fair Trading.

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will refer the proposed takeover of Wedgwood by the London International Group to the Director General of Fair Trading for advice as to reference to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

Mr. Howard: The proposed takeover by the London International Group of Josiah Wedgwood and Son Ltd is currently being considered by the Director General of Fair Trading. My right hon. Friend will make his decision on whether the proposal should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for further investigation in the light of advice from the Director General.

Unicol

Mr. Williams asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when allegations relating to the status and activities of Unicol of Harrow-on-the-Hill as a debt-collecting agency were first notified to the Office of Fair Trading; what investigations and action have taken place; if the validity of that company's application for a licence under the Consumer Credit Act has been re-checked; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: The licensing of debt-collecting agencies under the Consumer Credit Act is the responsibility of the Director General of Fair Trading, and I will ask him to write to the hon. Member.

Takeover Bids

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will make it his policy to seek to limit the present spate of opposed takeover bids; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: My right hon. Friend has powers under the Fair Trading Act 1973 to act to prevent a merger only if it is referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission and the Commission concludes that it would operate against the public interest. Our policy is to make references to the Commission primarily on competition grounds, although this does not rule out making references on other public interest grounds where appropriate. The fact that a merger is contested does not necessarily mean that it raises competition or other public interest issues which justify investigation by the Commission.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Tony Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is the likely level of employment in British Shipbuilders after the postulated cuts; how this compares with the number of workers at the time of nationalisation; and what has been the percentage reduction in employment since nationalisation.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Following the privatisation of the warship building and ship repair yards and its general engineering subsidiaries, British Shipbuilders now comprises merchant ship and engine building companies only. Once the current restructuring programme has been completed, employment in British Shipbuilders is likely to total about 6,500. This compares with 44,800 employed

in merchant ship and engine building and 87,300 within the whole of British Shipbuilders at the time of nationalisation, reductions of some 85 and 92 per cent., respectively.

Regional Aid

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry (1) what proportion of the total of regional development grants has been paid to firms in the Northern Region in each year since 1979;

(2) what is his estimate of the number of firms in the northern region which have received regional development grant payments since 1979 and have subsequently closed down or announced redundancies; and if he will give an estimate of the number of jobs involved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

British Steel Corporation

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed by the British Steel Corporation in the northern region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Shipyards (Aid)

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry which of the listed shipyards are in areas with some form of assisted area status and which are outside any such area: Appledore, Ferguson-Ailsa, Govan, NESL, Smith's Dock and Clark-Kincaid.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Appledore is in a non-assisted area. The other yards listed fall within assisted areas.

Compensation (Defence) Act 1939 (Claims)

Mr. Ashdown asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what representations have been made to his Department by other interested parties about the claim for compensation for the Wolverhampton group of companies under the Compensation (Defence) Act 1939.

Mr. Howard: Representations have been made to my Department by or on behalf of the former managing director and principal shareholder of the Wolverhampton Group of Steel Companies relating to a claim for compensation under the Compensation (Defence) Act 1939. No such representations have been made by or on behalf of any other parties known to have any financial interests in the companies.

Copyright

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if, pursuant to his answer of 16 May, *Official Report*, column *569*, to the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent, Central (Mr. Fisher) he will seek to amend the Copyright Act 1956 to add sculptured portraits to the statutory exceptions listed under section 4(3).

Mr. Pattie: As recently announced in the White Paper "Intellectual Property and Innovation" (Cmnd. 9712) at page 66, the Government have concluded that it is unnecessary and undesirable to amend either the basic ownership provision or the existing specific exceptions to that provision in the Copyright Act 1956. Accordingly, I am not seeking to add sculptured portraits to the statutory exceptions listed under section 4(3) of this Act.

Estate Agents

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people the Director General of Fair Trading has banned under the Estate Agents Act 1979 in each year since the Act came into force.

Mr. Howard: I am informed by the Director General of Fair Trading that the number of prohibition orders made during last year is:

	Number
*1982	2
1983	6
1984	6
1985	12
1986	17

* (May-December)

A further five orders are subject to appeal. Three of the orders listed have since been expunged from the public register kept by the Director General. Further information can be obtained from the Director General.

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Crown Agents

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make it his policy that there will be no compulsory redundancies resulting from the subsumation of the Crown Agents into the Overseas Development Agency.

Mr. Raison: No member of staff of the Overseas Development Administration will lose his or her job or be compulsorily transferred as a result of the merger of the Crown Agents' pensions division with the Overseas Development Administration. There will be staff savings in the area of work currently handled by the Crown Agents' pensions division as a result of the merger, but the Crown Agents' management and my officials are working closely together with a view to avoiding redundancies among Crown Agents' staff.

WALES

Road Accidents (Hospital Treatment)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many *(a)* men, *(b)* women and *(c)* children have been treated in hospitals in Wales for injuries arising out of road accidents during each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The available information is given in the following table:

Persons discharged from NHS hospitals in Wales who were admitted as a result of a road traffic accident

	1980	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*
Males aged 16 and over	2,229	2,185	1,869	1,724	1,769
Females aged 16 and over	956	893	801	774	804

	1980	1981	1982	1983*	1984
Persons, 15 and under	604	556	502	523	549
Total	3,789	3,634	3,172	3,021	3,122

Shell Oil Terminal, Ynys Môn

Mr. Barry Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales *(a)* how much public money went into the Shell oil terminal at Ynys Môn, *(b)* what reasons Shell have given the Welsh Office for pulling out and *(c)* what are the terms of the renegotiated deal with Merseyside Port Authority.

Mr. Nicholas Edwards: The available information is as follows:

(a) Just over £3·8 million of regional development grant was paid in respect of the Rhosgoch tank farm.

(b) Shell UK Ltd. has said that its decision to cease operations in Anglesey was the result of a greatly reduced demand for oil products which meant that the facility is operating at only about 30 per cent. of its capability and giving rise to unacceptably high operating costs.

(c) That is a commercial matter for the company and the port authority.

Sheep Annual Premium

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Wales which breeds of ewe in which areas of Wales qualify for the higher rate of headage payments under the sheep annual premium arrangements; and if mountain breeds of ewe in well-defined regions of Wales were considered for the extension of sheep annual premium to untupped shearlings.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There is only one rate of sheep annual premium. All breeds of ewe are currently eligible for the premium, provided that all other conditions of the scheme are met. It is not the practice in Wales to leave shearlings untupped.

Wales Advisory Body

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Wales if he will make it his policy to dismiss the chairman of the board of the Welsh Advisory Body on Further and Higher Education; and to appoint in his place a person who has not previously held office in either a university or college of further education; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: No. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has every confidence in the chairman of the board of WAB and expects that he will continue to serve until the conclusion of his appointment at the end of this year.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Terrorism

Mr. Thurnham asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on the outcome of recent discussions with other western Governments on international terrorism.

Mr. Eggar: I refer my hon. Friend to the statement given by my right hon. and learned Friend on 23 April about the meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the Twelve on 21 April. The commitment of the western democracies to resist terrorism and to take significant action to deal with it were also firmly underlined at the Tokyo summit. We shall continue to work with friendly and like-minded countries in fighting a problem which affects us all and to urge that measures similar to those agreed by the European Community and summit seven countries be applied on the widest possible basis in the international community.

United States

Mr. Canavan asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what subjects he expects to discuss at his next meeting with representatives of the Government of the United States of America.

Mr. Eggar: My right hon. and learned Friend has just had discussions on a wide range of international issues with the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Shultz, in Washington and during the North Atlantic Council meeting in Canada. He expects to continue these contacts on international subjects in future meetings.

Nuclear Tests

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if Her Majesty's Government plan to submit proposals under article 2, section 1, of the partial test ban treaty to the depository Governments for ciruclation to all the treaty's signatories for a reduction in the 150 kiloton limit governing nuclear weapon tests.

Mr. Renton: No. The 150 kiloton limit is the subject of the 1974 threshold test ban treaty between the United States and the Soviet Union. This treaty is so far unratified. We regret that the Soviet Union has not responded to recent proposals by the United States on verifying the yield of nuclear tests with a view to ratifying this treaty.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in full the text of the scientific advice so far made available to the Government about technical inadequacies in the United Kingdom's ability to detect, identify and quantify nuclear weapon tests.

Mr. Renton: The United Kingdom's paper to the conference on disarmament in July 1985 (CD 610), a copy of which is available in the Library of the House, set out very fully the scientific grounds on which we continue to believe that verification difficulties at present stand in the way of negotiating a comprehensive test ban treaty.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will list the parameters governing his assessment of technical considerations when determining whether a proposed method of independently verifying nuclear weapons tests is adequate.

Mr. Renton: As has been made clear to the House on a number of occasions, we are looking for adequate verification that is sufficiently reliable to give confidence to all sides. In particular, I refer the hon. Member to the replies given in two Adjournment debates; the first by my right hon. Friend the Member for Shoreham (Mr. Luce), the then Minister of State, on 7 June 1985 and my own on 26 March 1986. In both those speeches there are details

of the considerations which we would need to take into account in assessing the adequacy of any verification regime.

Mr. Cenos Delos Santos

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs how much his Department is paying per annum for the accommodation of Mr. Cenos Delos Santos in Wormwood Scrubs prison; and how long it is anticipated that such expenditure will continue.

Mr. Eggar: The cost to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of Mr. Delos Santos' accommodation in Wormwood Scrubs prison is currently £29,000 a year. This is reimbursement of costs incurred by the Home Office. Delos Santos was sentenced to life imprisonment in November 1985, and the present expenditure will continue until, after assessment, he is moved from a main centre dispersal prison such as Wormwood Scrubs. Assessment normally takes place after three or four years, following which most life prisoners are transferred to category B training establishments, where costs can be expected to be lower.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Cambell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he is satisfied that the construction contract awarded to John Mowlem and companies complies with the terms of the lease between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government on the use of Diego Garcia; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: Diego Garcia is not leased to the United States Government. Its use is based on exchanges of notes dated 30 December 1966 and 25 February 1976 between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. I am satisfied that the construction contract complies with the terms of those exchanges of notes.

Mr. Cambell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether he will list those contractors currently engaged on projects on Diego Garcia under the terms of the lease agreement.

Mr. Eggar: There are two major consortia engaged on maintenance or construction projects in Diego Garcia. They are FEBROE, a joint venture between the United States firms Frank E. Basal and Burns and Roe Services; and RBRM, which comprises John Mowlem (UK), Brown and Root and Raymond International of the USA. In addition, RCA (US) and TRW (US) are engaged in the installation of equipment; Overseas Express Inc. (US) is operating tug boats, and Cable and Wireless (UK) is operating the telephone and telex system.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what construction contracts are currently being undertaken on Diego Garcia by *(a)* British contractors and *(b)* other contractors.

Mr. Eggar: The only contract for construction work in Diego Garcia was awarded to a consortium of Brown and Root, Raymond International and Mowlem (UK). The contract, which is nearing completion, covers the improvement of services and utilities on the island including refuelling arrangements, expansion of storage, warehousing, maintenance and wharf installations and the upgrading of the runway and other airfield support facilities.

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the value of the contract awarded to John Mowlem for its construction works in Diego Garcia by the United Kingdom Government.

Mr. Eggar: The contract in which John Mowlem is engaged with other members of the RBRM consortium was not awarded by the United Kingdom Government. It is a United States Government contract, paid for by the United States Government.

Berlin Bomb Incident (Libyan Involvement)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will instruct Her Majesty's ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany to seek from the Federal authorities their latest assessment of the Libyan involvement in the bomb explosion in Berlin in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: No. Berlin is not part of the Federal Republic of Germany and is not governed by it. The Allies, who have supreme authority in Berlin, remain in close touch with the German authorities in the city.

School Fees

Dr. Marek asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if, pursuant to the answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, columns *17-18*, he will state the number of families concerned; whether there is any maximum school fee per child set by his Department; and what is the highest fee paid.

Mr. Eggar: In the financial year 1985-86, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office paid boarding school allowance to 562 officers serving overseas. The FCO pays an allowance towards both fees and board and lodging costs charged by schools. The maximum allowance currently paid is £1,553·08 per term for boys at senior schools. Any costs in excess of these allowances have to be met by officers themselves.

Western European Union

Sir Anthony Grant asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what is the policy of Her Majesty's Government towards the enlargement of the Western European Union; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: At their meeting in Venice on 29-30 April, WEU Ministers agreed that the new institutional arrangements approved at the Council meeting in Bonn in April 1985 should be allowed to run until the end of 1987, when a review of the structure and operation of the organisation will take place. At that time member Governments will be able to assess the achievements of the WEU's reactivation and the way ahead. We support this approach.

Disarmament Conference, Geneva

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make a statement on recent developments in the chemical arms control talks in committee at the conference on disarmament in Geneva.

Mr. Renton: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rutland and Melton (Mr. Latham) on 24 April at column *223*. The spring session of the conference on disarmament ended on 25 April. The summer session will start on 10 June.

EMPLOYMENT

Workfare Scheme

26. **Mr. Marlow** asked the Paymaster General if he will make it his policy to develop plans to introduce into the social security system in the United Kingdom a scheme similar to the workfare scheme operated in the United States of America; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The restart programme for the long-term unemployed which will be fully operational by July this year will include a number of elements which feature in workfare programmes in the United States of America, in particular job clubs to help and encourage the unemployed to find work. The Government are continuing to study the American experience of workfare programmes to see if there are further elements which should be applied here.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General how much assistance has been given to small businesses in the northern region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Trippier: Figures are not available for the total amount of assistance given to small firms in the northern region, but a broad range of assistance, including the benefits of the Government's overall economic policies, is available to them. Specific measures for which figures are available include the small firms service, the enterprise allowance scheme, the loan guarantee scheme, and the Department of Trade and Industry's business improvement services. The following figures can be provided, although they do not all refer to the same geographical area.

The small firms centre in Newcastle from 1980 to 1985 answered 95,000 inquiries and arranged 10,000 counselling sessions.

The loan guarantee scheme, since its introduction in 1981, has provided guarantees for bank lending to small firms in the north-east, totalling over £22 million.

The enterprise allowance scheme has since 1983 helped 7,333 unemployed people in the northern region to start their own businesses at a cost of over £11 million.

In the period to 31 March 1985, 816 applications had been made in those areas of the north-east eligible for business improvement services, and £6·78 million of expenditure committed.

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General what has been the total expenditure by his Department and by the Manpower Services Commission in each year since 1979 on *(a)* job creation and *(b)* training, including retraining in the northern region.

Mr. Lang: Expenditure in the northern region is not separately accounted for and precise figures are therefore not available. Estimates of expenditure are given in the table.

	1979-80 £ *million*	*1980-81* £ *million*	*1981-82* £ *million*	*1982-83* £ *million*	*1983-84* £ *million*	*1984-85* £ *million*	*1985-86* £ *million*
Community Programme	—	9·0	12·0	20·0	42·0	56·0	71·0
Enterprise Allowance	—	—	—	—	1·3	4·3	5·7
Voluntary Projects Programme	—	—	—	0·02	0·2	0·5	0·7
Community Industry	—	—	—	3·0	3·0	3·0	3·0
Training Opportunity Programme	8·4	8·4	7·1	6·5	7·2	13·1	
Adult Training Strategy	—	—	—	—	—	—	12·3
YTS	—	—	—	—	*49·7	46·9	48·6
Young Workers Scheme	—	—	—	2·6	3·8	2·7	2·2

* Figure includes estimated expenditure in Cumbria.

Expenditure on the job splitting scheme in the northern region is estimated to have been below £50,000, in each year.

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General how many people were placed in jobs by jobcentres in the northern region in 1983, 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Lang: Following is the requested information. The figures exclude placings on Government schemes.

	Number
1983	83,311
1984	92,094
1985	99,408

Mr. Fallon asked the Paymaster General whether he will publish a table showing how many people have benefited in the northern region from *(a)* the community programme, *(b)* the enterprise allowance scheme, *(c)* YTS and *(d)* adult training in each year since 1983; and how many are currently benefiting from each scheme.

Mr. Lang: In April 1986, 29,854 people in the northern region were benefiting from the schemes. The number of participants, by scheme, were:

	Number
Community Programme	22,492
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	2,864
YTS	1,663
Adult Training	2,835

The number of entrants to the above schemes in the northern region during the past three years is shown in the table.

Programme	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Community Programme	13,343	15,942	24,009
Enterprise Allowance Scheme	1,562	2,588	3,183
YTS	26,929	27,229	27,416
Adult Training	5,416	7,080	16,994

Printing Industry

Mr. Nicholas Winterton asked the Paymaster General what has been the total number of people employed in each region of England and Wales in the printing industry in each of the last five years for which figures are available; and what percentage of the total possible work force this figure represents in each of those years.

Mr. Lang: The Department's employment statistics are analysed according to the 1980 standard industrial classification, which combines the printing industry with publishing. Estimates of the numbers of employees in employment in printing and publishing in Great Britain for September of each year from 1981 to 1985, and expressed as a percentage of the working population (employees in employment, the self-employed, Her Majesty's forces and the unemployed) are given in table 1.

Regional estimates of employees in employment in the printing and publishing industry are available only from censuses of employment. The latest available regional estimates for the industry are based on the September 1981 census of employment, and those for England and Wales are given in table 2. The figures are expressed as a percentage of the civilian working population — employees in employment, the self-employed and the unemployed—in each region.

TABLE 1
Printing and publishing industry: Great Britain

September of each year	*Employees in employment*	*Employees in employment as a percentage of the working population per cent.*
1981	350,300	1·3
1982	345,400	1·3
1983	338,900	1·3
1984	343,800	1·3
1985	353,300	1·3

TABLE 2
Printing and publishing industry: September 1981

	Employees in employment	*Employees in employment as a percentage of the civilian working population per cent.*
South-East	175,000	2·0
East Anglia	13,000	1·6
South-West	20,800	1·1
West Midlands	20,800	0·8
East Midlands	19,500	1·1
Yorkshire and Humberside	23,900	1·1
North-West	34,400	1·1
North	12,300	0·9
Wales	6,500	0·5

Labour Statistics

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what is his estimate of the number of unemployed building workers in the northern region.

Mr. Lang: The labour force survey showed that in the northern region in the spring of 1984 there were about 21,000 people without a job and looking for work who had been employed at some time in the last three years, their previous job having been in the construction industry.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many people were registered as unemployed in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The numbers of unemployed claimants seasonally adjusted, excluding school leavers in the northern region, for April of each year from 1979 to 1986, are as follows:

	Numbers
April 1979	99,500
April 1980	112,900
April 1981	163,900
April 1982	186,000
April 1983	204,500
April 1984	215,700
April 1985	227,200
April 1986	228,600

The numbers of unemployed claimants in the Sunderland local authority district for April of each year from 1984 to 1986 are as follows:

	Numbers
April 1984	26,941
April 1985	28,387
April 1986	28,859

These figures are unadjusted and are affected by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for local authority districts are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many people were unemployed for more than one year in *(a)* Northern region and *(b)* Sunderland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. The figures are affected by the 1983 Budget provisions, which mean that certain older men, mainly aged 60 or over, no longer have to sign on at unemployment benefit offices to receive benefit and by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for local authority districts are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983. Comparisons of unemployment over the period are difficult to make because of changes in the method of collection and compilation of the data.

Claimants—unemployed for over 12 months

	Northern region	*Sunderland local authority district*
April 1983	93,083	—
April 1984	97,042	12,774
April 1985	106,767	14,595
April 1986	108,077	14,496

Registrants—unemployed for over 12 months

	Northern region
April 1979	35,855
April 1980	33,780
April 1981	48,354
April 1982	81,959

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what has been the rate of redundancies per thousand employees for *(a)* the United Kingdom and *(b)* the northern region for each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The available information, relating to confirmed redundancies, is given in the following table:

Redundancies confirmed as due to occur per 1,000 employees in employment†*

	Great Britain	Northern region
1979	8	12
1980	22	28
1981	25	36
1982	19	30
1983	16	29
1984	11	25
1985	11	23

* Redundancies confirmed by the Manpower Services Commission as due to occur and based on notifications of impending redundancies involving 10 or more workers. Figures for 1985 are provisional.

† Based on the latest mid-year (June) estimates of employees in employment.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in manufacturing industry in the northern region in each year since 1979.

Mr. Lang: The information is as follows:

Employees in employment in the manufacturing industries in the northern region
December of each year

Year	Number
1979	403,000
1980	359,000
1981	334,000
1982	309,000
1983	291,000
1984	289,000
1985*	288,000

* The latest date for which an estimate is available.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies were available in jobcentres in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland in May 1979, June 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The following figures relate to the numbers of unfilled vacancies at jobcentres in the northern region and at Sunderland jobcentre. Figures for May 1979 exclude self-employed vacancies.

	Northern Region	Sunderland Jobcentre
May 1979	10,585	766
June 1983	6,239	281
April 1986	8,753	569

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many vacancies were available at careers offices in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland in May 1979, June 1983 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The following figures relate to the numbers of unfilled vacancies at careers offices in the northern region and at Sunderland careers office.

	Northern Region	Sunderland Careers Office
May 1979	744	33
June 1983	304	17
April 1986	317	34

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many places were available at skillcentres in the northern region in 1979 and at the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Trippier: I regret that figures for 1979 are not available. 68,000 weeks of training were provided in the northern region of the skills training agency in 1985-86.

Since 1983 statistics on skillcentre training volumes have been kept in terms of training weeks provided, rather than places available.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General how many people were employed in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland in 1979, 1983 and the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The available information is given in the table. For areas smaller than regions, this information is available only for those dates when censuses of employment are taken. The table therefore includes the available information from the 1978 and 1981 censuses of employment. More-up-to-date employee figures for local areas will become available following publication of the 1984 census of employment later this year.

Employees in employment (thousands)

	Northern region	Sunderland jobcentre area
June 1978	1,242·0	66·0
September 1979	1,248·0	Not available
September 1981	1,119·0	59·0
September 1983	1,047·0	Not available
December 1985*	1,044·0	Not available

* Latest available.

Mr. Clay asked the Paymaster General what were the unemployment figures by ward for Sunderland as at *(a)* May 1979, *(b)* June 1983 and *(c)* the latest date for which figures are available.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the numbers of unemployed claimants in June 1983 and April 1986 in the wards of the Sunderland local authority district. This comparison is affected by seasonal factors, the 1983 Budget provisions, which meant that certain older men, mainly aged 60 and over no longer have to sign on to obtain national insurance credits or supplementary benefits, and by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Statistics of unemployment for local electoral wards are derived from the new ward-based system and are available only from June 1983.

	June 1983	April 1986
Bishopwearmouth	1,027	1,147
Castletown	721	789
Central	806	821
Colliery	683	718
Deptford and Pallion	1,287	1,499
Downhill	1,321	1,377
Ford and Pennywell	2,195	2,274
Fulwell	445	537
Hendon	791	989
Humbledon	837	839
Hylton Castle	1,115	1,139
Roker and Monkwearmouth	978	1,154
Ryhope	758	863
St. Chads	956	1,001

	June 1983	April 1986
St. Michaels	606	698
Silksworth	1,199	1,353
Thorney Close	1,271	1,409
Thornhill	445	504
Southwick	1,026	1,153
Hetton No. 1	421	538
Hetton No. 2	419	564
Houghton No. 1	642	747
Houghton No. 2	609	872
Houghton No. 3	726	936
Washington No. 1	1,169	1,291
Washington No. 2	3,164	3,647

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what particular plans he has to seek to reduce youth unemployment *(a)* in Lancashire and *(b)* in Burnley.

Mr. Trippier: A reduction in youth unemployment in Lancashire and Burnley depends on a sustained improvement in the performance of industry, business and the economy as a whole. Our economic policies are designed to create the conditions for that improvement and we are making substantial progress. We also need levels of pay which ensure the competitiveness of our industry.

In 1986-87 two-year YTS will provide 8,651 places in Lancashire and 770 in Burnley, with a further 1,898 and 152 continuation places respectively being provided for young people who entered training last year. The job prospects of those completing YTS and those ineligible for training will be further enhanced by the new workers scheme.

Those young people who have been unemployed for some time will be able to benefit from temporary employment under the community programme. In 1986-87, 6,218 places will be available in Lancashire and 513 in Burnley. Our other employment measures will also directly or indirectly benefit young people.

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what was the level of youth unemployment in the Burnley travel-to-work area at the latest date for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in 1979 and subsequent years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 10 April 1986, the number of claimants in the Burnley travel-to-work area aged under 25 years was 2,113. The corresponding figures for April 1984 and April 1985 were 2,011 and 2,033 respectively. This comparison is affected by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Larger discontinuities occurred in the local area statistics in 1982 and 1983, with the change in the basis of the count, the introduction of ward-based statistics and the revision to boundaries of travel-to-work areas. Therefore, the figures for earlier years are not directly comparable.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General (1) if any contribution is being made by the airlines to the £1 million which the British tourist industry proposes to spend in the United States of America to halt the decline in the number of United States visitors to the United Kingdom;

(2) if any contribution is being made by the largest of three hotel operators in London to the £1 million being spent by the British Tourist Authority in the United States of America to halt the decline in the number of American tourists to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: The British Tourist Authority is devoting $400,000 to this campaign and aims to raise a further $800,000 from the trade. It is currently negotiating with prospective partners and it is very much hoped that the major airlines and hotel operators, as well as others, will contribute but nothing has yet been finalised.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what is the Government's contribution to tourism this year; what was the comparable sum in 1973-74; and if he will break down the expenditure by end use.

Mr. Trippier: The following table shows the estimated provision by my Department for the British Tourist Authority and the English Tourist Board in the current financial year together with the equivalent figures for 1973-74:

	1986-87 £000's	1973-74 £000's
BTA Grant-in-aid	20,370	5,600
ETB Grant-in-aid	10,369	1,750
Assistance to tourist projects under Section 4 of the Development of Tourist Act 1969	9,400	570
	40,139	7,920

In 1973-74 an additional sum of £20·8 million was paid in grants and loans to eligible applicants in England under the hotel developments incentive scheme. This scheme provided non-discretionary grants for hotel developments which met certain conditions of eligibility. Developments had to start before 1 April 1971 and be completed before 1 April 1973 and this resulted in an exceptionally high level of payments in 1973-74.

Departmental Expenditure

Mr. Norris asked the Paymaster General whether any change will be made to cash limits or gross running cost limits for his Department.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: Subject to parliamentary approval of the necessary Supplementary Estimates, the following changes will be made.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 1 (labour market services) will be increased by £82,400,000 from £1,227,006,000 to £1,309,406,000 to cover the expansion of the community programme and an associated increase in the average wage limit, and the introduction of a new workers scheme, announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in his Budget statement on 18 March 1986.

The cash limit for class VII, vote 3 (administration) will be increased by £1,500,000 from £60,505,000 to £62,005,000 to cover the Department's administrative costs arising from the measures announced in the 1986 Budget, and increased payments to the Manpower Services Commission for statistical work and in connection with city action teams. Increased expenditure of £8,300,000 on the vote is partially offset by receipts totalling £6,800,000 from class XV, vote 5 (DHSS administration).

The cash limit for class VII, vote 6 (MSC) will be increased by £78,354,000 from £1,566,832,000 to £1,645,186,000 to cover the nationwide expansion of the restart programme and an increase in the number of places

on the enterprise allowance scheme, partially offset by a reduction in expenditure on MSC's geographical mobility schemes, as announced in the Budget. A gross increase of £93,074,000 is offset by increased appropriations in aid totalling £14,720,000 from the industry department for Scotland (class XVI, vote 4) and the Welsh Office (class XVII, vote 4).

The cash limit for class XVI, vote 4 (MSC, Scotland) will be increased by £9,008,000 from £155,069,000 to £164,077,000 to meet the proportion of the MSC increases described above which can be specifically identified.

The cash limit for class XVII, vote 4 (MSC, Wales) will be increased by £5.712,000 from £95,076,000 to £100,788,000 to meet the proportion of the MSC increases which can be specifically identified with services in Wales.

As a result of these changes, the Department of Employment's gross running cost limit is increased by £10,300,000 from £374,288,000 to £384,588,000; and the MSC's gross running cost limit is increased by £28,458,000 from £370,875,000 to £399,360,000. Taken together with the existing gross running cost limits for the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Health and Safety Commission, the total for the Department of Employment group as a whole will be increased by £38,785,000 from £846,463,000 to a new aggregate of £885,248,000.

The public expenditure costs of these measures have been charged to the Reserve so do not add to the public expenditure planning total.

Job Creation

Mr. Knox asked the Paymaster General what steps the United Kingdom Government are proposing to take to combat the problems of unemployment in the European Community.

Mr. Kenneth Clarke: I have, acting jointly with the Employment Ministers of Italy and Ireland, put forward a paper entitled "Employment Growth into the 1990s—a strategy for the Labour Market," which will be discussed at the EC Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers on Thursday 5 June. The paper, which has been agreed by the three member states concerned, sets out proposals for a labour market initiative aimed at combating the problem of unemployment in the European Community. The paper concentrates on four main areas where action might be taken: promoting enterprise and self-employment; flexible employment patterns and conditions of work; training; and long-term unemployment. It proposes a number of specific measures in each area as part of a programme of action which could be carried forward jointly by the European Commission and member states.

We shall now be looking to take this initiative forward as part of our presidency of the Community in the second half of this year.

I am placing a copy of the paper in the Library.

DUCHY OF LANCASTER

Magistrates

Mr. Hoyle asked the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster what is the number of magistrates who reside in each ward, on a ward for ward basis; and what percentage this is of the total magistrates on each bench in the petty sessional districts of Wigan, St. Helen's, Halton and Bury, respectively.

Mr. Tebbit [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. 55]: The figures requested are in the schedule. These do not include the figures for Halton justices. As these serve on the Cheshire commission of the peace, the ministerial responsibility for these falls to my noble Friend the Lord Chancellor.

Wigan Metropolitan District

Ward	*Petty Sessional Division*	*Leigh Bench*		*Makerfield Bench*		*Wigan Bench*	
		Number	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*	*Number*	*Per cent.*
Abram	Makerfield	—	—	7	8·8	—	—
Ashton-Golborne	Leigh/Makerfield	—	—	12	15·0	—	—
Aspull-Standish	Makerfield/Wigan	—	—	9	11·2	14	15·4
Atherton	Leigh	6	9·5	1	1·25	—	—
Bedford-Astley	Leigh	3	4·8	—	—	—	—
Beech Hill	Wigan	—	—	1	1·25	7	7·7
Bryn	Makerfield	—	—	8	10·0	—	—
Hindley	Makerfield	2	3·2	7	8·8	1	1·1
Hindley Green	Makerfield	1	1·6	5	6·2	—	—
Hindsford	Leigh	8	12·7	—	—	—	—
Hope Carr	Leigh	12	19·0	2	2·5	—	—
Ince	Makerfield	—	—	5	6·2	—	—
Langtree	Wigan	—	—	1	1·25	16	17·6
Leigh Central	Leigh	4	6·3	—	—	—	—
Leigh East	Leigh	4	6·3	—	—	—	—
Lightshaw	Makerfield	—	—	1	1·25	—	—
Newtown	Wigan	—	—	—	—	1	1·1
Norley	Wigan	—	—	—	—	1	1·1
Orrell	Makerfield	1	1·6	7	8·8	2	2·2
Swinley	Wigan	—	—	—	—	26	28·6
Tyldesley East	Leigh	6	9·5	—	—	—	—
Whelley	Wigan	—	—	2	2·5	5	5·5
Winstanley	Makerfield	1	1·6	3	3·8	3	3·3
Worsley Mesnes	Wigan	—	—	—	—	5	5·5

Ward	Petty Sessional Division	Leigh Bench		Makerfield Bench		Wigan Bench	
		Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.	Number	Per cent.
Outside Wigan Metropolitan District		15	23·8	9	11·2	10	11·0
TOTAL		63		80		91	

Bury Petty Sessional Division

	Magistrates	
	Number	Per cent.
Ramsbottom	8	8
Tottington	11	11
Elton	7	7
Moorside	9	9
Church	7	7
Redvales	5	5
East	2	2
Unsworth	6	6
Radcliffe (North)	9	9
Radcliffe (Central)	2	2
Radcliffe (South)	4	4
Pilkington Park	8	8
Besses	3	3
St. Mary's	5	5
Sedgley	7	7
Holyrood	4	4
Living out of area	2	2
TOTAL	99	

St. Helens Petty Sessional Division

	Magistrates	
	Number	Per cent.
Billinge and Seneley Green	5	5
Blackbrook	2	2
Broad Oak	2	2
Eccleston	26	25
Grange Park	10	9
Haydock	6	6
Marshalls Cross	5	5
Moss Bank	2	2
Newton East	4	4
Newton West	3	3
Parr and Hardshaw	0	0
Queens Park	1	1
Rainford	11	10
Rainhill	4	4
Sutton and Bold	1	1
Thatto Heath	1	1
West Sutton	2	2
Windle	10	9
Outside Area	10	9
TOTALS	105	

DEFENCE

Coopers Lane, Bramley

Mr. Hunter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what were the findings of the review of the requirements from his Department's housing in Coopers Lane, Bramley, near Basingstoke.

Mr. Lee: As I advised my hon. Friend in my letter of 22 January 1986 to him the programme for reducing the MOD's housing stock in the Aldermaston area had been deferred in order to provide accommodation for additional manpower needed for the nuclear defence programme. This decision includes the houses in Cooper's lane, Bramley.

It is too early yet to say whether the availability of MOD housing has proved to be a worthwhile recruitment incentive, but I am keeping the situation under review and will continue to bear in mind that the local housing authority would be interested in the short-term loan of houses in Cooper's Lane, whenever this can be arranged without detriment to the MOD's requirements.

Research and Development Contracts

Mr. Jackson asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) what firms received research and development contracts from the Ministry of Defence or its research establishments in 1983-84 in total *(a)* over £50 million, *(b)* between £25 million and £50 million, *(c)* between £10 million and £25 million, *(d)* between £5 million and £10 million and *(e)* between £1 million and £5 million;

(2) what expenditure for research and development was allocated in 1983-84 to those companies listed in annex G of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates", Cmnd. 9430-1, which were paid *(a)* between £50 million and £100 million for equipment in 1983-84, *(b)* between £25 million and £50 million for equipment in 1983-84, *(c)* between £10 million and £25 million for equipment in 1983-84 and *(d)* between £5 million and £10 million for equipment in 1983-84.

Mr. Freeman: As shown in table 3.2 of Part 2 of the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" (Cmnd 9763-II), which gives a comprehensive breakdown of MOD's research and development spending, the net total for extramural expenditure on research and development in 1983-84 was £1,378 million. The detailed information requested is, however, not readily available and could not be obtained without disproportionate effort.

Lines of Communication Agreement

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will publish the terms of the United States-United Kingdom lines of communication agreement; what powers under this agreement would be made available to United States armed forces in Britain in times of emergency; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: The United States-United Kingdom lines of communication arrangement which has been in existence since 1973 permits the United States to establish, operate and maintain lines of communication and logistic support facilities in the United Kingdom for use under emergency conditions as part of their NATO obligations. The arrangement itself is classified and cannot therefore be published. It makes no powers available to United States armed forces in the United Kingdom in times of emergency.

Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment Vessel

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the expected delivery date for the first auxiliary oiler replenishment vessel.

Mr. Lee: It is not our practice to give precise planned acceptance dates. I have nothing to add, therefore, to the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence on 24 April at column 434.

Vessel Costs

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the anticipated cost of (i) a type 23 frigate, (ii) a type 2400 submarine and (iii) an auxiliary oil replenishment vessel.

Mr. Lee: Precise costs are commercially confidential. However, the approximate cost (at 1985-86 price levels) are £115 million for the Type 23 frigate and £100 million for the Type 2400 submarine. These are the average prices we expect to pay for vessels in the first batch and include weapons and equipment fitted in each case, but exclude first of class costs which are covered by separate contracts.

For the AOR, we achieved a price slightly below our target of £130 million (at 1985-86 price levels) for the first ship. Because this vessel is being procured on a design and build contract, this includes design costs. We expect follow-on vessels to be significantly cheaper.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether, pursuant to the answer of the Lord Privy Seal of 22 May to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West, any of the documents listed as missing from the Public Records Office cited in the Prime Minister's answer of 19 May relate directly or indirectly to Dr. Kurt Waldheim.

Mr. Freeman: Pursuant to the reply of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister of 19 May to the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West, it is not the practice to disclose any part of the contents of records retained with the approval of the Lord Chancellor under the Public Records Acts.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) whether he has any information as to British prisoners of war interrogated by German Army group E while Dr. Kurt Waldheim was a senior staff officer in charge of interrogation other than those referred to him for inquiry by the Lord Privy Seal and as identified by the hon. and learned Member for Leicester, West on 22 May;

(2) whether he will complete his inquiry into the interrogation and subsequent fate of British prisoners of war by German Army group E, while Dr. Kurt Waldheim was senior staff officer in charge of interrogation, by 3 June;

(3) whether he will make a statement concerning the identities and fate of British prisoners of war interrogated by German Army group E while Dr. Kurt Waldheim was a senior staff officer in charge of interrogation and concerning Dr. Kurt Waldheim's part in such interrogation and, in particular, in the deaths and disappearance of such service men following their interrogation.

Mr. Freeman: The research into Ministry of Defence records continues as a matter of urgency, and it would not be appropriate to make any statement until it is completed. It has not, however, been possible to complete it by 3 June.

Captain Brian Courtney

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date Captain Brian Courtney of the Army police was discharged from the Army; and what was his last date of active service.

Mr. Freeman: Captain Courtney's last day of Army service was 23 July 1984, when he left on completion of a short service commission.

Corporal Peter Clark

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence, on what date the decision was taken to court-martial Corporal Peter Clark of 9 Signals Regiment.

Mr. Freeman: The application for Corporal Clark to be tried by court-martial was authorised on 31 August 1984.

Flight Sergeant Timothy Sheeham

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date Flight Sergeant Timothy Sheeham was discharged from the Royal Air Force.

Mr. Freeman: Flight Sergeant Sheehan completed a pensionable engagement and was discharged on 5 April 1985.

Cyprus (Security)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what date a representative of the United States Government was first informed of a breach of security in Cyprus in the spring of 1984.

Mr. Stanley: 24 February 1984.

United States Starlifter Aircraft

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence which bases in the United Kingdom have been visited by United States C-141 Starlifter strategic aircraft.

Mr. Stanley: C-141 transport aircraft of the United States Air Force have deployed regularly to airfields in the United Kingdom since the 1960s, but no detailed records are maintained of visits to individual bases.

Chemical Weapons

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence what discussions he had with his West German and American counterparts prior to the discussion by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation officials on 14 May, on the proposed crisis deployment of binary chemical weapons in the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Stanley: None. My right hon. Friend has however had general discussions concerning United States chemical weapon modernisation proposals with both the Defence Secretaries of the United States and of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence (1) by what means and when Her Majesty's Government indicated to the United States Government their willingness to consider the deployment of binary chemical weapons in Britain;

(2) if there have been discussions with the United States Government about which bases in the United Kingdom might be considered for the deployment of binary chemical weapons in time of crises; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Stanley: As my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister made clear to the House on 19 May at column *33*, the Government have received no requests from other North Atlantic Treaty Organisation countries for chemical weapons to be based in the United Kingdom. The United States Government have indicated that they have no plans to deploy binary chemical weapons in any foreign country in peacetime. To date we have not been consulted about possible contingency arrangements. If a request for deployment of United States binary chemical munitions were ever to be received it would be a matter for decision by the British Government of the day in the light of all the circumstances prevailing at the time. Any deployment to the United Kingdom at any time would require the consent of Her Majesty's Government.

Mr. Wareing asked the Secretary of State for Defence if Her Majesty's Government have received any representations from allied governments opposing their support for the adoption of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation force goal stipulating the need for the modernisation of the United States share of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation chemical weapons deterrent.

Mr. Stanley: No.

Nuclear Tests (Nevada)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the nuclear tests in Nevada in April attended by British observers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Freeman: No British observers were present at any nuclear test held in Nevada during April.

Spy Trial (Cyprus)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence why three service men acquitted at the end of the Cyprus spy trial have been discharged from the services.

Mr. Freeman: Five service men have so far been discharged from the services following the conclusion of the Cyprus secrets trial. Four left on completion of their engagement and one left at his own request. The remaining three service men are at present still serving in the Royal Air Force: the Air Force Board has been recommended to consider their discharge. The reasons for the recommendation have been given to the service men, who have made representations to the Air Force Board.

Cruise Missiles

Mr. Meadowcroft asked the Secretary of State for Defence what is the number of cruise missiles at United States Air Force, Greenham common, that are assigned to maintenance programmes; and whether these are included in the complement of 96 cruise missiles deployed at Greenham common as stated in the 1986 Defence Estimates, paragraph 320.

Mr. Stanley: It would not be in the public interest to publish detailed information on the number of cruise missiles undergoing maintenance at RAF Greenham common. However, I understand that the figure of 96 missiles quoted in the "Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986" includes those undergoing maintenance.

Turkey (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will make a statement on the purpose and outcome of the visit to Turkey made by the then Minister of State for Defence Procurement, the hon. Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont).

Mr. Freeman: The visit was designed to promote co-operation between British and Turkish manufacturers in order to assist Turkey in the modernisation of its defence industrial capability. The Turkish Government were assured of the British Government's support for this objective while the 20 or so British defence companies who took part were fully briefed on the opportunities in that country by the Turkish authorities and met a large number of potential industrial partners. I believe the visit was considered a valuable first step by all those who took part.

Research Contracts

Mr. Strang asked the Secretary of State for Defence what are the guidelines for awarding Ministry of Defence research contracts.

Mr. Freeman: Research contracts are awarded on broadly the same criteria as apply to other defence contracts, taking into account the requirement for the work and the ability of prospective contractors to carry it out.

Diego Garcia

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Secretary of State for Defence whether he will publish the terms of the lease between Her Majesty's Government and the United States Government for the use of Diego Garcia.

Mr. Eggar: I have been asked to reply.

There is no lease between the Governments of the United Kingdom and the United States for the use of Diego Garcia. Its use is based on exchanges of notes dated 30 December 1966 (published as Cmnd. 3231) and 25 February 1976 (published as Cmnd. 6413).

Homefield School, Christchurch (Rifle Range)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the reasons why he has given a 90 per cent. grant to the Homefield school, Christchurch, for a rifle range.

Mr. Freeman [*pursuant to his answer* 22 May 1986, c. *264*]: The provision of a minature rifle range for an open Army Cadet Force detachment at Homefield school near Christchurch, Dorset is the responsibility of eastern Wessex territorial auxiliary and volunteer reserve association who have obtained a site rent-free from the school for that purpose, and for the use of an air training corps squadron which is planned to be located there. My Department has made no grant to the school for the range, but has made a grant to the association of some 90 per cent. of the anticipated costs of the necessary works, with the school contributing just over 10 per cent. The range remains under TAVRA control.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Magistrates (Swindon)

Mr. Hoyle asked the Attorney-General how many of the magistrates of the petty sessional district of Swindon, on a ward by ward basis, reside in each ward; and what percentage this of the total number of magistrates on the bench.

The Attorney-General: I refer to the answer I gave the hon. Member on 19 May. The information is not available and could be ascertained only at disproportionate cost.

9 Signals Regiment

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General what were the terms of reference given to Superintendent Eames in connection with his visit to Cyprus to inquire into possible breaches of security involving 9 Signals Regiment; what limitations were imposed on his inquiries in respect of *(a)* the geographical area of his investigation and *(b)* the scope of his inquiries; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: Presumably the hon. Member is referring to the visit to Cyprus by three Metropolitan police officers in March and April 1984. The officers went to Cyprus in order to investigate, within the sovereign base area, allegations that service men in 9 Signals Regiment had committed offences under the Official Secrets Acts.

Secrets Trial (Cyprus)

Mr. Dalyell asked the Attorney-General, pursuant to the answer of 20 May, if he will state the reasons why no attempt was made to bring to the United Kingdom the Cypriot national alleged by the prosecution to be a KGB agent, to appear at the trial of service men from 9 Signals Regiment; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: It is not the practice to give reasons why individuals were, or were not, called to give evidence in a particular case.

PRIME MINISTER

Housing Support

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister if she will update her answer to the hon. Member for Kensington, 20 March 1985, *Official Report*, c. 505, showing Government support for housing, by category, in 1984-85 and 1985-86.

The Prime Minister: Following are the available estimates for 1983-84 to 1985-86:

	£ million		
	1983-84	*1984-85*	●*1985-86*
Assistance to supplementary benefit recipients:*			
Rents*	1,700	1,950	2,150
Rates*	700	850	950
Mortgage interest*	150	n.a.	n.a.
Rent rebates and allowances†	900	950	1,050
Rate rebates†	550	550	600
Mortgage interest relief‡	■2,750	3,500	4,750
Improvement and thermal insulation grants	■1,260	1,022	677
Central Government subsidies to LA, NT and HA housing ¶	■657	713	757
Rate fund contributions to LA housing	■634	584	632

Notes

* Certificated rent rebates and allowances, rate rebates and mortgage interest; including housing benefit supplements.

† Rebates and allowances to non-recipients of supplementary benefit. Including rate rebates under provisions of the Rating and Disabled Persons Act.

‡ MIRAS and other mortgage interest tax relief.

§ Grants paid to private owners and tenants.

¶ Including subsidies to Scottish Special Housing Association and Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

n.a. not available

● provisional

■ revised.

Rates

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister if she will update her answer to the hon. Member for Kensington, 12 February 1985, *Official Report*, column 102, giving the breakdown of revenues from local rates in the United Kingdom, in each year since 1978-79.

The Prime Minister: The following is the available information:

£ billion

	1978-79	*1979-80*	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*	*1986-87*
Domestic*	2·4	2·8	3·7	4·6	5·2	4·9	5·3	5·8	6·6
Commercial	1·7	1·9	2·5	3·0	3·4	3·6	3·9	4·3	4·8
Industrial†	1·1	1·2	1·6	1·9	2·1	2·2	2·2	2·3	2·6
Other	0·7	1·0	1·1	1·3	1·5	1·6	1·7	1·8	2·0
Total	5·9	6·9	8·9	10·8	12·2	12·3	13·1	14·2	16·0

* Net of domestic rate relief grant and rate rebates.

† Includes public utilities.

Benefits, Grants and Tax

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what were the costs for the United Kingdom as a whole in 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 of administering *(a)* social security benefits, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* personal social services, *(d)* Manpower Services Commission and Northern Ireland equivalent grants and allowances, *(e)* student grants and *(f)* income tax.

The Prime Minister: Information is not available in precisely the form requested; what is available is set out in the table:

Cost of administration of:—	*£ million United Kingdom*		
	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) Social Security benefits	1,608	1,616	1,784
(b) Housing benefit*	104	124	137
(c) Personal Social services†	409	420	n/a
(d) Manpower Services Commission and Northern Ireland equivalent schemes‡	275	276	299
(f) Income Tax‖	676	730	793

Figures for the costs of administering student grants are not available
n/a=not available
* Item *(b)* represents the cost to local authorities of administering housing benefit. The cost to central Government of administration of this benefit cannot be identified separately, and is included in item *(a)*.
† Costs to local authorities. Figures for 1985-86 are not yet available.
‡ The cost of administering all Manpower Services Commission programmes in Great Britain except the Skills Training Agency and Professional and Executive Recruitment and the costs of administering the Northern Ireland equivalent schemes to those administered by the Manpower Services Commission.
‖ The cost to central Government of the collection of income tax.

Tax Credits

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what would have been the net cost in 1985-86 of replacing all existing personal income tax allowances with tax-free, non means-tested tax credits or basic incomes of *(a)* £13, *(b)* £14, and *(c)* £15 per week per adult, aged 16 years and over, assuming reductions in all existing Department of Health and Social Security, Department of Employment and Department of Education and Science benefits and allowances to take account of the change.

The Prime Minister: The extra tax revenues raised from abolishing personal allowances and taxing income from the first pound in 1985-86 would have been £24 billion from persons who are currently on Inland Revenue records. There would be an additional yield from persons with small incomes below the tax threshold. The cost of tax credits of *(a)* £13, *(b)* £14 and *(c)* £15 a week for all residents aged 16 or over would have been *(a)* £30 billion, *(b)* £32½ billion and *(c)* £35 billion. The effect on benefits and allowances would depend on the precise way in which changes in income associated with the change to tax credits were taken into account.

School Meals

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Prime Minister what is her latest estimate of the cost for the United Kingdom as a whole of free school meals in *(a)* 1983-84, *(b)* 1984-85 and *(c)* 1985-86.

The Prime Minister: "Free" school meals are, of course, paid for through rates and taxes. The cost of providing them to pupils in the United Kingdom is estimated to have been £232 million in 1983-84 and £251 million in 1984-85. Both figures are in cash terms. It is not possible to give corresponding information for 1985-86.

Protea Coins

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister when she expects to have completed her consideration of whether the spirit of the undertaking at the Commonwealth Heads of Government conference in 1985 covers protea coins as well as Kruggerrands; and if she will consult Commonwealth authorities on this matter.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Member to a reply given by the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond and Barnes (Mr. Hanley) on 23 May at column *327*.

Select Committees

Mr. Mason asked the Prime Minister what were the main recommendations accepted by Her Majesty's Government from the reports of the 14 departmental Select Committees during the year March 1985 to March 1986.

The Prime Minister: The table shows the main recommendations accepted by Her Majesty's Government from the reports of the departmental Select Committees published between March 1985 and March 1986. In addition, during this period there have been numerous lesser recommendations which have been accepted and suggestions or statements made in reports which the Government have noted.

Agriculture Committee

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
Session 1985-86	
Sixth Report 1984-85: The United Kindom Government Agricultural Development and Advisory Services including Lower Input Farming	Community wide movement towards lower production. Government should press for such a reduction for commodities in structural surplus within the CAP. Different systems of production including those involving the use of Lower inputs, should be investigated by MAFF. The social cost of changes in Conservation policy should be borne by recognised sources of funding, including those from the European Community.

Defence

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
Session 1984-85	
First Report: The use of merchant shipping for defence purposes—June 1985	That the Statement on Defence Estimates should include manpower figures, for officers and ratings in the United Kingdom merchant fleet, in comparison with those for earlier years.

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Second Report: Security at Royal Ordnance Factories and nuclear bases —June 1985	That security and accounting procedures at all Royal Ordnance Factories should be subject to regular monitoring by Ministry of Defence and external auditors as appropriate. That physical security improvements at all ROFs should be completed as a matter of urgency.
Third Report: Defence commitments and resources and the Defence Estimates1985-86—June 1985	That a review of policy priorities should be included in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1986. That the question of British and wider European participation in Strategic Defence Initiative research required urgent consideration. That the Committee should be able to observe a demonstration of the enhancements to 5 Airborne Brigade. That the tables in Volume 2 of future Statements on the Defence Estimates should present constant-price information adjusted for carry-forward. That more examples should be provided of the savings achieved through competition procurement than the one example given in the Statement on the Defence Estimates 1985.
Fourth Report: The future of the Royal Dockyards—July 1985	That the Government should not decide in favour of introducing commercial management to the Royal Dockyards unless they were confident that the objections discussed in the Committee's report could be satisfactorily met and that the advantages of a Trading Fund were outweighed by those of commercial management.
Fifth Report: The appointment and objectives of the Chief of Defence Procurement—July 1985	That the Secretary of State for Defence should inform the Committee of his views on the extension or otherwise, beyond the twelve month period originally envisaged, of the arrangements designed to prevent a conflict of interest between Mr. Levene's position as Chief of Defence Procurement and his former role as Chairman of United Scientific Holdings Ltd., and that the House should be informed of the Secretary of State's decision regarding this matter once taken.
Sixth Report: The Trident programme—July 1985	That the published anual revised cost estimate of the Trident programme should be only a part of a regular and detailed progress report on the state of the programme as a whole.
Session 1985-86	
First Report: Further observations on the future of the dockyards—December 1985	That the Government should approach the debates on the Dockyard Services Bill with an open mind and be prepared to consider opinions expressed in such debates.

Employment

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	
Fourth Report: The Manpower Service Commission's Corporate Plan 1985-89—March 1985	There should be general study of the funding for training purposes.

Energy

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	
Seventh Report: Gas Depletion—July 1985	The Government must declare a policy on gas imports and exports. The fiscal regime should be stable and should not distort development patterns. The Department of Energy to investigate the Dutch statistical method used to assess the level of gas reserves.
Eighth Report: The EEO—November 1985	The commitment to effective use of taxpayers' money through efficient energy management must be universal through all Departments of State. The opportunities which Energy Efficiency Year will offer for putting across the energy efficiency message in the domestic sector must not be lost. The first priority for the next year must be development and public announcement of the EEO's priorities and the logic behind them. Inside Government, energy efficiency should not be regarded as someone else's concern and there should be no complacency that it is all a matter to be sorted out by the Property Services Agency or the EEO.
Session 1985-86	
First Report: Regulation of the Gas Industry— February 1986	The Gas Consumers Council should be given explicit authority by legislation to safeguard the interests of consumers on such matters as safety, installation, servicing and repair and appliance quality and performance.

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
	The right of appeal (against transmission tariffs and terms for the supply of back-up gas) should be defined in the Gas Bill.
	An assurance that Standing Charges are taken into account in the price formula.
	Directions made by the Secretary of State to the Director of OFGAS to be laid before Parliament.

Environment

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1985-86	
First Report: Radioactive Waste—March 1986.	[*Note:* The Government has made only an interim response to this Report: its final response is still being considered.]
	Classification of radioactive waste should be modified. [Partially accepted].
	Any disposal methods chosen should reduce the "dilute and disperse element of their design" to be as small as technically possible.
	The Drigg radioactive waste disposal site in the UK is not an acceptable model for future sites.
	Near surface disposal facilities should only be acceptable for short-lived low level waste and must be engineered on a complete containment basis.
	Serious consideration should be given to the issue of compensation to those affected by the establishment of radioactive waste disposal facilities.
	Any future site should have a strong and widely representative local liaison committee, with greater power to influence decisions than is presently the case. [Partially accepted].
	The Nuclear Installations Inspectorate should be more forward looking in its licensing role and should put in hand a generic safety study of solid waste disposal sites at an early date — to be published in advance of any public inquiry into such sites. [Partially accepted].
	The industry, through a body like NIREX should retain executive responsibility for disposal of the waste in accordance with the "polluter pays" principle.
Third Report: DOE main estimates 1985-86—June 1985	The situation whereby dog licences cost more to issue than they raise in revenue should be ended.
	Specific statutory authority should be sought for grants to London Zoo and certain other bodies.
	The effectiveness of policy on gypsy sites should be reviewed.
	Steps should be taken to discourage applications for urban programme grant which are unlikely to succeed.
	A full evaluation should be made of experience with the Liverpool International Garden Festival.
	Means of reducing the administrative costs of the London Docklands Development Corporation should be explored.
Fourth Report: PSA Main Estimates 1985-86—June 1985	PSA should delegate to departments more operational and financial responsibility for the maintenance of their own buildings.
	PSA should ensure that common standards are applied to the maintenance work for which PSA retains responsibility.
	PSA should provide the Environment Committee with fuller and clearer reasons for variations in the original and current costs of projects, and, wherever possible, avoid changes in the design and construction stages.
	There should be a review of the economies achieved by the Property Repayment Services system and of the way that PSA accounts for expenditure and receipts including the possibility of producing a civil accommodation account on commercial lines.

Foreign Affairs

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	
Second Report: Famine in Africa—April 1985	It is important that United Kingdom Embassy staff should have the training to inform themselves on the food situation in countries where food supply is a problem.
	Every effort must be made to ensure that aid distribution is properly monitored and checked.
	It must be a priority to get relief supplies through as urgently as possible.
	Short-term and long-term needs should be considered together.
	A continued commitment to the needs of African countries will be needed for many years.
	Support in general for the ODA's approach of channelling a sizeable part of the relief effort through voluntary and international agencies.

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
	Support for Government's broad approach on food aid policy.
	Support for the increasing concentration of the United Kingdom bilateral programme.
Fourth Report: Overseas Programme Expenditure 1985-86—June 1985	A review should be carried out on the way the FCO is charged by the British Airports Authority for VIP lounges.
	Government treatment of overseas students should be reviewed.

Home Affairs

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	
Third Report: Refugees and Asylum, with special reference to the Vietnamese—April 1985.	Family reunion criteria should be relaxed in respect of Vietnamese in camps in countries of temporary asylum.
	A considerable degree of Ministerial discretion should be retained in the granting of family reunion applications.
	Britain's willingness to relax its family reunion criteria for Vietnamese in camps in countries of temporary asylum should be used as a bargaining counter to attract offers of additional resettlement places from other countries.
	The aim of such negotiation should be to reduce drastically the size of Hong Kong Vietnamese refugee population and to resettle all those whose stay in camps has been prolonged.
	The FCO should make resolution of Hong Kong's Vietnamese refugee problem a major priority in its dealings with foreign governments.
	A Joint Working Group consisting of Home Office, MSC and refugee agency representatives should be established to assess the type and scale of assistance needed in respect of training and employment and to press for it it to be provided.
	The MSC should be permitted to relax its eligibility criteria in respect of the Vietnamese, particularly for YTS, and should ensure that the intended expansion of the Community Programme enables many more Vietnamese to find employment.
	The Home Office (and the Department of Environment) should examine with the refugee agencies and local authorities what sort of service the agencies could provide for authorities with a few Vietnamese and how such services should be paid for.
	The scale of the refugee agencies' Vietnamese Programme should be increased, and its funding should be continued for as long as necessary to achieve its objectives.
	In normal circumstances, asylum seekers at ports of entry who would otherwise be detained should be granted temporary admission to a refugee hostel or other suitable and accepted accommodation.
	Various recommendations on the staffing of the Home Office refugee unit and the monitoring of progress on cases have been broadly accepted.
	There should be a presumption in favour of giving permanent settlement to those with exceptional leave to remain after seven years.
	Statistics relating to immigration and those relating to the granting of asylum should be clearly separated if possible in separate documents.
Fifth Report: Misuse of Hard Drugs (Interim Report)—May 1985.	There should be intensified law enforcement effort against drug trafficking.
	The penalty for systematic dealing in hard drugs should be no less than the penalty for premeditated murder.
	The Government should do all it can to assist in crop eradication and substitution schemes in drug producer countries.
	The civil and criminal law of the United Kingdom should be amended to provide for the seizure and forfeiture of assets connected with drug trafficking.
	Immediate steps should be taken to reform the laws of banking to remove the secrecy which now protects the international drug traffickers and makes the "laundering" of their money easy.
Sixth Report: Immigration and Nationality Department (IND) of the Home Office—June 1985.	A continuing effort should be made to increase the number of immigration officers from ethnic minorities.
	IND should continue and expand its programme of producing leaflets in minority languages, after appropriate consultation.
	The possibility of extending charging for certain of the department's services should be considered when an opportunity for legislation arises.
	Permanent arrangements should be made for independent inspection of the Immigration Service's detention facilities.
First Report: Session 1985-86 Misuse of Hard Drugs—March 1986.	There should be statutory protection for bankers who volunteer information to the authorities about their clients' finances when these seem to be connected with drug trafficking.

Scottish Affairs

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
	Session 1984-85
Second Report: Highlands and Islands Development Board (HIDB)—March 1985	To raise financial limit for any one social project.
	HIDB should not adopt, in public, an independent stance on matters of public controversy.
	No change required in HIDB's powers of compulsory purchase of land.
	HIDB should produce a clear statement of objectives for all projects carried out at its own hand—costs and performance should be assessed against these objectives.
	HIDB members should have business and commercial experience and should be appointed for 5 years initially.
	HIDB must remain a source of practical support and guidance on all economic activities.
	HIDB's policy of decentralising to local offices to be supported.
	Staff performance indicators should be published in HIDB's Annual Report.
	HIDB should explore the possibility of extending its co-operative arrangements with outside organisations.
	Crofter's Commission's Livestock Loan Scheme to be reviewed.
	No diminution in the functions of either HIDB or Sea Fish Industry Authority.
	Responsibility for supporting tourism development projects should be retained by HIDB.
	Good relations and co-operation between HIDB and the Nature Conservancy Council should be a continuing priority.
	Rahory Deer Farm should not be sold and the deer farming experiment should continue.
	Targets should be set for returns on factory accommodation.
	Greater private sector involvement in providing finance for projects within the Board's area.
	Consideration should be given to extending HIDB's boundary into certain adjoining areas.
	Session 1985-86
Second Report: Fisheries Protection—March 1986	Fishery Protection Vessel Norna should be replaced.
	RAF Nimrods should be replaced by a civil aircraft.
	Clearer numbering and marking of fishing vessels is required.
	The Government continue to oppose any relaxation regarding 10 per cent. by-catch in pout fishery.
	Compulsory calibration of refrigerated sea-water tanks would aid monitoring of pelagic catches.
	EC Fishery Inspectors complement should be increased.
	The Government should continue to ensure that United Kingdom quotas are reserved for bona fide United Kingdom fishermen.
	DAFs keep a close watch on inshore fisheries to ascertain the effect on Salmon fishing.

Social Services

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendation Accepted*
	Session 1984-85
Third Report: UGC Cuts and Medical Services Report—May 1985	The NHS should not be expected to engage in widespread funding of medical academic posts nor to replace many lost university posts with newly created NHS posts.
	The Government should continue to monitor the effects of the reductions in academic funding on shortage and new specialities, in particular on pathology.
	Continued monitoring of the spread of clinical academic job losses across grades.
	The Department, the DES and the UGC together examine the effect of UGC funding reductions on clinical dental services.
Fourth Report: Misuse of Drugs—June 1985	National guidelines for developing a framework of services for drug misusers should be established.
	A National Drug Advisory Service should be established.
	An immediate, sizeable and recurring injection of additional money is needed for services for drug misuers.

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendation Accepted
Fifth Report: Medical Education Follow up to 1981 Report — June 1985	Further consideration should be given to regularising the terms and conditions of those individuals who have been in training posts for many years without the prospect of becoming consultants. Continued monitoring by the Department of the clinical assistant grade to ensure that clinical assistant posts are not used as a substitute for consultant expansion. A thorough local examination of the possibilities of extending cross-over as a means of further reducing onerous rotas [of junior hospital doctors].
Sixth Report: Public Expenditure on the Social Services—July 1985	The detailed results of the monitoring exercise on savings actually achieved from the introduction of the limited list be laid before Parliament. The estimated proportion of Family Practitioner Services expenditure met from related charges be published in each year's Public Expenditure White Paper. Provision be made for the evaluation of the latest central initiative, "Helping the Community to Care" and that the results of other evaluations of central initiatives be made available to Parliament as they become available. The Estimates should henceforth include brief explanatory notes on substantial real increases from the previous year's total provision in subhead or subheads. The Department investigate in detail the reasons for the growing number of invalidity beneficiaries.
Seventh Report: The Government's Green Paper 'Reform of Social Security'—July 1985	The Government and the House allow the Department a high degree of financial flexibility with regard to the Social Fund for at least the first few years while national and local needs are established. The White Paper should include plans for monitoring the progress of the Social Fund once it is implemented. The structure of the Social Fund should be sufficiently flexible to cover other areas of need wherever they might be identified: it must not be enclosed in a legislative straitjacket. The automatic payment under entitlement of the new maternity grant should be paid out of a separate and non cash-limited fund, and payments for the expenses of maternity out of the Social Fund must recognise the real costs of maternity. [Partially accepted]. Claimants under the age of 25 with children should receive the full adult rate of income support. The White Paper contain a fuller explanation of the Government's proposals for increasing budgeting help through loans. The Department put forward in the White Paper proposals for some sort of review mechanism. The proposed changes in the assessment procedure be reconsidered in the White Paper and any proposals made be fully supported by evidence and argument. Ministers seriously reconsider the proposal for a combined rent and rates taper.
Session 1985-86	
Second Report: Resettlement Units and Re-establishment Centres—February 1986.	In developing new provision for the itinerant homeless, the Department make every effort to ensure that those staff whose skills are not suitable for re-employment elsewhere in the Department can be offered the opportunity of transfer to positions in the replacement facilities provided by local authorities or voluntary organisations. The Government issue immediate guidance to local authorities and voluntary organisations clarifying how, and to what extent, replacement provision will be funded, with regard to both capital and revenue. The Secretary of State postpone closure of the restablishment centres until he can demonstrate that the MSC is able to fill the gap that their closure may create.

Trade and Industry

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	
Third Report: Trade with China—July 1985	Provision of soft loans where necessary to secure competitiveness of UK exporters.

Transport

Committee, Session, Report and Date	Main Recommendations Accepted
Session 1984-85	

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
Fourth Report: Transport Aspects of the 1985 Public Expenditure White Paper—March and July 1985	The Government agreed: to consider how to include in the White Paper more information on measurement of output against objectives; in particular for road schemes built and under construction, and on benefits from local roads; that schemes which appear in Estimates will continue to be included in the White Paper until completed. (The Department will continue to include schemes over £25 million which are firmly committed but for which no expenditure is expected in expenditure year. Additional information on contracts will be provided with the Supply Estimates); the importance of preserving the real level of investment in National Roads Programme and maintaining present level of output subject to overall public expenditure constraints. (Extra funds for National Roads Programme have been made available in PES.); that there is a need to promote efficient planning of capital projects; this will be taken into account in the current review of the whole system for controlling local authority capital expenditure; to encourage and help local authorities to give road maintenance high priority in 1986-87.
Fifth Report: Marine Pilotage—August 1985	The Government accepted: that the Danish system of auxiliary and permanent auxiliary pilots or variations thereof be considered for this country; that it should be for future pilotage authorities to set the criteria for the issue of certificates but that the criteria should pay due regard to the high standard of expertise and safety awareness needed to navigate in confined waters; that separate pilotage accounts should continue to be made.

Treasury and Civil Service

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
Session 1985-86	
Third Report: The Government Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89 —February 1986	Charts showing total civil service manpower and targets for future years and civil service manpower by Departments should be included in future [Public Expenditure] White Papers. [Partially accepted]. Reference to reductions together with an explanation of underlying policy and other considerations . . . should be included in Volume 1. [Partially accepted]. Give urgent consideration to how it can assist local authorities to plan ahead with greater certainty. [Accepted in principle]. A table analysing gross and net interest payments be included again in future White Papers. The goods and services category in the economic category analysis tables should be divided into capital and current spending.

Welsh Affairs

Committee, Session, Report and Date	*Main Recommendations Accepted*
Session 1985-86	
First Report: Coastal Sewage Pollution in Wales—December 1985	The Welsh Office should commission surveys of coastal water quality at periodic intervals from bodies independent of the Welsh Water Authority (WWA), and publish the results. [Partially accepted]. Private discharges to coastal waters should be catalogued by the WWA and when full implementation of COPA 1974 permits their regulation, consent procedures should ensure they do not discharge un-disintegrated faecal material to recreational areas. Progress should also be made in eliminating such discharges in other coastal waters. The WWA should accelerate its policy of replacing those antiquated crude sewage outfalls which deposit human excrement in recreational waters with carefully sited long sea outfalls discharging screened macerated effluents. Urgent attention should be given to maintenance and repair of existing sewage outfalls. Research should be carried out by a body such as the Water Research Centre to determine the fate of viruses discharged to the sea in sewage and sufficient resources to support the work should be allocated by the Government There should be a total exclusion of faecal solids from bathing waters and compliance with the E Coli standard of the EEC Directive. The environmental health officers of the ADC should increase their efforts to make the public aware of the dangers of eating shellfish that have not been properly treated and purified The WWA should retain its virological facility and encourage its expansion as a reference centre for the water industry, financed by contractual work from other water authorities. The necessary capital should be made available to allow the tidal water schemes to be carried out in order of priority.

Mr. Mason asked the Prime Minister what was the cost to Her Majesty's Government of providing briefing material and other services in connection with the activities of the 14 departmental select committees of the House of Commons during the financial year 1985-86.

The Prime Minister: A study was carried out in 1980-81 of the work of the departmental Select Committees, which costed the time spent by Departments on this work; a copy of this study was placed in the Library on 10 December 1982. It would not be possible to update this information for the financial year 1985-86 without an extensive new study at disproportionate cost; in general, however, the work occasioned by departmental Select Committees in 1985-86 has not changed markedly from the year on which the 1980-81 study was based.

Israel (Visit)

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will report on the purpose and outcome of her recent visit to the state of Israel.

Mr. Parry asked the Prime Minister if she will make a statement on her visit to Israel.

The Prime Minister: I held friendly and wide-ranging talks with the Israeli Government and with leading Palestinians from the occupied territories. I underlined the importance we attach to the search for middle east peace and our readiness to help if we can.

Dr. Kurt Waldheim

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Prime Minister (1) whether the search of Ministry of Defence records in connection with the allegations relating to Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities has yet yielded information which would lead Her Majesty's Government to seek from the United Nations copies of all documents in their possession relating to those activities; and if she will make a further statement;

(2) if she will make it her policy to make a statement to the House before 8 June on the interim results of the search of military records of the Ministry of Defence in connection with Dr. Kurt Waldheim's wartime activities.

The Prime Minister: The search of Ministry of Defence records is continuing. It is being given priority. But equally it must be thorough and cannot be tied to a particular deadline. It would be inappropriate to comment, or to consider seeking access to United Nations files, until the search is completed.

Young People

Mr. Lawler asked the Prime Minister what initiatives the Government have taken to further the interests of young people.

The Prime Minister: In education there has been an increase of 18 per cent. in real terms in spending per pupil between 1979-80 and 1984-85. This has enabled the average size of one-teacher classes between 1979 and 1985 to be reduced from 25·9 to 24·9 in primary and from 21 to 20·4 in secondary. In January 1985, the overall pupil-teacher ratio was at a best ever level of 17·8:1. More young children than ever before are receiving nursery education — an increase from 210,000 to 267,000 between 1979 and 1985—and the proportion of young people continuing their education beyond compulsory school age has gone up from 40 to 46 per cent. over the same period. The number of students going into higher education has increased by 78,000 to its highest level—a record proportion of a record age cohort. The number of students on science and engineering courses has increased by 30 per cent. The engineering and technology programme launched by the Secretary of State for Education and Science last year will provide a further 5,000 university and polytechnic places in these subjects. In addition, we are placing greater emphasis on the achievements of higher standards.

Our White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) set out a range of initiatives to improve standards in schools: we are now taking vigorous action to put these into effect. Examination results have shown a welcome improvement. The number of students leaving school with no qualifications has fallen to below 10 per cent. High priority is being placed on all young people in schools having a broad and balanced education including the opportunity of following a more relevant and practical curriculum: under the technical and vocational education initiatives which started in 1983, and which will involve over 100,000 young people, pilot projects run by education authorities are exploring ways of organising the technical and vocational education of students of all abilities in the 14 to 18 range. In aggregate this will cost £250 million over nine years. In addition, first year enrolments are exceeding expectation for the new certificate of pre-vocational education designed for 16-year-olds remaining in full-time education who are not taking a specific academic or vocational course. In addition, we are promoting the use of computers and information technology in schools through the new micro-electronics education support unit, enhanced teacher training, and through the software in schools scheme. Government expenditure this year on new technology in schools will be some £6 million. We are also promoting better links between industry and education through a variety of projects. The current scheme for Industry Year, to encourage every school to have a mini-enterprise, is an example.

We are acting to improve the quality of teaching. We are promoting more purposeful in-service training and the introduction of new appraisal arrangements. And we have offered substantial additional resources for school teachers' pay, beyond the recent increases, in return for a bargain on duties, appraisal and career development and on a new salary structure which will better reward responsibility, leadership and commitment.

In the field of youth training, the training scheme (YTS) has already helped one million young people and will now provide two years of high quality training and planned work experience for 16-year-old school leavers, and one year for 17-year-old leavers. It will place particular emphasis on quality and occupational relevance; all entrants will have the chance to gain a recognised vocational qualification or credit towards one.

Other measures to enhance the employment prospects of young people include the new workers scheme announced in this year's Budget; the job release scheme; the community programme; and community industry. Our reforms of the wages council system will also make it easier for young people to find work at a rate of pay which they will accept and employers can afford.

For the youth service, we have established a new youth service unit within the Department of Education and Science; published the first circular on youth service policy generally for many years; and established a new national advisory council for the youth service. Grants payable to national voluntary youth organisations for headquarters expenditure have also been substantially increased in total.

The Government have developed a comprehensive strategy for tackling all aspects of drug misuse including an information and education campaign, the appointment of prevention co-ordinators in each local education authority and the expansion of treatment and rehabilitation services. A £1 million pilot campaign to deter teenagers from smoking has also been launched.

In the field of sports and recreation, increased grant to the Sports Council has supported initiatives specifically aimed at encouraging young people to take part in sport and recreation. The Council's national action sport programme, jointly funded by the Manpower Services Commission, will employ over 1,000 sports leaders to encourage young people to take up sport.

Our policies to encourage home ownership have benefited young people and particularly first-time buyers. This country has a very high proportion of owner-occupation in the younger age categories: some 25 per cent. of householders under 25 are owner-occupiers—the highest proportion in Europe.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for 3 June.

Mr. Greenway asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 3 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today.

Parking Fines

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Prime Minister which Department is responsible for paying parking fines on behalf of the Home Office.

Mr. Hurd: I have been asked to reply.

The Home Office policy on the payment of parking fines is based on section 80 of the Road Traffic Regulations 1967 which makes provision for a fixed penalty to be imposed on a person who commits an offence. In the light of this, the payment of such penalties is considered to be the responsibility of the person who was in charge of the vehicle at the time the offence was committed.

It is recognised however, that the offence could have been committed in extenuating circumstances and to protect the interests of the individual in such cases, consideration can be given to the payment of an ex gratia award equal to the amount of the penalty. These payments would be made from Home Office funds. Three such payments have been made in the past 12 months.

TRANSPORT

Channel Tunnel

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received since the change in the Government of France concerning continuing support for the all-rail Channel tunnel link.

Mr. David Mitchell: My right hon. Friend received several representations after the time of the change in the Government of France, including confirmation from the new French Government of their strong support for the chosen Channel tunnel project.

Ticketing Machines

Mr. Faulds asked the Secretary of State for Transport, pursuant to the answer of 19 May, *Official Report*, column 27, concerning underground ticketing machines, what consideration was given by his Department, prior to the granting of approval for the new system as to the effects of the new system on *(a)* the incidence of machines not providing the correct change and *(b)* the sums of money wrongly retained from travellers as a result of machines not giving the correct change.

Mr. David Mitchell: A major advantage of the new underground ticketing system is that the passenger-operated ticket-issuing machines will be an integral part of the booking office. They will be far more easily serviced by the booking office staff than the existing isolated machines. This was taken into account in our assessment of LRT's investment proposal.

BREL (Orders)

Mr. Eastham asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will give details of the value and percentage of total British Rail Engineering Ltd. orders which have been placed abroad in each of the last three years, giving a breakdown between the countries involved.

Mr. David Mitchell: British Rail's policy is to buy British whenever the product and price are right. In the years 1983 to 1985 British Rail Engineering Ltd. placed about 95 per cent. by value of its orders with British suppliers — and most of the remainder via United Kingdom-based companies. Details of individual orders are a management matter for BREL, and I understand that a breakdown by country could not be provided except at disproportionate cost.

Drink-driving Campaign

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what account he took of the passage of relevant information to police traffic officers in designing the current drink-driving campaign; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he has received representations from the Association of Chief Police Officers or individual chief officers on the implications for the level of enforcement of the drink-driving law of the current drink-driving campaign.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: As I explained in answer to my hon. Friend's questions on 28 April and 9 May, the current focus on drinking and driving was planned in close

consultation with representatives of the traffic committee of the Association of Chief Police Officers. Consultation began early in the year and provided an opportunity to take account of police views on the implications for enforcement and other relevant aspects.

Detailed information about the campaign was provided to all police forces by the Department on 17 April. I understand information was also made available by the traffic committee.

Road Projects (Northern Region)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether he will list the major road construction or improvement projects carried out in the northern region in each year since 1979 together with an estimate of the cost of each at current prices.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The major trunk road schemes carried out in the northern region since 1979 and the cost of each are listed. Further schemes are in preparation to start in the next two years at an estimated cost of an additional £91 million.

		Estimated Cost £ million (May 1986 Prices)
1980	A1 Felton Bypass	4·38
1981	A66 Stockton-Thornaby Bypass	20·93
1982	A19 Billingham Bypass	22·09
1983	A66 Bowes Bypass	9·25
	A1 Berwick Bypass	11·25
	A1 Belford Bypass	4·12
	A69 Bardon Mill Diversion	2·26
1985	A69 Greenhead Diversion	3·79
	A1 Alnwick Bypass Stage II	5·56
	A66 Darlington Bypass	8·79
	A69 Team Valley Grade Separated Junction	2·92
1986	A69 Cross Lane Interchange Phases I and II	2·00

In addition to the expenditure listed, about £10·4 million has been spent between 1979 and 1986 on small improvement schemes.

Woolwich Ferry

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Transport (1) if he will state the dates since 1 April when the Woolwich free ferry was not operating as planned together with the nature and period of the respective delays;

(2) if he is satisfied with the level of performance of the Woolwich free ferry service since 1 April; if he will investigate the reasons for reduction or cessation of service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I understand there have been seven days with no service and 34 days with some disruption due to labour difficulties or mechanical failure.

As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Woolwich (Mr. Cartwright) on 28 April at column *311*, Greenwich borough council is operating the Woolwich ferry as our agent and questions on its day-to-day operation should be addressed to the council.

Beckton and Tower Hill (Trunk Road)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for a new trunk road between Beckton and Tower hill.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: None. A significant part of the A13 became a trunk road on 1 April, as a basis for improvements relating to docklands access. There are no plans to extend trunking as far as Tower hill.

British Airways and KLM (Agreement)

Mr. Steen asked the Secretary of State for Transport if, in view of the decision of the European Court of Justice on 30 April, he will now declare null and void the bilateral tariff and pooling agreement concluded by British Airways and KLM on the Heathrow to Amsterdam route in 1984; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Michael Spicer: The European Court of Justice has made it clear that inter-airline agreements cannot automatically be regarded as contrary to article 85(1) of the treaty of Rome, but must be scrutinised and ruled upon to determine their validity. This process can be carried out either under a Council regulation, or by individual member states, or by the Commission. The Government are now considering how best to act in the light of this judgment.

Stubbings Bypass

Dr. Glyn asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to announce his decision on the A423 Stubbings bypass following the public inquiry in September 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The inspector's report is expected shortly.

A decision should not be expected before the autumn.

Road Fill

Mr. Heddle asked the Secretary of State for Transport when he proposes to publish the findings of the inter-departmental committee's report on the use of waste material for road fill.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: I have today published this report in full, so that the background to the findings is clearly understood. The report concluded that the experimental dual tendering arrangements have been ineffective in increasing the use of material for road fill. Given that road fill can at best make only a very small contribution to reducing the stock of waste material, it argues that it is better to abandon dual tendering and place greater reliance on competitive pricing of waste material than to retain dual tendering in a modified form. Procedures to ensure better information about sources of waste material should be provided to tenderers so that these sources are not overlooked. Before the Government decide whether to accept these conclusions, I am consulting interested organisations and expect to receive their comments by 25 July 1986.

Copies of the report have been placed in the House of Commons Library.

TRANSPORT

Trailers (Speed Limits)

Mr. Powley asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has yet decided on regulations to amend the speed limits for vehicles towing trailers; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: My right hon. Friend has today laid regulations amending the speed limits for vehicles towing trailers. These, if approved by Parliament, will come into effect within the next two months.

The main change is to increase, from 50 mph to 60 mph, the limit for cars and light vans towing trailers on dual carriageways and motorways. The limits for these vehicles towing trailers will then be 10 mph below the national road speed limits.

I am satisfied that these new limits allow for safe maximum speeds in normal conditions and that they will not have an adverse effect on road safety.

Trunk Roads (Mobile Refreshment Vans)

Mr. Conway asked the Secretary of State for Transport what representations he has received on the placement of unauthorised signs advertising mobile refreshment vans in trunk road laybys.

Mr. Peter Bottomley [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *27*]: I have received in the last three months two letters from hon. Friends on behalf of constituents who have expressed concern about such signs.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Teaching Costs

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what information he has on the allocation for teaching costs from education and library boards for each of the further education colleges in Northern Ireland at present and for each of the past three years.

Dr. Mawhinney: The education and library boards meet directly the cost of employing part-time lecturers and the additional hours of full-time lecturers. The costs for each college are given in the following table.

College	*1983-84 £000's*	*1984-85 £000's*	*1985-86 £000's*
Belfast Education & Library Board			
College of Business Studies	209	225	200
College of Technology	298	338	240
Rupert Stanley College	447	505	510
North-Eastern Education & Library Board			
Antrim Technical College	43	44	48
Ballymena Technical College	95	118	122
Coleraine Technical College	86	78	87
Larne Technical College	51	44	36
Magherafelt College of Further Education	29	37	39
Newtownabbey Technical College	168	199	226
North Antrim College of Further Education	55	64	51
NI Hotel and Catering College	19	23	25
South-Eastern Education & Library Board			
Castlereagh College of Further Education	73	99	128
Down College of Further Education	92	125	149
Lisburn College of Further Education	186	168	160
Newcastle College of Further Education	34	54	78
North Down College of Further Education	189	274	230
Southern Education & Library Board			
Armagh College of Further Education	111	139	174
Banbridge College of Further Education	72	68	64
East Tyrone Further Education Area	95	112	93
Lurgan College of Further Education	59	96	107
Newry/Kilkeel Further Education Area	190	202	245
Portadown College of Further Education	70	93	89
Western Education & Library Board			
Fermanagh College of Further Education	82	86	82
Limavady Technical College	87	90	114
North-West College of Technology	351	351	431
Omagh Technical College	78	91	109

Note: Figures for 1986-87 are not available.

Further Education Colleges

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what information he has on the full-time staff: Burnham unit ratio for each further education college in Northern Ireland;

(2) what information he has on the part-time staff: Burnham unit ratio for each further education college in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information requested is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the numbers of long-term unemployed in the Province at the latest date and the comparable figures for May 1979; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: At 10 April 1986, 60,868 claimants had been continuously unemployed for more than one year in Northern Ireland. At April 1979 (figures for May are not available), 19,916 unemployed people had been registered at employment service jobmarkets for more than one year.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the level of youth unemployment in the Province at the latest date; and what were the figures for May 1979.

Dr. Boyson: At 10 April 1986, 47,116 unemployment claimants in Northern Ireland were under 25 years old. At April 1979 (figures for May are not available), 22,469 unemployed people aged under 25 were registered at employment service jobmarkets in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many job vacancies there were in the Province at the latest date; and what was the figure for May 1979.

Dr. Boyson: At 4 April 1985 there were 2,206 unfilled vacancies for adults and 576 for young people (under age 18) at employment service jobmarkets in Northern Ireland. At May 1979 there were 1,558 unfilled vacancies for adults and 306 for young people.

Job Creation

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce long-term unemployment in the Province.

Dr. Boyson: On 26 March I announced a package of enterprise and employment measures for Northern Ireland, designed to reduce long-term unemployment. These include: individual in-depth counselling interviews; short restart courses; a £20 weekly jobstart allowance; and an extra 325 job places available in the Enterprise Ulster and Action for Community Employment schemes.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to reduce youth unemployment in the Province.

Dr. Boyson: A great deal is being done in Northern Ireland through community employment schemes, assistance to those wanting to start their own business, and training schemes, including the youth training programme. This will continue. In addition, I announced in March the introduction of a new workers scheme which gives employers incentives to take on 18 to 20-year-olds at realistic wages. The employment prospects of young people will also be improved by legislation which will be brought forward to take under-21s out of the scope of wages councils.

Intimidation

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing how many acts of intimidation have been reported against members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve full-time and the Royal Ulster Constabulary Reserve part-time, while they were off duty, detailing specifically *(a)* whether these aspects involved petrol bombs, stonings, shootings, *(b)* if property was damaged and to what extent, *(c)* whether people were injured, and how severe those injuries were, *(d)* where the incidents took place and *(e)* whether they were during the day or the night, since 1 March.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 6 May 1986, c. *37*]: Information in the precise form requested is not readily available from existing records and could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Such information as is available however indicates that during the period 1 March to 7 May 1985 there were 368 incidents of intimidation involving officers of the Royal Ulster Constabularly, ex-members and police families. Of these, 284 were attacks on or intimidation at homes; 116 involved regular members of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, 115 involved members of the full-time Reserve and the remaining 53 involved members of the part-time Reserve. The attacks included 39 petrol bombings, 140 stonings and 11 shootings. Fortunately few injuries, none serious, have resulted from these despicable acts.

Fatalities

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the total number of deaths due to terrorist and paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland during the six months since 15 November 1985.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 16 May 1986 c. *566*.]: Since 15 November 1985, 22 people are believed to have been killed by members of terrorist or paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland.

Ainsworth Avenue, Belfast (Attacks)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many homes of Protestant families were attacked in the Ainsworth avenue district of Belfast during the weekend of 9 to 11 May; what security is provided for these families; if he is satisfied with the present arrangements for the safety of these Protestants; who attacked them; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: In the early hours of 10 May a block of five houses in Ainsworth avenue was attacked. Following this incident the police made a number of arrests and their inquiries are continuing. To date (20 May) one person has been charged with riotous behaviour.

The Ainsworth avenue/Springfield road area has over many years seen a number of inter-communal assaults and disturbances. It has therefore received particular attention from the police. The details of this are an operational matter for the Chief Constable but I am satisfied that everything possible is being done to preserve the peace in the area.

I understand that meetings have taken place between residents, police representatives, local councillors and appropriate officials to discuss security and that since the recent attacks the police have been in daily contact with the residents.

Construction (Ballyhalbert)

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if the proposed primary school scheme at Victoria school, Ballyhalbert, is still a priority scheme; at what stage is the preparation of the tender documents; and during which year work is expected to commence.

Dr. Mawhinney: Yes. Planning of the scheme is at a very early stage and the point has not been reached at which a tender document could be prepared. The timing of the commencement of work on the scheme will depend on the availability of finance for the school building programme and on the completion of the necessary planning.

Spina Bifida

Mr. John David Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what educational and training facilities are available for young people suffering from spina bifida in the constituency of Strangford to prepare them for employment at the age of 18 years; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Mawhinney: Facilities for these young people are available at secondary schools and colleges of further education in the constituency. Those who are unable to attend ordinary secondary schools and colleges of further education normally attend special schools in Belfast.

Terrorism (Railways)

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will list the amount of

compensation paid to individuals in respect of claims for compensation in relation to incidents since 1970 attributable to Republican terrorist groups involving trains, the railway line and railway property;

(2) if he will list, with dates, those incidents since 1970 attributable to Republican terrorist groups involving trains, the railway line and railway property on the route from Belfast to Dublin which have given rise to payments of, or claims for, compensation; and how much in monetary terms has been paid for such incidents *(a)* to Northern Ireland Railways and *(b)* to Coras Iompair Eireann.

Mr. Scott: The information is not available in the form requested and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The table provides general information in respect of claims for terrorist damage which have been made by the companies, Northern Ireland Railways (NIR) and Coras Iompair Eireann (CIE).

Year of claim	*NIR*	*CIE*	*Total*
1973	2	1	3
1974	—	—	—
1975	1	3	4
1976	1	2	3
1977	4	1	5
1978	10	2	12
1979	8	3	11
1980	8	2	10
1981	12	3	15
1982	10	2	12
1983	2	—	2
1984	—	—	—
1985	2	—	2
*1986	1	1	2
TOTALS	61	20	81

* Up to 23 May 1986.

Notes:

(1) The number of claims shown for 1973 to 1976 inclusive relates only to claims still in existence at the time of computerisation of records in August 1977. Information for the years 1970 to 1972 could only be obtained at disproportionate cost.

(2) It is not possible to attribute responsibility for damage to particular terrorist groups or to isolate claims specifically to the Belfast-Dublin line.

Compensation amounting to £4,529,007 (£3,527,584 to NI Railways and £1,001,423 to CIE) has been paid in respect of 62 claims. In the remaining 19 cases the claims were abandoned, withdrawn, refused or payments have yet to be made.

AOR Contract

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland whether he will place in the Library a copy of the report made by P. A. Consultants on the tender made by Harland and Wolff for the auxiliary oil replenishment vessel contract.

Dr. Boyson: No. The report contains commercially confidential information.

Employment

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) if he will make a statement on the group set up to assist employment prospects in the Carrickfergus area, giving details of its composition, brief, resources and any undertakings given by Her Majesty's Government in respect of requests or recommendations made by this group;

(2) if he will make a statement on the work to date of the special task force established to help employment prospects in the East Antrim area;

(3) if he will give consideration to appointing further task forces to assist the needs of areas with long standing problems of high unemployment.

Dr. Boyson: I have set up a working group, composed of officials of the Department of Economic Development, the Industrial Development Board and the local enterprise development unit, to examine ways of alleviating the effects of the redundancies caused by the impending closure of the Rothmans factory at Carrickfergus. The group reports to me on a regular basis. As a result of its work, on the spot information about job vacancies is being provided and individual counselling is being provided to those who request it. The Department of Economic Development is also co-operating with Rothmans, LEDU and Enterprise Carrick to provide information and guidance on the scope for the establishment of small enterprises in the area. Last week I announced an increase from 45 per cent. to 50 per cent. in the rate of industrial development grant available in the Carrickfergus area.

I shall certainly consider setting up such special groups again where large scale redundancies occur.

Training Centres

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give details of the courses available in each Government training centre in Northern Ireland, indicating the uptake of each course and the number of staff employed in each course.

Dr. Boyson: The table indicates the courses available at each training centre and the number of persons entering training during the year ended 31 March 1986.

Each course is manned by one instructor per class of 10-12 trainees and all centres have additional instructional staff to cover courses in the event of sickness, annual leave and so on.

Number of persons entering courses in training centres—year ended 31 March 1986

	Alfred street, Belfast	*Ballymena*	*Boucher road, Belfast*	*Craigavon*	*Dundonald*	*Enniskillen*	*Felden Belfast*	*Lisburn*	*Maydown Londonderry*	*Newry*	*Omagh*	*Springtown Londonderry*	*Totals*
Young persons													
Basic vocational training	—	234	158	—	432	88	228	161	82	440	126	88	2,037
Advanced vocational training	—	126	—	36	110	19	60	39	100	45	56	45	636

	Alfred street, Belfast	Ballymena	Boucher road Belfast	Craigavon	Dundonald	Enniskillen	Falden Belfast	Lisburn	Maydown Londonderry	Newry	Omagh	Springtown Londonderry	Totals
Apprenticeship courses													
Joinery	—	73	48	35	84	22	24	35	46	97	37	24	525
Bricklaying	—	35	22	23	34	33	23	—	42	93	24	24	353
Plastering	—	10	30	29	—	—	20	—	—	23	—	24	136
Electrical installation	—	58	12	31	—	—	31	—	8	—	—	—	140
Painting	—	9	—	—	18	—	24	—	10	24	—	—	85
Plumbing	—	13	—	24	22	—	25	—	—	12	—	11	107
Electrical engineering	—	—	—	—	72	—	—	—	18	—	—	—	90
Fabrication engineering	—	23	—	30	21	21	24	—	11	20	10	24	184
Mechanical engineering	—	23	—	20	32	—	34	15	13	—	—	—	157
Light vehicle repair	—	36	34	24	89	48	34	—	42	42	—	—	349
Heavy vehicle repair	—	—	9	—	—	—	28	—	—	—	—	—	37
Agricultural machinery repair	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	13	—	21
Light vehicle body repair	—	—	—	—	31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	31
Contractor's plant mechanics	—	—	—	—	38	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	38
Heavy vehicle body building/repair	—	—	—	—	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	8
Adult courses													
Light engineering assembly	115	—	—	8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	123
Catering cookery	287	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	287
Stitching	227	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	227
Basic creative (constructions)	—	112	540	52	97	145	66	28	41	99	41	555	1,776
General engineering	—	64	115	34	72	46	—	83	—	51	30	49	544
Milling/grinding	—	6	44	—	96	—	90	—	39	—	—	57	332
Toolmaking	—	53	10	15	43	—	19	—	12	—	18	28	198
Welding	—	69	92	65	114	53	123	—	84	71	55	13	739
Capstan/centre lathe	—	26	—	27	70	—	101	29	30	34	41	63	421
Industrial electronics	—	10	—	—	35	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	54
Computer awareness	—	84	—	5	4	68	8	293	—	—	—	—	462
Fabrication	—	—	—	37	53	36	—	—	—	26	—	26	178
Radio and TV repair	—	—	—	—	15	—	10	27	—	—	—	—	52
Advanced/Hi Tech welding	—	—	—	—	—	—	33	26	—	35	—	35	129
Electrical maintenance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	117	—	—	—	—	117
Pneumatics/hydraulics/ refrigeration	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	172	—	—	—	—	172
Domestic appliance repair	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16	—	—	—	—	16
Instrumentation	—	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
Totals	629	1,086	1,114	495	1,582	579	1,033	1,050	578	1,112	451	1,066	10,775

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what account is taken of local need, population distribution and fair employment aims in deciding the allocation of courses and resources among Government training centres.

Dr. Boyson: The allocation of courses and resources at training centres is based on the needs of industry, industrial promotion and of individuals in the areas which the centres serve. In allocating such courses and resources the Government are concerned to ensure equality of opportunity of access to training in accordance with the principles of fair employment legislation.

Cervical Cancer

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many deaths from cervical cancer there have been in Northern Ireland in each of the past five years.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows:

Deaths from cervical cancer—Northern Ireland

	Number
1981	43
1982	48
1983	39
1984	30
1985	27

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many cases where cervical cancer was diagnosed in each of the past five years were, or are being, successfully treated.

Mr. Needham: The number of new cases of cervical cancer (malignant neoplasm and carcinoma in situ of the cervix uteri) registered with the Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme for each of the years from 1980 to 1984 is given in table A.

It is not possible to provide information concerning the number of those who were or are being successfully treated for this disease. The number of deaths registered with the general register office in these years, where cervical cancer was the principal cause of death, and the rate per 100,000 of the female population aged 15 and over are given in table B.

The two sets of statistics should not be directly associated for any one year in view of the known

deficiencies in the data from the Northern Ireland cancer registration scheme and the variation in time between a case being registered and a death occurring.

Table A
New cases of malignant neoplasm and carcinoma in situ of the cervix uteri registered 1980-84

	New cases
1980	136 (63)
1981	137 (48)
1982	152 (69)
1983	217 (121)
1984	189 (113)

Note: Figures in brackets relate to cases of carcinoma in situ included in total.

Table B
Deaths registered from cervical cancer and rate per 100,000 female population aged 15+

	Registered deaths	*Rate per 100,000 female population aged 15+*
1980	34	5·83
1981	43	7·21
1982	48	7·99
1983	39	6·44
1984	30	4·91

Note: All deaths shown in above table relate to deaths from malignant neoplasm of cervix uteri.

Attendance Allowance

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time taken to deal with claims for attendance allowance and appeals, at each stage, against refusal of this allowance.

Mr. Needham: The average time between the receipt of a claim and determination of title is about 17 weeks. Attendance allowance appeals on medical questions are considered by way of review and a sample check made recently indicated that the average time taken was about 10 weeks.

Mobility and Attendance Allowances

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what is the average length of time taken to deal with claims for mobility allowance and appeals, at each stage, against refusal of this allowance.

Mr. Needham: The average time between the receipt of a claim and determination of title is just less than six weeks. The other information is not available. However, the average time taken by a medical board or medical appeal tribunal to deal with an appeal, calculated from small recent surveys, was two weeks and 23 weeks respectively.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many people are receiving *(a)* mobility allowance and *(b)* attendance allowance at (i) higher rate and (ii) lower rate and *(c)* both allowances.

Mr. Needham: There are 9,600 people receiving mobility allowance and 21,700 receiving attendance allowance of whom 11,500 are being paid at the higher rate. Information about the number of people receiving both allowances is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Hume asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many applications for attendance allowance and mobility allowance in each of the past five years were granted on their initial application and at each review or appeal stage.

Mr. Needham: The information is as follows. All figures related to decisions given in the relevant years, not to the results of claims made in those years. Four attendance allowance appeals considered by way of review include awards from the lower to the higher rate.

(a) Attendance allowance

	Initial applications granted	*Reviews decided in claimants favour*
1981	5,051	635
1982	6,682	1,023
1983	7,938	850
1984	8,697	866
1985	8,186	899

(b) Mobility allowance

		Appeals decided in claimants favour by	
	Initial applications granted	*(i) Medical board*	*(ii) Medical appeal tribunal*
1981	621	54	54
1982	800	99	48
1983*	1,789	101	57
1984	2,055	138	44
1985	2,330	196	72

* Figures for renewal claims only available from September 1983.

Navan Fort

Sir John Biggs-Davison asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the preservation of Navan Fort and access of the public thereto; and what he estimates will be the effect on the economy and employment of the prohibition of quarrying.

Mr. Needham: Navan Fort is a historic monument of primary archaeological importance which is in the ownership of the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland. The preservation of the fort itself, therefore, is secure and the public has complete freedom of access.

Officials are currently in discussion with the operator of the quarry adjacent to Navan Fort about the future of the business in the light of the decision to refuse planning permission for continued quarry operations.

Assembly

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on his future plans for the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Tom King: I am at present considering the position of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Terrorism

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the number of bomb plantings, the number of shooting incidents and the number of attacks on the security forces in the five-month period commencing 15 November 1985; and how this compares with the previous five-month period in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: The information is as follows:

	*Bomb incidents**	*Shootings*	*Attacks on the RUC*	*Attacks on the regular army UDR†*
1 June to 14 November 1985	128	85	394	60
15 November to 30 April 1985	79	126	681	40

* Includes explosions and devices neutralised.
† Includes all attacks involving firearms or explosives and other incidents which resulted in death or injury or in which plastic baton rounds were discharged.

Mr. McNamara asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of persons charged under the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1984 and 1985 in Northern Ireland; and what was the total number of persons charged under other Acts with terrorist-type offences in Northern Ireland for 1984 and 1985.

Mr. Scott [*pursuant to his reply*, 14 May 1986, c. *463-4*]: The information is as follows:

	1984	*1985*
Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978	*14	*2
Prevention of terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984	—	5
Persons charged with other terrorist-type offences‡	524	516

* Ten of these were also charged under other legislation.
† One of these was also charged under legislation.
‡ To identify separately persons charged with statutory offences and persons charged with common law offences would involve disproportionate cost.

ENERGY

Electricity Prices

Mr. Woodall asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish a table showing the average price per unit of electricity supplied to British industry for each year since 1970.

Mr. Goodlad: The average revenue per kWh of electricity sold to industrial consumers in Great Britain from 1970 to 1984 was as follows:

	Pence
1970	0·654
1971	0·721
1972	0·739
1973	0·742
1974	1·020
1975	1·344
1976	1·599
1977	1·790
1978	1·983
1979	2·190
1980	2·703
1981	3·133
1982	3·448
1983	3·465
1984	3·482
1985	*3·589

* Provisional.
Source: Digest of United Kingdom Energy Statistics.

Nuclear Materials (Safety)

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will *(a)* give the breakdown of expenditure by the International Atomic Energy Agency's budget as between safety, safeguards, medical research and promotional activity and *(b)* indicate whether any representations have been made by Her Majesty's Government since May 1979 to the board of governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency urging that a higher proportion of its budget be allocated to safety issues.

Mr. Goodlad: The following allocations of proposed expenditure are made in the 1986 budget of the International Atomic Energy Agency:

	$ million
Nuclear Safety and Radiation Protection	5·0
Safeguards	33·3
Nuclear Power and Fuel Cycle	8·1
Nuclear Applications (of which Human Health accounts for £2·3 million)	14·5
Direction and Support (of which Technical Co-operation Servicing and Co-ordination accounts for $5·0 million)	34

Her Majesty's Government have regularly stressed our support for the IAEA's work in the field of nuclear safety.

International Atomic Energy Agency

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will indicate in constant prices the annual contribution paid by the United Kingdom Government to the International Atomic Energy Agency since 1957.

Mr. Goodlad: The IAEA regular budget is drawn up in United States dollars and member states contributions are assessed in that currency. The table sets out the United Kingdom's assessed contribution to that budget in the period 1958-1985, together with the equivalent figures at 1985 prices.

	Assessed Contribution ($000s)	
	(a) Prices of the day	*(b) 1985 United States Prices*
1958	295	1,098
1959	377	1,393
1960	422	1,534

	Assessed Contribution ($000s)'	
	(a) Prices of the day	(b) 1985 United States Prices
1961	440	1,584
1962	475	1,691
1963	499	1,757
1964	505	1,754
1965	538	1,835
1966	563	1,870
1967	595	1,921
1968	660	2,043
1969	655	1,926
1970	711	1,973
1971	800	2,126
1972	830	2,140
1973	1,030	2,498
1974	1,328	2,904
1975	1,482	2,969
1976	1,904	3,606
1977	2,063	3,667
1978	2,371	3,916
1979	3,060	4,541
1980	3,741	4,899
1981	3,793	4,490
1982	3,602	4,020
1983	3,788	4,094
1984	4,296	4,449
1985	4,178	4,178

Source: IAEA Annual Accounts 1958-1985.
Note
There is no immediately appropriate deflator for converting these figures to constant prices. The one employed was the purchasing power of the dollar in terms of United States consumer prices.

National Coal Board

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much aid has been given since 1979 to the National Coal Board in grants and loans in respect of its Northumberland, Durham and Tyne and Wear operations.

Mr. David Hunt: Grant aid to the National Coal Board since 1979 totals £5,700 million, capital investment by the Board in the same period totals £4,800 million. Assistance is given to the National Coal Board in respect of its operations nationally, and no regional allocations are made.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Energy how may people were employed by the National Coal Board in the Northumberland and Durham area for each year since 1979.

Mr. David Hunt: The number of wage earners on colliery books in the north-east area of British Coal at the end of each year since 1979-80 was as follows:

	Number
1979-80	33,400
1980-81	32,000
1981-82	29,000
1982-83	26,400
1983-84	22,900
1984-85	21,900
1985-86	17,900

Nuclear Industry

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will *(a)* list for each year of operation the percentage of the yearly total of nuclear material reprocessed in the Windscale R204 plant that arose from reactors operated by the electricity boards and *(b)* publish the percentage of the total throughput of spent fuel processed in the Windscale B204 plant that came from civilian reactors;

(2) on how many occasions Her Majesty's Government have informed *(a)* the European Commission and *(b)* the International Atomic Energy Agency that safeguarded plutonium had been withdrawn from safeguards under the article 14 provisions of the 1978 tripartite safeguards treaty (Cmnd. 6730);

(3) if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow, East (Mr. Deakins), *Official Report*, column *292*, of 5 December 1985, he will *(a)* make an estimate of the cost of implementation of the full separation of civil and military facilities and activities at Sellafield and *(b)* state what proportions of the annual United Kingdom payment to the International Atomic Energy Agency such a safeguards system would require.

Mr. Goodlad: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportions of his time is devoted to the assessment of British Nuclear Fuel Ltd's operation of the reactors at Calder Hall and Chapel Cross.

Mr. Goodlad: These reactors are regularly inspected by the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate. British Nuclear Fuels also reports to my Department on any relevant commercial aspects of its operation. I commit as much time to any matters requiring my attention as necessary.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if his Department has any plans to issue guidance to British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. on the use of stockpiled safeguarded civil origin plutonium at Sellafield in mixed oxide fuel for *(a)* advanced gas-cooled reactors and *(b)* fast breeder reactors; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: The use of mixed uranium and plutonium fuel in fast reactors is well established. The generating boards have no plans at present to use such fuel in their advanced gas-cooled reactors.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list for each year of the operation of British Nuclear Fuel plc's chemical separation plant B205 at Sellafield *(a)* the weight of plutonium reprocessed from spent fuel from the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board reactors and *(b)* the total tonnage of spent fuel reprocessed from civil reactors.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Member to my answer to a question from the hon. Member for Islington, South and Finsbury (Mr. Smith) on 11 December 1985 at column *638-39*.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), *Official Report*, 26 July 1985, column *806*, whether he will set out the reasons why it is not in the public interest to publish details of nuclear materials withdrawn from nuclear safeguards under article 14 of the tripartite safeguards treaty (Cmnd. 6730).

Mr. Goodlad: For national security reasons.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for

Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown), *Official Report*, 26 July 1985, column *806*, which reactors are included within the definition of civil reactors to which he refers in relation to plutonium withdrawn from safeguards.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), *Official Report*, 1 May, column *460*, he will list the nuclear reactors from which the nuclear material to which he makes reference originated.

Mr. Goodlad: I refer the hon. Members to my earlier answer to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) of 18 December 1984 at column 82.

Mr. D. E Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy what consultations have taken place between his Department and the Central Electricity Generating Board in 1986 on *(a)* plutonium and *(b)* the safeguarding of nuclear materials generated in the Central Electricity Generating Board's nuclear reactors against diversion to military use.

Mr. Goodlad: My Department has had various discussions with the CEGB on these matters.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if the Central Electricity Generating Board has any plans to hold an exercise simulating a nuclear emergency presenting a radiological hazard to the local population at one of its Magnox power stations; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: I am advised by the Central Electricity Generating Board that it regularly exercises its contingency plans at all its sites. These exercises are witnessed by observers from the Health and Safety Executive's Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, and a number of further exercises are being planned.

Mr. Beith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, further to his answer to the hon. Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed of 25 March, *Official Report*, column *407*, the estimated costs of the European fast reactor demonstration reprocessing plant are priced in 1986 terms; and if he will identify the waste management facilities estimated to cost one quarter of the total figure.

Mr. Goodlad: BNFL and the UKAEA advise me that the indicative estimate of £300 million given for the European fast reactor demonstration reprocessing plant in my answer of 25 March is based upon costings at January 1985 prices. That estimate includes volume reduction plant and interim storage facilities for all types of waste produced.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to the reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) on nuclear safeguards at Sellafield, *Official Report*, 6 May, column *107*, he will state when his Department came to an agreement not to divulge details on safeguards discussions with the European Parliament; and at whose initiative the decision was taken.

Mr. Goodlad: I have nothing to add to my right hon. Friend's reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas) of 6 May 1986 at column *107*.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Meirionnydd Nant Conwy (Mr. Thomas), *Official Report*, 6 May column *106*, on plutonium all the occurrences, naming each country as appropriate, of the re-transfer of civil plutonium from the United Kingdom, and if he will list the amounts of plutonium involved in each transaction.

Mr. Goodlad: Details of individual transfers are confidential to the Governments involved.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Energy what arrangements are in force for security at the Central Electricity Generating Board site of South Killingholme; and who will be responsible for protection of contractors' equipment.

Mr. Peter Walker: I shall ask the chairman of the CEGB to write to the hon. Member.

North Sea Oil

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will detail in the *Official Report* those representations which he has received requesting permission to suspend planned drilling or annexe B development, detailing in each case the oil company and specific field involved.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I refer to the reply I gave to the hon. Member on 15 May 1986 at column 503-4.

Superphénix Fast Reactor, Malville

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy what assessments have been made by his Department since 1979 of the implications for the United Kingdom of the maximum credible accident at the Superphénix fast reactor at Malville; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As agreed at the Tokyo economic summit, it is the responsibility of each country engaged in nuclear power generation to provide detailed and complete information on nuclear emergencies and accidents with potential trans-boundary consequences. I also refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Rugby and Kenilworth (Mr. Pawsey) on 22 May about the agreement between Her Majesty's Government and the French Government which refers to the actions to be taken in the event of an accident occurring in either country which could have radiological consequences for the other.

EC (Reactor Safety)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether, at the next meeting of the European Community Energy Ministers, he will raise the implications of the Chernobyl accident for the safety assessments of operational and proposed European reactors, particularly those of new design; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Goodlad: As envisaged at the Tokyo summit, the International Atomic Energy Agency provides the principal forum for examination of the implications of the Chernobyl accident for nuclear safety. The first step must be consideration of the detailed information on the causes of the accident and subsequent events which the Soviet Government are expected to present at the IAEA later this summer.

Foratom Status Report

Mr. Maclennan asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will place in the Library a copy of the Foratom status report on nuclear power in Western Europe.

Mr. Goodlad: Yes.

Ministerial Vehicles (Parking Tickets)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy what departmental business took ministerial vehicles to Knightsbridge and London airport in 1985 which resulted in parking tickets being issued.

Mr. Peter Walker: The car at Heathrow was meeting a Minister returning from an official engagement. The car in Knightsbridge was being used in connection with the purchase of an official gift required for a ministerial visit.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Public Sector Borrowing Requirement

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the addition to the central Government borrowing requirement in 1984; and how much this cost in interest payments in 1985.

Mr. MacGregor: The central Government borrowing requirement on own account was £6·6 billion in 1984-85. Applying to that borrowing the average of the interest rates applicable in 1985-86 to all new central Government borrowing in 1984-85 (including lending to the rest of the public sector, and the refinance of maturing debt), interest payments in 1985-86 on the £6·6 billion amounted to around £0·6 billion.

Revenue Statistics

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what proportion of total Government revenue has been received from *(a)* direct taxation of individuals, *(b)* indirect taxation, including excise duties and car tax, *(c)* North sea oil and gas taxation and *(d)* sales of public assets in each of the past five years.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The figures are as follows:

Percentages of general Government receipts

	(a) Taxes on personal incomes	*(b) Expenditure taxes**	*(c) North Sea revenues*
1981-82	25·7	40·0	5·8
1982-83	24·9	38·4	6·4
1983-84	24·0	38·2	6·8
1984-85	23·1	37·7	8·5
1985-86†	23·6	37·8	7·7

* Including local authority rates.
† Estimates (see FSBR, Table 1.2).

The proceeds from sales of public assets are not treated as revenue, but as negative expenditure.

Estimates of privatisation proceeds were given in the 1986 Public Expenditure White Paper, Cmnd. 9702–II (tables 2.1 and 2.2). Some estimates of other asset sales were give in answer to the hon. Member for Sedgefield (Mr. Blair) on 28 January at columns *441-2*.

Wage Increases

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, when he next meets the director general of the Confederation of British Industry, he will raise with him the subject of private sector wage increases which exceed the rate of inflation or which exceed productivity improvements.

Mr. Ian Stewart: My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer has discussed the problem of excessive pay rises with the Director General of the CBI on a number of occasions, and will no doubt continue to do so.

Mortgage Interest Tax Relief

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many taxpayers receive mortgage interest relief at above the standard rate of income tax; how many taxpayers each year receive such relief on a new or extended mortgage which replaces an existing mortgage; and what is the average amount of mortgage tax relief received by each of those categories.

Mr. Norman Lamont: It is estimated that in 1986-87 about 800,000 mortgagors receive relief at rates in excess of the basic rate of income tax. The average value of the relief for this group is about £1,200 per annum of which about a third is due to relief above the basic rate. Analysis of such relief for new or extended mortgages is not available centrally.

Gross National Product

Mr. Deakins asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what information he has on the ranking of the United Kingdom in world tables of gross national product per head in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. MacGregor: Figures published annually by the World Bank show the United Kingdom ranked 20th in 1976, 19th in 1977-1980, 18th in 1981 and 1982, and 17th in 1983 (the last year for which the World Bank has published figures).

Freeports

Mr. Best asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if, further to his answer of 1 May, *Official Report*, columns *476-7*, he will publish in the *Official Report* the information he has as to which concessions exist in freeports in other European Economic Community countries which are not available in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Brooke: All the customs duty reliefs which are available in freeports in other European Economic Community countries, operating under the EC free zone directive, are also available in the United Kingdom. I am not aware of the concessions made with regard to other duties and taxes except that in the freeport of Hamburg domestic VAT is not charged on supplies made within the zone and excise goods may be stored without payment of duty.

A number of areas popularly known in other member states as freeports do not operate under the free zone directive but are, in fact, warehousing systems. Rotterdam, Le Havre, and Shannon are examples. These offer facilities similar to those available in customs and excise warehouses in the United Kingdom.

Value Added Tax

Mr. Fallon asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many new companies were registered for value added tax in the northern region in each year since 1979; and what was the net change in each year.

Mr. Brooke: The number of new registrations for value added tax, together with the net change, for the area covered by the value added tax offices at Middlesborough, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, and Washington in each of the calendar years since 1979 is as follows:

	Number	*Change*
1979	5,607	+1,680
1980	5,568	+533
1981	4,769	+1,278
1982	5,260	+472
1983	5,800	+953
1984	5,821	+620
1985	6,046	−198

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will estimate the effect of the elimination of value added tax payments on credit transactions between registered traders on the tax yield on the assumption that Customs and Excise continues to take appropriate measures to collect all revenue due; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke: As I told the hon. Member for Yeovil (Mr. Ashdown) on 20 November 1985 at column 190 any loss could be prevented. However, steps would have to be taken to ensure that tax currently charged on taxable supplies to businesses which is irrecoverable by them was not lost to the Exchequer. These steps, including the need to separate credit and cash transactions, would involve extra complexity both in the operation of the tax and for the trader.

Members' Car Allowance

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make an extra-statutory concession to exempt from income tax car mileage allowance paid to hon. Members in respect of travel from Westminister to their homes within a 20-mile radius of Westminister after 11 pm on days the House does not rise until that time or later.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The general rule is that tax is payable on mileage allowances paid for travel between home and work, and it would not be appropriate to introduce a special exemption for hon. Members in respect of travel between Westminister and their homes.

Unemployment (Departmental Cost)

Mr. Clay asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is the estimate of the total cost to his Department of unemployment in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland.

Mr. MacGregor: The overall cost of unemployment and supplementary benefit paid to the unemployed is estimated to be £5·6 billion in 1986-87. In addition, it is estimated that £1·15 billion will be paid in housing benefit, a benefit which can continue to be paid if the recipient finds employment. A regional breakdown of this expenditure would only be available at disproportionate cost. It is not possible to estimate the tax revenue forgone.

Bank of England

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer whether he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing for each year since 1970 the Government's income from the Bank of England; and what information he has over the same period on the German Government's income from the German Central Bank.

Mr. Ian Stewart: I assume that the hon. Member is referring to the payments which the Bank of England makes to the Treasury in lieu of dividend under section 1(4) of the Bank of England Act 1946. The amounts paid are published in the Bank of England's report and accounts, as follows:

*Year**	*£ million†*
1971	1·7
1972	5·5
1973	7·0
1974	6·0
1975	6·0
1976	6·0
1977	3·0
1978	5·5
1979	7·5
1980	6·5
1981	15·0
1982	18·0
1983	23·0
1984	21·8
1985	25·3
1986	39·4

* Financial year ended 28 February.
† Rounded to the nearest £0·1 million.

Comparable information about the Bundesbank is not readily available.

Child Benefit and Tax Allowances

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table showing the rates of child benefit, single person's tax allowance and married man's allowance at current and at 1979 prices, in April each year since 1979 up to April 1986 on the same basis as his reply of 3rd December 1985 to the hon. Member for Kensington, Official Report, columns 173-174.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 May 1986, c. *310*]: Information is as follows:

	Child Benefit (£ per week per child)		*Single persons tax allowance (£ per annum)*		*Married man's tax allowance (£ per annum)*	
	current prices	*April 1979 prices**	*current prices*	*April 1979 prices**	*current prices*	*April 1979 prices**
April:						
1979†	4·00	4·00	1,165	1,165	1,815	1,815

	Child Benefit (£ per week per child)		Single persons tax allowance (£ per annum)		Married man's tax allowance (£ per annum)	
	current prices	April 1979 prices*	current prices	April 1979 prices*	current prices	April 1979 prices*
1980	4·00	3·29	1,375	1,129	2,145	1,762
1981	4·75	3·48	1,375	1,008	2,145	1,572
1982	5·25	3·52	1,565	1,049	2,445	1,638
1983	5·85	3·77	1,785	1,150	2,795	1,801
1984	6·50	3·98	2,005	1,228	3,155	1,933
1985	6·85	3·92	2,205	1,263	3,455	1,979
1986	7·00	3·89	2,335	1,298	3,655	2,032

* Figures converted to 1979 prices using the movements in the RPI between April of each year.
† Tax allowances are those set for 1979-80 in the Finance Act (No. 2) 1979, following the June 1979 Budget.

Taxation

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will up-date to 1986-87 the tax thresholds for a single person, married couple without children, married couple with two children and four children on the same basis as appendix C of the 1985 "Inland Revenue Statistics".

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 May 1986, c. *310*]: Latest estimates for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are as follows:

	Threshold at current prices	Threshold at 1984-85 prices	Threshold as percentage of average manual earnings*	Threshold as percentage of average earnings† for all occupations	Break-even point at current prices	Break-even point at 1984-85 prices	Break-even point as percentage of average manual earnings*	Break-even point as percentage of average earnings† for all occupations
	£	Index 1984-85 = 100	Per cent.	Per cent.	£	Index 1984-85 = 100	Per cent.	Per cent.
Single person								
1985-86	2,205	103·8	24·6	21·2	2,205	103·8	24·6	21·2
1986-87	2,335	106·2	24·3	21·0	2,335	106·2	24·3	21·0
Married man without children								
1985-86	3,455	103·4	38·5	33·3	3,455	103·4	38·5	33·3
1986-87	3,655	105·7	38·0	32·9	3,655	105·7	38·0	32·9
Married man with 2 children								
1985-86	3,455	103·4	38·5	33·3	5,849	101·3	65·1	56·3
1986-87	3,655	105·7	38·0	32·9	6,190	103·5	64·4	55·7
Married man with 4 children								
1985-86	3,455	103·4	38·5	33·3	8,242	100·4	91·8	79·3
1986-87	3,655	105·7	38·0	32·9	8,725	102·7	90·8	78·5

* Full time males aged over 21 working a full week.
† Full time males paid at adult rates working a full week.

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will up-date to 1986-87 the information on tax breakeven points, tax-free income thresholds and tax on the same basis as his reply of 26 July 1985 to the hon. Member for Dunfermline, East (Mr. Brown) *Official Report*, columns 855-6.

Mr. Norman Lamont [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 May 1986, c. *309-10*]: Latest estimates for 1985-86 and 1986-87 are as follows:

	Threshold at current prices	Threshold at 1949-50 prices	Threshold as percentage of average manual earnings†	Tax free income at current prices	Tax free income at 1949-50 prices	Tax free income as percentage of average income*	Break-even point at current prices	Break-even point at 1949-50 prices	Break-even point as percentage of average manual earnings†
	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.
Single person									
1985-86	2,205	139·6	24·6	2,205	139·6	24·6	2,205	139·6	24·6
1986-87	2,335	142·8	24·3	2,335	142·8	24·3	2,335	142·8	24·3

	Threshold at current prices	Threshold at 1949-50 prices	Threshold as percentage of average manual earnings†	Tax free income at current prices	Tax free income at 1949-50 prices	Tax free income as percentage of average income*	Break-even point at current prices	Break-even point at 1949-50 prices	Break-even point as percentage of average manual earnings†
	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.	£	Index 1949-50 = 100	Per cent.
Married man without children									
1985-86	3,455	137·1	38·5	3,455	137·1	38·5	3,455	137·1	38·5
1986-87	3,655	140·1	38·0	3,655	140·1	38·0	3,655	140·1	38·0
Married man with 2 children									
1985-86	3,455	86·3	38·5	4,173	100·7	43·0	5,849	118·8	65·1
1986-87	3,655	88·2	38·0	4,391	102·4	42·4	6,190	121·5	64·4
Married man with 4 children									
1985-86	3,455	64·6	38·5	4,891	84·8	47·0	8,242	110·7	91·8
1986-87	3,655	66·1	38·0	5,126	85·9	46·3	8,725	113·2	90·8

* Average manual earnings plus child benefit
† Full time males aged over 21 working a full week

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

School Closures

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) how many secondary schools subject to a section 12 order have been kept open as a result of an appeal to the Secretary of State by parents or governors in each of the last seven years;

(2) how many primary schools subject to a section 12 order have been kept open as a result of an appeal to the Secretary of State by parents or governors in each of the last seven years.

Mr. Dunn: Since the Education Act 1980 came into force, 122 out of a total of 1,509 school closure proposals have been rejected by the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State considered these cases on their individual merits and reached his decisions on the basis of all the relevant factors, including any objections made by parents or governors.

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many representations he has now received in total against the proposed introduction of the general certificate of secondary education; and how many of these representations are from *(a)* local education authorities, *(b)* examination boards or groups, *(c)* independent or private schools, *(d)* state schools, *(e)* right hon. and hon. Members and *(f)* other individuals.

Mr. Chris Patten: Since the beginning of the year, the Department has received some 1,400 letters from various bodies and individuals requesting that the GCSE be delayed. Of these, 27 are from local education authorities, two are from examining groups and four are from CSE examinations boards. Further information is not available in the form requested.

Education Initiatives

Mr. Lawrence asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the initiatives taken in education since June 1983 by his Department.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government's principal concern in education has been to raise standards at all ability levels and to obtain better value for money throughout the education system. We have put great emphasis on the need for a closer relationship between the education service and the outside world, particularly industry and commerce. The following initiatives have been taken:

In Schools

The Government's principal achievements in respect to the schools are set out in the White Paper "Better Schools" (Cmnd. 9469) published on 26 March 1985. In particular, the definition with greater clarity of the objectives and content of the curriculum, financial support for a pilot initiative to promote technical and vocational education for 14 to 18-year-olds in schools and colleges; the support of a pilot programme for improving the education of lower attaining pupils; and the establishment of a scheme for in-service grants for teachers.

Decisions have been taken to introduce a new system of examinations at 16, the general certificate of secondary education, based on national criteria; to introduce the AS level examination to broaden A-level studies; and to introduce, and to develop, through specially financed pilot projects, records of achievement for all school leavers.

The Education Bill, now before Parliament, will reform school government, giving more influence to parents. It will also provide for new financial arrangements to make in-service training of teachers more effective.

All initial training courses are being reviewed and strengthened where necessary.

Spending per pupil increased by 18 per cent. between 1979-80 and 1984-85, with a best ever overall pupil-teacher ratio of 17·8:1 in January 1985.

In Adult and Continuing Education

Implementing PICKUP to promote provision of updating and broadening the skills of those in mid-career; the programme is helping to secure an increase in updating education of about 10 per cent. a year, especially in the areas of technology and business studies.

Establishing over 100 local collaborative projects in which educational institutions and firms work in partnership to offer adult training and updating—a joint venture between PICKUP and the MSC within the Government's adult training campaign.

Initiating REPLAN for meeting more effectively the education needs of unemployed adults.

Promoting the establishment of a national unit for the development of continuing education.

In Higher Education

Since 1979 the number of home students in higher education has increased, including a general shift towards vocational courses and specifically a 30 per cent. increase in the numbers on science and engineering courses. This reflects a 15 per cent. growth in the proportion of 18 to 19-year-olds entering higher education and an increase of 12 per cent. in the number of mature entrants. At the same time measures to preserve and enhance quality and to increase the cost-effectiveness of the system and its responsiveness to the needs of the economy have been pursued.

As elements within the movement towards science and engineering, launching the information technology initiative in 1982 and the engineering and technology programme with industry itself contributing £24 million. Specific measures to link higher education and industry in collaborative projects include the appointment of more industrialists to educational bodies.

In Further Education

Setting out and implementing important decisions for vocational education in the White Paper "Training for Jobs".

The formation of the Business and Technician Education Council with an important role in the preparation of skilled manpower.

Introducing the new certificate of pre-vocational education (CPVE) as an additional option in the range of courses preparing young people for the world of work, and available in both schools and colleges.

The establishment of a scheme of in-service training grants for further education lecturers.

The operation of college-employer links project (CELP) aimed at increasing colleges' responsiveness to employers' needs and the awareness of the latter of college facilities.

Developing the work of the further education unit, giving it new status and developing the presentation of its reports.

The Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education has been set up to review and evaluate initial teacher training courses for which criteria have been set down.

Establishing the education counselling and credit transfer information service (ECCTIS); and supporting the development of a computer-aided careers guidance system for graduates.

Providing resources for "new blood" in the universities; and for the enhancement of equipment in selected centres of high quality research in the universities.

Reviewing academic validation procedures in the public sector of higher education a committee under Sir Norman Lindop reported in 1985, and the Government's position was set out in a statement on 17 March 1986.

Providing support for programmes of efficiency studies in the universities and in public sector higher education.

Generally in Education

Publishing reports of formal inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate and introducing arrangements for more systematic follow-up action, and publishing the annual HMI report on the observed effects of LEA expenditure policies.

Introducing a scheme of education support grants which covered just over £39 million of expenditure in 1985-86 on selected activities of national education importance, as provided for under the Education (Grants and Awards) Act 1984.

Introducing new arrangements for decision-making and management within the Department, aimed at greater efficiency and value for money.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received about the future of the Medical Research Council's mammaliary genome unit; and if he will make a statement on its future.

Mr. Walden: The Department has received five letters from right hon. and hon. Members and other interested parties about the future of the Medical Research Council's mammalian genome unit. I would also refer the hon. Member to my reply of 16 april at column *383* to a question from the right hon. Member for Tweeddale, Etterick and Lauderdale (Mr. Steel).

Leicester (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Spencer asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will make a statement on the recent visit to Leicester by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Buckingham (Mr. Walden).

Mr. Walden: My visit to Leicester university on 12 May was interesting and informative. I had useful discussions on higher education policies with academic staff and students, and I saw and heard in detail about work in four departments and units of the university.

National Advisory Body (Planning Exercise)

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what representations he has received in the past month on the planning exercise of the National Advisory Body for 1987-88.

Mr. Walden: Since the secretariat of the National Advisory Body wrote to institutions on 4 April with proposals for student numbers in 1987-88, about 400 representations have been received.

Student Awards

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will publish figures showing the cost of student awards in each year since 1982-83, including an estimate for 1985-86, distinguishing between mandatory and discretionary awards and between awards for fees and awards for maintenance, and including an estimate for administrative costs.

Mr. Walden: The table below provides a breakdown of expenditure on student awards as requested. The related administrative costs are not available.

Expenditure England and Wales
£ million

	Academic Years			Financial Year*
	1982-83	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
MANDATORY AWARDS				
maintenance	472	502	480	†470
fees	209	217	226	†240
FULL-VALUE DISCRETIONARY AWARDS				
maintenance	59	64	65	‡63
fees	24	25	26	‡25
LESSER-VALUE DISCRETIONARY AWARDS				
maintenance	26	29	34	‡33
fees	8	10	12	‡11

* Academic year information for 1985-86 is not yet available
† Provisional outturn expenditure
‡ Estimates

Middle School, Verwood

Mr. Adley asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he expects to reach a decision in connection with the proposals concerning the provision of a voluntary-aided middle school in Verwood, Dorset.

Mr. Dunn: My right hon. Friend is aware of the urgency of these proposals and expects to be able to reach a decision shortly.

Epilepsy

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how much has been spent by the Medical Research Council on research into epilepsy in each of the past five years.

Mr. Walden: I understand that the expenditure by the Medical Research Council on research into epilepsy has been as follows:

Financial year	*£(000s)*
1980-81	n.a.
1981-82	270
1982-83	331
1983-84	355
1984-85	498

n.a. not available.

University Funding

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what is the percentage change in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1986-87, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home students fees, for redundancy and for early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant, changes in the level of local authority rates and additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes;

(2) what is the percentage change in real terms, measured by the gross domestic product deflator, in the funding of each university by the University Grants Committee between 1980-81 and 1986-87, excluding those amounts representing compensation for changes in home student fees, compensation for redundancy and early retirement, changes to take account of minor capital works from the recurrent grant and changes in the level of local authority rates *(a)* including and *(b)* excluding additions made for the information technology and new blood programmes.

Mr. Walden: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Sex Education

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what is his policy on sex or relationships education in primary and secondary schools.

Mr. Chris Patten: The Government firmly believe that sex education is an essential curricular element in preparing pupils for the realities and responsibilities of adult life. Last year's White Paper "Better Schools" made clear that the Government expect to see sex education being taught within a moral framework which is supportive of family life.

CIVIL SERVICE

Planners and Architects

Mr. Steen asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the cost of employing architects in central Government Departments, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *226*, and the cost of support staff.

Mr. Luce: The cost of employing architects in central Government Departments for the year 1986-87 is estimated at £22 million. Details of support staff are not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Steen asked the Minister for the Civil Service what is the total cost of employing town and country planners in central Government Departments, pursuant to his answer of 21 May, *Official Report*, column *226*; and what cost to the public purse of employing support staff.

Mr. Luce: The total cost of employing town and country planners in central Government Departments for the year 1986-87 is estimated at £4 million. Details of support staff are not held centrally and can be obtained only at disproportonate cost.

THE ARTS

News International

Mr. Cartwright asked the Minister for the Arts what information he now has about the current extent of the ban on News International newspapers in public libraries; and to what extent this has changed since his answer of 6 March, *Official Report*, column *219*.

Mr. Luce: I understand that at least 14 library authorities may currently be applying a ban. I have recently written to those authorities about whom I have received specific complaints to ask them whether the complaints are true and, if so, how they reconcile their action with their duties under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. I will consider what further action to take in the light of their replies.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Select Committees

Mr. Mason asked the Lord Privy Seal how many reports were published by the 14 departmental select committees during the period March 1985 to March 1986; and how many were debated in the House.

Mr. Biffen: Sixty-four reports (excluding special reports) from the departmental Select Committees were published between 1 April 1985 and 31 March 1986. In that period, one report was debated on a substantive motion in the House, 10 were referred to on the Order Paper as being relevant to debate in the House, including motions for the Adjournment of the House, but excluding Estimates days, and six were subject to debate on Estimates days. Other reports have been germane to legislation before the House.

Mr. Mason asked the hon. Member for Berwick upon Tweed, as representing the House of Commons Commission, if he will give the total operating costs of the 14 departmental Select Committees for the financial year 1985-86, indicating separately, costs for overseas visits, listing all visits by each Committee, together with the administrative and clerical costs and expenditure on specialist advisers, as well as the printing costs of the Committees' reports.

Mr. Beith: Costs, other than staff salary costs, identifiable as attibutable to the 14 departmental Select Committees during the financial year 1985-86 were as follows:

	£
Visits within the United Kingdom	43,527
Overseas Visits	210,000
Witnesses Expenses	4,811
Remuneration of Specialist Advisers	72,714
Expenses of Specialist Advisers	11,787
Work Commissioned	813
Entertainment	924
Publications not supplied by HMSO	1,019

Estimated shorthand writing costs, and the estimated costs of printing and publishing reports (including evidence printed with reports), as shown in the notes to volumes published during the financial year 1985-86, were as follows:

	£
Shorthand Writing Costs	88,452
Cost of printing reports (including evidence printed with reports)	880,248

No allowance is made for the revenue recouped from sales of the publications in question.

The table shows the overseas visits made by each Committee on which costs fell to be paid during the financial year 1985-86. The costs shown are those actually paid during the financial year and exclude *(a)* payments made prior to 1 April 1985 in the case of visits taking place before that date, *(b)* payments made subsequent to 31 March 1986, and *(c)* any provision for accounts not yet received.

Overseas Visits by Committees

Committee	*Countries/Cities Visited*	*Dates of Visits*	*Costs Paid During the Financial Year 1985-86* £
Agriculture	Iberia	17 to 23 February 1985	1,395
	France and Germany	17 to 21 June 1985	4,667
Defence	USA	23 March to 2 April 1985	21,372
	Brussels	24 to 25 April 1985	2,797
	Norway and Sweden	2 to 8 June 1985	7,490
	Portugal	17 to 23 November 1985	5,301
	Germany	9 to 14 March 1986	2,570
	Brussels	20 February 1986	98
Education, Science and Arts	Germany	28 October to 1 November 1985	7,608
Employment	Australia and New Zealand	15 to 26 October 1984	3,613
Energy	Netherlands	12 to 13 June 1985	1,219
Environment	Sweden	26 to 30 August 1985	4,648
	USA and Canada	14 to 26 July 1985	23,287
	Germany and France	2 to 8 June 1985	4,889
Foreign Affairs	Geneva	27 to 30 August 1985	2,900
	Moscow	8 to 17 July 1985	22,920
	Paris	26 to 27 June 1985	2,261
	The Sahel	7 to 19 February 1985	14,409
	New York	7 May 1984	2,246
Home Affairs	Amsterdam	10 to 12 February 1985	1,675
	USA	25 April to 4 May 1985	23,984
Home Affairs Sub-Committee on Race Relations and Immigration	Pakistan, India and Bangladesh	30 October to 13 November 1985	9,306
Trade and Industry	China and Hong Kong	24 April to 11 May 1985	18,197
Transport	Denmark and Germany	24 to 27 June 1985	3,604
Treasury and Civil Service	USA	2 to 7 June 1985	17,467
	Brussels	17 to 18 July 1985	1,022
Welsh Affairs	Holland	24 to 26 February 1986	1,458
		Total	212,403

Committee	Countries/Cities Visited	Dates of Visits	Costs Paid During the Financial Year 1985-86 £
		Less Adjustments Arising from Earlier Visits etc	−2,403
			210,000

Mr. Mason asked the Lord Privy Seal if, in the light of the decision by the House of 20 May in relation to the report of the Committee of Privileges on the leak of a draft report from the Environment Committee, he will bring forward proposals to clarify the relationship between Select Committees and the media, as it affects the deliberations and reports of those committees; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I am considering the procedural position in the light of the decision of the House on 20 May, and will, if necessary, put forward proposals to the House.

Energy (News Communiqué)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will arrange for copies of the World Information Service on Energy bi-weekly news communiqué on nuclear and renewable energy issues to be placed in the Library on a regular basis.

Mr. Biffen: The Library receives many requests and suggestions from hon. Members for the purchase of periodicals and, as is customary, arrangements are being made to obtain a sample copy of this title and to assess its usefulness as a source of information. The Librarian will be writing to the hon. Member in due course.

Restaurant Menus

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will exclude frogs' legs and turtle soup from restaurant menus within the Palace of Westminster; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: I am informed that frogs' legs cannot be purchased from the Refreshment Department and do not appear on its menus. Turtle soup is available only on a la carte and banqueting menus, at the request of Members. I have no proposals to change these arrangements.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Training

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much public money was spent on training in agriculture in each of the last five years.

Mrs. Fenner: Information is not available on the total public funding of adult education and training in agriculture undertaken by local education authorities at county agricultural colleges. Central Government funding of training in the agriculture industry in Great Britain in the last five years was as follows:

	1981-82 £ million	1982-83 £ million	1983-84 £ million	1984-85 £ million	1985-86 £ million
Agricultural Training Board Grant-in-Aid	7·950	7·500	7·486	7·200	7·736
YTS payments by the Manpower Services Commission	—	—	*11·700	*11·700	*12·300
Other Manpower Services Commission projects	—	—	—	0·204	0·559

* Estimate

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how much public money was spent on training in the fishing industry in each of the past five years.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	0·479
1982-83	0·679
1983-84	1·162
1984-85	1·457
1985-86	1·414

These figures represent public funds allocated to the Sea Fish Industry Authority and the fishing industry for training activities and exclude levy funding provided by the fishing industry.

Dr. Godman asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what criteria govern Her Majesty's Government's policy towards the extent to which *(a)* the fishing industry and *(b)* agriculture contribute from their own resources to training in their respective industries.

Mrs. Fenner: The Government attach considerable importance to vocational training in both the fishing and agriculture industries and look to both industries to contribute towards the costs of such training. In the case of the fishing industry this is through the Sea Fish Industry Authority levy, although in recent years the Government have increased significantly the contribution to training from public funds. So far as agricultural training is concerned, the industry's contribution is mainly through the time, on-farm activities and financial help contributed by individual farmers to some 650 training groups linked to the Agricultural Training Board. However, at our instigation the board itself is now having to meet from industry and other sources a greater share of its own expenditure.

Sugar Beet

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the anticipated tonnage of sugar beet production in the United Kingdom for the current year; what were the comparable figures for each of the last five years; and what the European Economic Community quota for United Kingdom production has been over the same period.

Mr. Gummer: The information requested on production of sugar beet in the United Kingdom is as follows:

('000 tonnes)

*Season**	*Beet Production*
1985-86	7,717
1984-85	9,017
1983-84	7,494
1982-83	10,008
1981-82	7,395
1980-81	7,380

* July-June year.

The United Kingdom production quota is measured in terms of white sugar, not beet, production. For each of the above years the maximum quota was 1·144 million tonnes white sugar equivalent.

Cereals

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what incentives there are to cereal producers to switch to the growing of alternative crops or alternative land usage; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Gummer: The changes agreed at this year's CAP price fixing provide incentives for cereals producers to switch to alternatives. Cereals production has been discouraged by the significant reduction in support as a result of adjustments to the quality standards and the introduction of a 3 per cent. co-responsibility levy. The balance is further shifted by the differentiated changes in the green rates which results in a rise of about 2¾ per cent. in the general level of support for livestock products in the United Kingdom, while modest support increases agreed for protein crops together with the green rate change provide an increase of up to 2·3 per cent. in our support levels. We are also studying the possibility of a scheme of voluntary set-aside for cereals.

Sheep

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food how many sheep grading inspectors are employed by his Department; and what is the annual cost of their employment and overheads.

Mr. Gummer: The grading of sheep under the sheep variable premium scheme is one of the technical functions performed by the fatstock staff of the Meat and Livestock Commission, acting as agents for the Intervention Board for Agricultural Produce. During 1985-86, the MLC's fatstock staff averaged 680. The intervention board paid the MLC approximately £9·5 million during 1985-86 for agency services, but it is not possible to say how much of that was attributable to sheep certification work. My Ministry's own Fatstock Inspectorate, whose duties include monitoring the sheep grading work carried out by the MLC staff in England and Wales, has a total complement of 11. The cost of the inspectorate salaries and overheads was approximately £260,000 in 1985-86.

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what estimate he has of the percentage of sheep rejected for subsidy over the most convenient recent period.

Mr. Gummer: During the year April 1985 to March 1986, 7 per cent. of sheep presented in Great Britain were rejected for variable premium on liveweight certification and 5 per cent. were rejected at deadweight certification.

Linseed

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the 1985 production of linseed in the European Economic Community expressed as a percentage of its total consumption; and what estimate he has of *(a)* the tonnage of imports of linseed to the European Economic Community in the current year and *(b)* the production of linseed from within the Community.

Mr. Gummer: Production of linseed within the Community of Ten in 1985 amounted to 77,000 tonnes, which represents about 16 per cent. of utilisation of linseed in that year. In the first two months of 1986, the latest period for which figures are available, the Community of Ten imported 58,341 tonnes of linseed and 1,656 tonnes of linseed oil. Forecasts of 1986 Community production are not yet available.

Veal

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information and statistics he has about the numbers of farmers continuing to operate veal crate systems despite the voluntary code of practice on the matter.

Mrs. Fenner: We believe that the number of establishments using veal crates has declined in recent years. The state veterinary service is currently carrying out a survey on the use of the veal crate system in Great Britain. I shall reply to my hon. Friend in due course when this information is available.

Council of Agriculture Ministers

Mr. Maclennan asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will make a statement on the meeting of the Council of Agriculture Ministers on 26 and 27 May.

Mr. Jopling: The Council decided to prolong for a further month the partial suspension of negative monetary compensatory amounts of pigs, eggs and poultry which had been agreed as a temporary measure at last month's price-fixing negotiations. The amount of MCA suspended for the United Kingdom continues to be closely in line with that for France, thus avoiding trade distortions as between these two countries. The Commission intends shortly to propose permanent changes in the method of calculating MCAs in these sectors.

Following the accession of Spain and Portugal to the Community, the Council considered proposals defining the parts of these two countries which are to be classified as agriculturally less-favoured areas, thus enabling special support measures to be applied. A proposal for a substantial extension of the less-favoured areas in Germany was also considered. The Council agreed in principle to these proposals, subject to the opinion of the European Parliament.

Finally, the Council adopted two measures designed to harmonise rules within the Community relating to pesticides and thereby improve freedom of trade. One measure fixes maximum residue limits for pesticides in cereals and in products of animal origin. The other prohibits the use of ethylene oxide as a pesticide but permits its continued use for a number of purposes until 31 December 1989. This is intended to allow time for effective alternative treatments to be developed.

Radiation (Cumbria)

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the results of tests being carried out into the absorption of radioactive elements by sheep and cattle in the county of Cumbria.

Mrs. Fenner: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Hill Land Compensatory Allowances

Mr. Livsey asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food when the remaining 25 per cent. of the payment for hill land compensatory allowances will be paid to farmers.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *72*]: All claimants for hill livestock compensatory allowances in Great Britain received 75 per cent. of the sum claimed shortly after submitting their applications. These advances were made on the basis of an initial check, and enabled nearly 60 per cent. more farmers to receive significant sums in the early months of the year than was the case in 1985. The Agricultural Departments' local offices then had to carry out the normal detailed checks before authorising payment of the balance. However, over three quarters of farmers have already received the outstanding 25 per cent. and the rest will be paid as soon as possible. This seems a proper balance between helping farmers in an emergency and protecting the taxpayer from improper payments.

Milk

Mr. Hicks asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if he will list the quantities of milk supplied to each local education authority in Great Britain on which a European Economic Community subsidy was claimed during the 1984-85 school year.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *71*]: Subsidy was paid on the following amounts of whole milk supplied by local education authorities and local authorities during the 1984-85 school year:

Local Education Authorities

	Gallons
Avon	535,209
Barking	51,304
Barnet	14,536
Barnsley	146,488
Bedfordshire	175,164
Berkshire	305,788
Bexley	70,994
Birmingham	182,968
Bolton	129,426
Bradford	170,948
Brent	164,290
Bromley	102,945
Buckinghamshire	67,297
Bury	96,705
Calderdale	75,180

	Gallons
Cambridgeshire	9,224
Cheshire	110,678
Cleveland	116,730
Coventry	33,567
Cornwall	40,026
Croydon	115,020
Cumbria	153,207
Derbyshire	407,106
Devon	290,106
Doncaster	108,413
Dorset	200,067
Dudley	32,991
Durham	119,986
Ealing	124,763
Enfield	37,136
Essex	34,107
Gateshead	109,490
Gloucestershire	235,488
Hampshire	178,542
Haringey	94,631
Harrow	43,638
Havering	58,151
Hereford & Worcester	212,850
Hertfordshire	552,359
Hillingdon	34,470
Hounslow	120,963
Humberside	145,523
ILEA	1,415,674
Isle of Wight	30,608
Kent	442,706
Kingston-on-Thames	5,831
Kirklees	133,098
Knowsley	114,001
Lancashire	659,513
Leeds	258,319
Leicestershire	201,286
Lincolnshire	46,396
Liverpool	243,863
Manchester	429,340
Merton	23,936
Newcastle-on-Tyne	160,771
Newham	191,854
Northamptonshire	33,787
Norfolk	170,851
Northumberland	162,375
Nottinghamshire	515,672
Oldham	114,437
Oxfordshire	180,038
Redbridge	11,606
Richmond-on-Thames	29,424
Rochdale	128,828
Rotherham	39,784
St. Helens	60,097
Salford	163,999
Sandwell	121,530
Sefton	38,010
Sheffield	299,167
Shropshire	129,799
Solihull	26,013
Somerset	258,050
Staffordshire	187,997
Stockport	45,540
Suffolk	77,814
Sunderland	187,802
Surrey	303,587
E. Sussex	245,121
W. Sussex	215,341
Sutton	4,590
Tameside	197,383
Trafford	36,212
N. Tyneside	109,762
S. Tyneside	141,999
Wakefield	112,036
Waltham Forest	156,276
Walsall	125,107
Warwickshire	151,983
Wigan	42,954
Wiltshire	158,183
Wirral	79,981
Wolverhampton	177,398
N. Yorkshire	204,261

Local Authorities

	Gallons
Ackworth	11,255
Bath	26,830
Bentham	4,025
Birmingham City	1,091
Blackburn	3,318
Bracknell	12,727
Brewood	66
Bristol	25,792
Bury Parish Council	1,905
East Cambridgeshire	4,593
North East Derbyshire	3,274
Erewash	3,535
Fordbridge	3,355
Forest Heath	222
Fylde	3,188
Gosfield	1,874
Great Budworth	238
Hammersmith	2,663
Harborough	1,574
Harlow	46,719
Kensington	6,384
Kingshurst	7,311
Lancaster	6,375
Lichfield	7,535
Northavon	6,281
Ribble Valley	15,843
Stafford	8,383
East Staffordshire	19,507
Thurrock	35,192
Wansdyke	9,312
Wandsworth	2,758
Westminster	12,413
Winsford	9,833
Woodspring	24,951
Wrekin	36,868
Wyre	17,495
Wales	
Connah's Quay	7,742

	Gallons
Sealand	1,578
County Councils Wales	
Clwyd	104,235
Dyfed	36,701
Mid Glamorgan	247,634
South Glamorgan	46,897
West Glamorgan	13,476
Gwent	20,086
Gwynedd	61,368
Powys	22,790
Regional and Islands Councils Scotland	
Borders	6,569
Central	202,737
Dumfries and Galloway	32,275
Fife	297,916
Grampian	194,705
Highland	30,303
Lothian	375,136
Orkney Isles	10,776
Shetland Isles	16,204
Strathclyde	1,632,795
Tayside	137,926
Western Isles	21,835

Whiting Fishery

Mr. Beith asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he is seeking to secure a derogation from the proposed European Economic Community mesh size increase so as to allow the North Sea whiting fishery to continue.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1986, c. *367*]: The Government fully support the increase in the minimum whitefish mesh size in the North sea to 90 mm, which is due to come into effect from 1 January next. The purpose of this increase, which is based on clear and repeated recommendations by international fisheries scientists, is to give increased protection to the round fish stocks in the North sea and improve their long-term productivity. As is invariably the case with measures to achieve long-term conservation gains, there will be some short-term losses and I am aware of the hon. Member's concern on behalf of fishermen, particularly inshore fishermen, whose income may be especially dependent on their catches of whiting. The question of derogations from the general mesh size increase is currently under discussion in the Community, and when this matter comes to the Council for decision we shall seek to reconcile as far as possible the needs of the fishermen concerned with the overriding priority of ensuring the improved conservation of the North sea roundfish stocks.

North-east Salmon Fishery

Mr. Onslow asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what is his present estimate of the total number of people in north-east England who are directly or indirectly employed in the north-east drift net salmon fishery; and if he can express the total in terms of man days per year.

Mr. Gummer [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *372*]: It is not possible to estimate the total employment involved in the drift net fishery. In 1985 nearly 600 people were directly involved either as licensed fishermen or by having their names entered on licences as servants or agents. This fishery is critical to the continued existence of the inshore fishing industry in the area. A number of other people in the area are involved in ancillary industries including fish marketing and boat building. There is also additional employment created outside the fishing industry by the existence of these jobs. Specific numbers are not available, but they will add significantly to the numbers directly involved.

ENVIRONMENT

Radiation

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what are the procedures for informing the public in East Sussex and Brighton regarding precautionary measures to be adopted in the event of airborne radioactive materials reaching the area.

Mrs. Rumbold: Emergency plans to cope with the results of nuclear accidents and emergencies are described in a pamphlet entitled "Emergency plans for civil nuclear installations" published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1982.

Mr. Colvin asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish a table showing the recorded levels of normal background radiation for those areas of England for which the information is available.

Mrs. Rumbold: The National Radiological Protection Board has determined the normal background radiation throughout Great Britain. Gamma-ray dose rates were measured out of doors in most of the 10 km squares of the national grid. The information is very bulky in tabular form, so I will arrange for a radiation map of the country, prepared by NRPB, to be placed in the Library of the House.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will list all airborne releases from nuclear facilities in the United Kingdom for the period 25 April to 20 May.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer this question shortly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment from what sources his assessment of the radioactivity arising from the Chernobyl accident was made; how much of his information came from private companies; and if he is satisfied with the technical resources available to him to assess risks from such accidents.

Mrs. Rumbold: The assessment was based on the advice of professional officers within my Department, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Health and Social Security and the National Radiological Protection Board. All information available to these bodies was taken into account. Some came from private companies. Technical resources required to deal with the situation were adequate but are currently under review.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he hopes to provide every hon. Member with a briefing note on the British Broadcasting Corporation "Panorama" programme on British radiation limits.

Mrs. Rumbold: I hope to make this note available within the next few days.

Mr. Andrew Bowden asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his assessment of the risk posed to the population in *(a)* East Sussex, *(b)* West Sussex, *(c)* Hampshire and *(d)* Kent in terms of the expected additional number of cancer deaths per 10,000 population as a result of the Chernobyl disaster.

Mr. Hayhoe: I have been asked to reply.

I am advised that it is not possible to provide specific information for the location requested. However, the National Radiological Protection Board has estimated that, for the population of the United Kingdom, exposure to radiation from the Chernobyl disaster could ultimately result in a few tens of additional deaths. This effectively represents less than 0.1 additional deaths per 10,000 people.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the United States Government informed the United Kingdom Government of any releases of radioactivity in the United States of America in April; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimate he has made of *(a)* the number of curies of alpha activity in the total estimated future quantity of low-level waste up to 2030, and *(b)* the increased cost of disposal if the alpha activity were removed.

Mrs. Rumbold: Low-level waste is subject to an upper limit of 4GBq/tonne for alpha activity. The total quantity cannot be reliably estimated; nor, therefore, can the cost of removing it.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether, in considering the list of suggested dumps, he sought evidence from Dr. Michael Heath or considered Dr. Heath's report of Greenpeace on the sites.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many petition signatures, letters and deputations *(a)* for and *(b)* against nuclear dumping he has had up to the end of May in connection with nuclear dumps at South Killingholme, Fulbeck, Elstow and Bradwell.

Mrs. Rumbold: Between 25 February, when potential sites were announced, and the end of May, the numbers of letters received in the Department opposing the siting of a radioactive waste facility were approximately as follows: South Killingholme 320; Fulbeck 275; Elstow 230; Bradwell 55. A number of postcards were also received. Four letters were received in favour of NIREX investigating the suitability of a particular site; three from South Killingholme and one from Bradwell. In addition, approximately 150 letters were received on the subject of radioactive waste management generally.

In the same period, my right hon. Friend, my hon. Friend the Minister of State and I have together or separately met 14 deputations, in London and the areas concerned. I shall write to the hon. Members about the number of petition signatures received.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment who is responsible for the costs of security at the proposed four sites for nuclear waste dumps; and what financial arrangements have been made for compensation to contractors in the event of damage to equipment.

Mrs. Rumbold: The costs of general security at the four sites remain a matter for the site owners in the first instance. Should they incur extra costs because of NIREX's interest in the sites, this would be a matter for negotiation between them and NIREX. NIREX will be responsible for the costs of security arrangements which it itself contracts for. Any compensation arrangements with contractors, if needed, would be for negotiation between NIREX and the firms concerned.

Local Government Finance

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will update to 1985-86 his reply to the hon. Member for Kensington, *Official Report*, 10 May 1985, giving estimates of *(a)* rate support grant, *(b)* rate support grant per domestic ratepayer, *(c)* expenditure on education, *(d)* expenditure on police, *(e)* revenue from domestic rates and *(f)* revenue from commercial and business rates.

Mrs. Rumbold: I have today placed the available information in the Library which is based on local authorities' revised estimates for 1985-86, except for the rate support grant figures which are taken from the second supplementary report.

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will give for the years 1980-81 to 1985-86 inclusive, in both cash prices and constant 1985-86 prices *(a)* local authority gross expenditure in England on (i) housing revenue account land, new dwellings and acquisitions and (ii) housing revenue account renovation and *(b)* English local authority receipts from (i) sales of land and other assets, (ii) initial receipts from sales of dwellings and (iii) repayment of sums outstanding on sales of dwellings.

Mrs. Rumbold: The information requested on gross capital expenditure and capital receipts by local housing authorities in England is given in the following table. The figures for 1985-86 are estimates based on returns by local authorities for the third quarter.

	Capital Expenditure HRA land, new dwellings and acquisitions	HRA renovation	Sales of land and other assets	Capital Receipts Initial receipts from sales of dwellings	Repayment of sums outstanding on sales of dwellings
		£ million (cash)			
1980-81	1,008	670	96	186	53
1981-82	760	619	99	532	89
1982-83	736	951	135	1,017	282
1983-84	743	1,132	124	930	443
1984-85	814	1,240	130	822	431
1985-86	625	1,150	125	905	380
		£ million (1985-86 prices)			
1980-81	1,369	911	129	253	72
1981-82	939	765	122	658	110
1982-83	849	1,099	156	1,175	326
1983-84	821	1,251	137	1,028	490
1984-85	863	1,314	139	871	457
1985-86	625	1,150	125	905	380

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will state the total amount to date which has been withheld from *(a)* all local authorities, *(b)* local authorities in the northern region and *(c)* the borough of Sunderland in the form of penalties which were imposed on councils for spending in excess of required amounts;

(2) if he will state the total amount of capital receipts which *(a)* all local authorities, *(b)* local authorities in the northern region and *(c)* the borough of Sunderland are currently prevented from spending because of the regulations regarding such spending which prevail at present.

Mrs. Rumbold: I shall answer these questions shortly.

Liverpool (Ministerial Visit)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on his recent visit to Liverpool.

Mr. Ridley: My predecessor as Secretary of State for the Environment was to have visited Merseyside on 22 and 23 May 1986. However, the announcement of Cabinet changes on 21 May meant that this visit had to be cancelled.

Northern Region

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will give details of the urban and environmental aid made available in the northern region in each since 1983, and of how much is being spent in the current financial year.

Sir George Young: The information is as follows:

£'000s

	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87
(a) Urban programme allocations to partnership and programme authorities and other designated districts under the Inner Areas Act 1978 and traditional urban programme allocations	41,302	37,222	38,042	34,314
(b) Urban development grant approvals for private sectors developments	2,242	7,893	1,171	—
(c) Derelict land reclamation allocations to local authorities	10,199	10,300	11,615	13,000

Urban programme and urban development grant schemes normally attract Exchequer grant at the rate of 75 per cent. and derelict land reclamation schemes at 100 per cent. In addition to the allocations for 1986-87 referred to, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry announced on 14 May that an additional £10 million would be made available to the northern region to help deal with prospective shipbuilding closures, including £2 million urban programme and £1 million derelict land reclamation resources.

Liverpool (Direct Labour Organisation)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will meet a deputation of Liverpool hon. Members to discuss the organisational problems of the direct labour organisation of the Liverpool city council; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: My right hon. Friend has asked Liverpool city council to provide a special report on its DLO's new building work, and he does not feel that it would be useful to meet Liverpool hon. Members before the council has provided that report.

Radiation Leak, Cap la Hague

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the emergency warning procedure agreement between the British and French Governments was used following the recent incident of a radiological leak at the Cap la Hague nuclear reprocessing plant; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: No. Since there was no escape of radioactivity to the atmosphere and therefore no radiological consequences for the United Kingdom the warning procedure was not implemented.

Tip Sites (Methane Gas Explosions)

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many other build-ups of methane gas on the tip sites in Britain have led to explosions since 1956 similar to that which occurred at Loscoe, Derbyshire on 24 March.

Mrs. Rumbold: No central records are kept on incidents of this nature.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has carried out any research into the reasons for the tip blast at Loscoe, Derbyshire on 24 March.

Mrs. Rumbold: An official of my Department has visited the site and had discussions with those concerned. My Department and the fire research station have carried out research into the problems of landfill gas generally.

Mr. Phillip Oppenheim asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his Department has taken any steps since 1956 to deal with the aftermath of waste tip explosions similar to that at Loscoe, Derbyshire; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Remedial action is the responsibility of the local authority. The research sponsored by my Departmemt into methane production and control in landfill sites should form a basis for any remedial work necessary.

London Residuary Body

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment at what intervals he plans to review the salary of the chairman of the London Residuary Body.

Mr. Tracey: General reviews of the level of remuneration payable to the chairmen and members of the residuary bodies will be undertaken annually in line with the procedure adopted for chairmen and members of other public boards.

Hook Kennels, Northaw (Planning Application)

Mr. Arnold asked the Secretary of State for the Environment why he called in for determination the appeal by the Retirement Homes Association over the planning application in respect of Hook Kennels, Northaw, Hertfordshire; when he expects to give his decision; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: With the exception of appeals by statutory undertakers involving development proposals on operational land, all planning appeals are transferred to inspectors for decision. The aim is to leave as many appeals as possible for inspectors to decide and to recover jurisdiction for a decision by the Secretary of State only in the more important cases.

There are a variety of reasons to warrant the recovery of jurisdiction; for example, where more than 100 houses are proposed, or residential development is proposed on land extending to more than 3·5 hectares, or if significant development is proposed in green belt.

The planning appeal by the Retirement Homes Association involves the provision of 220 units of residential accommodation on almost 23 hectares of land within the Metropolitan green belt at Hook Kennels, Northaw, Hertfordshire. There were good reasons, therefore, to recover jurisdiction for a decision to be made by the Secretary of State.

I am unable to say when a decision can be expected. Careful consideration will be given to the inspector's report of the inquiry when it is submitted. In the meantime, I cannot make a statement about the development proposed because this would prejudice my right hon. Friend's position in deciding the appeal.

Water Authorities

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will list in the *Official Report* the members of each water authority stating *(a)* their date of original appointment, *(b)* their date of completion of present appointment, *(c)* whether councillors or not and *(d)* their present professions;

(2) what is his policy towards the appointment of full-time executive water authority members;

(3) if he will list in the *Official Report* a list of those members of each water authority whose terms of office has been or will be completed in the current year, stating in each case whether or not they have been or will be reappointed;

(4) what criteria he uses in deciding whether to reappoint water authority members who complete their period of office.

Mr. John Patten: As stated in paragraph 102 of the white Paper "Privatisation of the Water Authorities" (Cmnd. 9734), a WSPLC will not necessarily have the same board members as the present water authorities.

Individuals will be appointed or reappointed who are best equipped to contribute positively to the efficient running of these important businesses. In line with policy since 1983, they will often include full-time executive members.

Not all decisions on the position of members whose periods of appointment expire in the current year have yet been taken but where available the information sought on individual members is shown in the following table.

Name	*Whether councillor*	*Date of original appointment*	*Date present appointment expires*	*Present profession*
Anglian water authority				
Mr. B. V. Henderson *(Chairman)*	—	1 October 1981	30 September 1986	—
Miss A. C. Abbey	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Community Worker
Mr. J. V. Boodle	—	1 January 1979	30 September 1988	Managing Director, Fermentation Products Ltd.
Dr. J. R. G. Bradfield	—	21 November 1975	30 September 1988	Senior Bursar, Trinity College, Cambridge
Mr. P. H. Bray	—	1 October 1983	6 July 1986	Chief Executive, AWA

Name	Whether councillor	Date of original appointment	Date present appointment expires	Present profession
Mrs. M. M. Camina	Yes	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Assistant Director, Norwich and Norfolk Chamber of Commerce. Norwich City Councillor
Mr. C. J. Groome	Yes	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	NEDO Committee Secretary. Kettering Borough Councillor
Dr. S. W. Kingsnorth	—	3 August 1973	30 September 1988	Consultant, Member, WRC
Mr. J. L. Roughton, CBE	—	1974	30 September 1988	Farmer
Mr. A. F. Smith	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Director of Finance, AWA
Mr. P. H. Tombleson, OBE	—	August 1973	30 September 1988	Executive Director, National Anglers Council
Colonel J. M. K. Weir, TD, DL, CC	Yes	6 January 1981	30 September 1986	Director, Jeakins Weir Ltd. Leicestershire County Councillor
Northumbrian water authority				
Sir Michael Straker, CBE *(Chairman)*	—	1 October 1982	30 September 1987	Farmer; Chairman of Aycliffe and Peterlee Development Corporation
Mr. J. W. R. Graham	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Town Planning Technician
Dr. R. Iley	—	1 January 1979	30 September 1988	Director Cookson Group plc
Mrs. J. Johnson	—	1 January 1981	30 September 1988	Housewife
Mr. D. R. C. Kelly	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Chairman, R. C. Kelly Ltd.
Mr. J. Landau, MBE	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Chairman, F. Clark (Sunderland) Ltd.
Mr. N. J. B. Prynn	—	28 September 1979	30 September 1986	Secretary, ICI Agricultural Division
Mr. W. F. Ridley	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Chief Executive, NWA
Sir Maurice Sunderland	Yes	1981	30 September 1986	Solicitor. Cleveland County Councillor
Mr. E. A. Wrangham	—	1973	30 September 1986	Farmer
North West water authority				
Mr. W. D. Grove *(Chairman)*	—	1 October 1985	30 September 1990	—
Mr. T. A. F. Barnes	—	1977	30 September 1988	Chartered Surveyor
Mr. O. J. Coyles*	—	1980	30 June 1986	Retired master painter and decorator
Mr. J. A. Cropper	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1988	Chairman, J. Cropper & Sons, Paper Mills
Mr. J. D. Hamilton*	Yes	1976	30 June 1986	Retired. Leader Liverpool City Council
Mr. G. E. Lowe*	Yes	1980	30 June 1986	Retired. Stockport Metropolitan Borough Councillor
Mr. D. H. C. McAuslan*	—	27 July 1973	30 June 1986	Chairman, Merseyside and North Wales Electricity Consultative Council. Retired.
Mr. J. B. Oldfield	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Chief Executive, NWWA
Mr. K. W. Palmer*	Yes	1 October 1983	30 June 1986	South Ribble Borough Councillor
Mr. A. Richardson, [illegible]'E	Yes	27 July 1973	30 June 1986	Farmer and Company Director. Cheshire County Councillor
Mr. J. B. Robinson	—	1981	30 September 1988	Farmer
Mr. F. Sanderson	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1987	Company Chairman
Mr. R. E. Weston	—	5 April 1978	30 June 1987	Retired

* Member formally told that he will not be reappointed.

Severn Trent Water Authority				
Mr. J. G. Bellak *(Chairman)*	—	1 June 1982	30 September 1988	—
Mr. J. E. Anthony	Yes	1981	30 September 1986	Coal Miner, Nottinghamshire County Councillor.
Mr. F. J. Chamberlayne	Yes	1973	30 September 1986	Farmer & Company Director Tewkesbury Borough Councillor
Mr. F. E. Earnshaw	—	1 November 1985	31 October 1988	Director of Technical Services, STWA
Mr. J. W. Griffiths	Yes	1973	30 September 1986	Farmer. Powys County Councillor.
Mr. G. W. Hart OBE	—	1974	30 September 1986	Farmer
Mr. T. C. Heywood-Lonsdale	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Farmer, Managing Director Shavington and Cloverly Estates Management Ltd.
Mr. F. A. Jennings	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Company Director.
Mr. C. G. McMillan	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Director of Finance STWA
Mr. R. F. O'Brien	—	1 April 1986	31 March 1991	Chief Executive, STWA
Mr. R. J. H. Parkes	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Chairman, Brockhouse Heaters Ltd.
Mr. K. G. Robertson	—	20 September 1979	30 September 1989	Retired
Mrs. H. P. Waudby OBE	—	24 August 1973	30 September 1986	Chairman, British Steam Specialities Group PLC
Mr. D. M. Woodroffe	—	1 June 1982	30 September 1988	Generation Manager, CEGB.
Mr. B. P. Zissman	Yes	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Director, Adagio Ltd. (Menswear). Birmingham City Councillor.
Southern Water Authority				
William J. W. Courtney *(Chairman)*	—	14 August 1985	31 July 1990	Chairman British Board of Agrément.
Mr. D. J. Arnold	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1986	Chairman, All Precision International Industries Ltd.
Lord Chapple of Hoxton	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1986	Retired
Mr. M. A. C. Drummond	—	9 November 1983	30 June 1986	Director, Newtown Oyster Fishery, IoW Countryside Commissioner
Mr. H. J. L. Harris	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Farmer

Name	Whether councillor	Date of original appointment	Date present appointment expires	Present profession
Mrs. M. K. Haselden	Yes	1 October 1983	30 June 1986	Voluntary Worker. Test Valley Borough Councillor.
Mr. J. R. Hitch	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1988	Chairman, Proptran Ltd. Chartered mechanical engineer.
Mr. A. Humbert	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	President, Williams & Humbert Group Ltd. Farmer and fish farmer.
Mr. N. P. Mackilligin	Yes	1 October 1983	30 June 1986	Retired, East Sussex County Council
Mr. W. J. Oates	—	6 January 1981	30 June 1986	Divisional Manager, ICI
Mr. A. Record	—	6 August 1982	30 June 1987	Partner, Record Thomas & Co. Chartered Accountants
Mr. B. R. Thorpe	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Chief Executive
South West Water Authority				
Mr. L. Hill CBE *(Chairman)*	—	1 April 1977	30 September 1987	
Mr. B. D. Casey	—	20 March 1980	30 September 1986	Chairman, Architectural Woodcraftsmen Ltd.
Mr. A. G. Conybeare Williams	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Chief Executive, SWWA
Mr. S. J. Day	Yes	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Farmer and Chairman of West of England Newspapers. Devon County Councillor
Lady Mary Holborow	—	31 March 1980	30 September 1987	
Dr. J. Lawrence	—	1 October 1985	30 September 1988	Director ICI Brixham Laboratory.
Mr. P. G. Lobb	—	1977	30 September 1986	Company Director.
Mr. G. C. Manning	—	1976	30 September 1988	Farmer.
Mr. D. Mitchell	—	1974	30 September 1988	Deputy Managing Director, Watts, Blake, Bearne & Co.
Mr. R. E. Trenerry	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Divisional Chief Accountant, English Clays Lovering Pochin & Co. Ltd.
Thames water authority				
Mr. R. Watts CBE *(Chairman)*	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	—
Mr. M. Davies	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Farmer.
Dr. Delphine A. Hoyle	Yes	1979	30 June 1987	Berkshire County Councillor, Horticulturist.
Mr. J. A. C. Humphries OBE	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1987	Solicitor.
Sir Christopher Leaver GBE	—	1 October 1983	30 June 1987	Managing Director, Russell and McIver. Chairman London Tourist Board.
Mr. M. Metcalf MC, DL	Yes	1 October 1983	30 June 1987	Chairman Edward Thomas Ltd. Surrey County Councillor.
Mr. H. P. Parry	—	1982	30 September 1986	Director, Amey Roadstone. Chartered Accountant.
Mr. K. J. Salter	Yes	1 October 1983	30 June 1987	Chartered Accountant. Redbridge London Borough Chairman.
Mr. C. N. Thompson CBE	—	1 January 1980	30 June 1987	Consultant Shell UK.
Mr. J. M. Thomson	—	11 January 1984	30 June 1987	Director London and Manchester Group plc.
Mr. R. T. Whiteley OBE	—	15 August 1973	30 June 1987	Farmer.
Mrs. J. K. Wykes	Yes	1982	30 June 1987	Director, C. E. Wykes & Co. London Borough of Bromley Councillor.
Welsh water authority				
J. E. Jones *(Chairman)*	—	1 April 1982	31 May 1987	—
F. B. Doyle	—	1 December 1983	25 September 1988	Chief Executive WWA
Prof. R. W. Edwards *(Deputy Chairman)*	—	1 April 1974	30 September 1988	Prof. of Applied Science (UWIST)
T. Knowles	—	1 April 1982	30 September 1987	Asst. Managing Director HTV
G. Edwards	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Director—Dynevor Engineering Company, Neath
Major H. R. Jackson	—	1 June 1983	31 May 1986	Livestock Farmer and Engineering Contractor
Sir John Cotterell	Yes	July 1981	30 September 1988	Farmer. Hereford and Worcestershire County Councillor.
G. Jones	Yes	13 April 1982	30 September 1987	BSC Employee. Afan District Councilor
J. D. A. Thompson	Yes	1 April 1974	30 September 1987	Farmer. Powys County Councillor; Radnor District Councillor.
L. R. Turnbull	Yes	24 October 1983	30 September 1988	Foreman—Erection and Welding Ltd. Gwent County Councillor; Newport Borough Councillor.
W. E. Conway	Yes	1 October 1985	30 September 1987	Steward—Rhyl Labour Club. Clwyd County Councillor.
Miss E. J. Muir	—	1 February 1986	31 January 1988	Managing Director Alternative Marketing
J. W. Ray	—	1 February 1986	31 January 1988	Managing Director Catnic Components
Wessex water authority				
Mr. M. A. Anson *(Chairman)*	—	5 July 1982	30 September 1987	—
Mr. R. H. Baker	—	1977	30 September 1988	Farmer.

Name	Whether councillor	Date of original appointment	Date present appointment expires	Present profession
Dr. A. K. Barbour	—	12 December 1987	30 September 1987	Group Environmental Scientist/Advisor Rio-Tinto Zinc Corporation plc
Mr. R. B. Clark	Yes	1975	30 September 1986	Managing Director Avalon Industries. Somerset County Councillor.
Mr. R. W. Clark	—	1978	30 September 1986	Managing Director of R. W. Clark (Building Consultants). Surveyor.
The Lady Digby DL	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	—
Mr. W. P. Johns	—	10 May 1976	30 September 1987	Technologist MoD.
Major Gen. P. H. Lee CB, MBE	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Director Wincanton Transport Ltd.
Major J. M. Mills	—	1973	30 September 1986	Farmer.
Mr. O. Oldham	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Lecturer in management. Chairman Oldham Foundation. Design Council Senior Industrialist.
Mr. K. F. Roberts CBE	—	1 October 1983	13 February 1988	Chief Executive.
Yorkshire water authority				
Mr. G. P. Jones *(Chairman)*	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	—
Mr. J. Bradley OBE	Yes	1979	30 September 1986	Retired. Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Councillor.
Sir Douglas Brown	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1986	Chairman, James Corson & Co., Ltd.
Mr. W. A. Chapman	Yes	1977	30 September 1986	Retired. North Yorks County Councillor.
Mr. J. P. Coverdale	—	1973	30 September 1988	Farmer
Mr. J. A Fawcett	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Managing Director, Thomas Fawcett & Sons Ltd.
Mr. D. Gow	—	1980	30 September 1986	Scientific Officer
Mr. T. Jackson	—	12 October 1983	30 September 1986	Bookseller.
Mr. H. G. Masterson	—	1 January 1977	30 September 1988	Controller, Scientific Services, CEGB
Mr. M. C. Simpson	—	1 October 1983	30 September 1988	Retired.
Mrs. P. V. Smith	—	1 June 1982	30 September 1988	Housewife.
Mr. A. J. T. Unwin	—	12 October 1983	30 September 1986	Retired.

Water Meters

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he now intends to carry out further experiments in water metering; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. John Patten: I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave the hon. Member for Kettering (Mr. Freeman) on 21 May, at columns 357-58.

Mr. Boyes asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has on the anticipated cost to domestic users of installing a water meter in each home.

Mr. John Patten: The economic consultants to the Watts committee estimated the additional costs of meter provision, installation and billing at about £4·75 per household per year on average with benefits of around the same magnitude in terms of reduced expenditure by water authorities in meeting demand. The consultants however drew attention to the deficiencies of the data on which their estimates were based. A co-ordinated programme of trials will be carried out, as recommended by the committee, to find out in what types of area and circumstances universal domestic metering might be most worth while.

Transferable Discounts

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) if he will extend to tenants of wheelchair housing the right to qualify for a transferably discount to purchase property on the open market; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what representations he has received from disability organisations concerning the extension of the transferable discount scheme to tenants of wheelchair housing owned by local authorities or housing associations; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: Representations have been received from the Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation. The transferable discount scheme currently in operation serves a limited and specific purpose: to help those tenants of charitable housing associations whose homes have been provided with assistance from public funds and who would have had the right to buy but for the charitable status of their landlord. There is no general presumption that tenants whose homes are excluded from the right to buy should receive financial compensation and we have no plans to extend the transferable discount scheme to tenants of wheelchair housing.

I sympathise with disabled tenants who wish to become home owners and I hope that local authorities will do what they can to assist them. Authorities can, for instance, offer vacant housing for sale at a discount, and provide assistance towards costs of adaptation.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how many tenants of housing associations have applied for a transferable discount; and if he will express this figure as a percentage of the total number of housing units owned by housing associations whose tenants are eligible for transferable discounts.

Sir George Young: Up to 31 March 1986, 7,543 tenants of housing associations in England had applied for a transferable discount under the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations. This represents just under 4 per cent. of the tenants who live in houses owned by housing associations that are eligible for the scheme.

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his estimate of the annual cost to public funds of offering transferable discounts to tenants of wheelchair housing owned by local authorities or housing associations on the same basis as to abled-bodied tenants of housing associations.

Sir George Young: There are estimated to be some 14,600 public sector wheelchair dwellings in England and Wales, and a further 27,000 dwellings for the disabled where substantial adaptations would be likely to result in their exclusion from the right to buy. Both types of dwelling need to be taken into account.

The average transferable discount granted under the home ownership scheme for tenants of charitable housing associations (HOTCHA) is £13,400. Assuming the same rate of assistance, and take-up corresponding to the national average rate under the right to buy (15 per cent.), the total cost of a transferable discount scheme for disabled tenants would be £83 million. If take-up were closer to the 4 per cent. rate under the HOTCHA scheme, costs would be correspondingly lower. No reliable estimate of annual costs can be made.

Wheelchair Dwellings

Mr. Alfred Morris asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the cost of providing a local authority or housing association wheelchair dwelling; how many such dwellings have been completed in each of the last five years; and what is his estimate of the number of disabled people wishing to rent such a dwelling but unable to do so.

Sir George Young: The average construction cost (excluding site works, fees and land) was about £23,000 for wheelchair dwellings in tenders accepted by English local authorities during 1985.

Numbers of completions of specialised dwellings for local authorities and new towns and for housing associations in 1983-85 appear in table 1.6*(b)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics" No. 24 and figures for earlier years are in table 6.7*(b)* of "Housing and Construction Statistics 1974-1984"; copies are in the Library.

No estimate is available of the number of disabled people wishing to rent wheelchair dwellings (as distinct from other accommodation for the disabled) but unable to do so.

Housing Investment Programme

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the amount of housing investment programme bids for each council in the northern region; and what was the amount of allocation for each authority for each year since 1979.

Sir George Young: The housing investment programme bids and allocations for each local authority in the northern region since 1979 are as follows. Local authorities may also supplement their housing investment programmes by using the prescribed proportion of capital receipts.

All figures are on a case basis except the following:

	Bids
1978-79	November 1976 prices
1979-80	November 1977 prices
1980-81	November 1978 prices
1981-82	November 1979 prices
1982-83	November 1980 prices

Housing Investment Programmes Bids and Allocations 1978-79 to 1986-87

£ thousands

Local Authority		*Bid*	*Final Allocation*
North Except Cumbria			
Hartlepool	1978-79	6,482	4,905
	1979-80	7,695	6,105
	1980-81	9,899	5,508
	1981-82	7,137	3,605
	1982-83	8,014	6,076
	1983-84	8,879	5,827
	1984-85	8,543	4,269
	1985-86	9,221	3,670
	1986-87	11,286	3,000
Langbaurgh	1978-79	10,666	8,384
	1979-80	12,226	9,510
	1980-81	12,015	8,595
	1981-82	10,698	6,316
	1982-83	10,869	6,944
	1983-84	10,459	5,569
	1984-85	10,815	4,934
	1985-86	8,011	4,045
	1986-87	8,871	3,466
Middlesbrough	1978-79	18,037	11,539
	1979-80	14,533	14,419
	1980-81	18,200	12,723
	1981-82	17,940	10,504
	1982-83	14,798	11,833
	1983-84	22,362	11,069
	1984-85	24,099	9,529
	1985-86	26,027	7,625
	1986-87	24,963	6,457
Stockton-on-Tees	1978-79	6,244	4,083
	1979-80	8,677	6,704
	1980-81	11,393	6,009
	1981-82	7,071	4,629
	1982-83	9,228	6,541
	1983-84	11,624	5,352
	1984-85	13,402	4,583
	1985-86	15,312	3,780
	1986-87	15,020	3,288
Chester-le-Street	1978-79	3,925	2,041
	1979-80	2,941	2,079
	1980-81	3,415	1,583
	1981-82	2,951	1,281
	1982-83	4,783	1,908
	1983-84	5,079	1,818
	1984-85	6,126	1,141
	1985-86	5,783	1,040
	1986-87	7,129	866
Darlington	1978-79	4,658	3,469
	1979-80	4,435	3,874
	1980-81	7,050	3,176
	1981-82	4,112	2,990
	1982-83	4,446	2,962
	1983-84	4,575	2,502
	1984-85	4,678	2,387
	1985-86	4,869	2,030
	1986-87	5,749	1,671
Derwentside	1978-79	6,805	4,087
	1979-80	5,845	4,789
	1980-81	5,746	4,065
	1981-82	9,652	2,334
	1982-83	8,554	5,563
	1983-84	8,073	2,619
	1984-85	4,635	2,885
	1985-86	6,680	2,528
	1986-87	11,641	2,140
Durham	1978-79	3,130	2,144

Local Authority		Bid	Final Allocation
	1979-80	5,404	2,748
	1980-81	5,323	2,234
	1981-82	6,332	1,996
	1982-83	8,313	2,850
	1983-84	8,641	2,222
	1984-85	10,524	2,571
	1985-86	11,158	2,230
	1986-87	14,132	1,830
Wansbeck	1978-79	3,658	2,857
	1979-80	3,400	3,122
	1980-81	3,487	2,585
	1981-82	4,421	2,034
	1982-83	3,700	2,701
	1983-84	4,852	2,558
	1984-85	5,497	1,723
	1985-86	5,522	1,560
	1986-87	6,354	1,285
Gateshead	1978-79	13,387	11,941
	1979-80	14,729	12,611
	1980-81	19,856	10,773
	1981-82	14,771	6,562
	1982-83	9,573	8,446
	1983-84	13,338	8,368
	1984-85	19,687	6,499
	1985-86	23,918	6,000
	1986-87	35,452	5,875
Newcastle upon Tyne	1978-79	23,103	20,023
	1979-80	27,163	21,290
	1980-81	29,753	18,514
	1981-82	23,888	12,657
	1982-83	17,703	14,997
	1983-84	26,180	14,707
	1984-85	38,597	12,835
	1985-86	35,993	10,509
	1986-87	39,482	9,750
North Tyneside	1978-79	18,866	17,355
	1979-80	21,798	16,206
	1980-81	27,914	13,849
	1981-82	19,678	7,667
	1982-83	12,582	10,928
	1983-84	14,718	13,762
	1984-85	18,473	7,818
	1985-86	19,830	6,290
	1986-87	20,161	5,850
South Tyneside	1978-79	14,151	13,682
	1979-80	17,312	14,362
	1980-81	16,336	12,317
	1981-82	14,934	9,154
	1982-83	11,540	11,844
	1983-84	13,452	9,342
	1984-85	14,382	7,988
	1985-86	11,630	6,400
	1986-87	12,819	5,840
Sunderland	1978-79	15,734	10,720
	1979-80	13,585	11,216
	1980-81	17,604	9,322
	1981-82	17,081	5,223
	1982-83	21,937	8,296
	1983-84	22,195	6,970
	1984-85	21,505	6,207
	1985-86	24,335	5,020
	1986-87	39,170	5,020
Easington	1978-79	9,834	6,947
	1979-80	11,135	7,630
	1980-81	10,069	7,396
	1981-82	9,779	5,649
	1982-83	10,471	6,707
	1983-84	14,117	5,541
	1984-85	13,990	5,374
	1985-86	17,420	4,525
	1986-87	20,952	3,850
Sedgefield	1978-79	11,952	5,209
	1979-80	8,473	5,938
	1980-81	7,475	5,548
	1981-82	10,359	5,292
	1982-83	8,338	5,505
	1983-84	9,343	5,837
	1984-85	9,503	3,701
	1985-86	7,150	3,070
	1986-87	8,756	2,798
Teesdale	1978-79	1,770	815
	1979-80	1,109	949
	1980-81	1,294	741
	1981-82	2,070	773
	1982-83	1,448	1,041
	1983-84	1,298	1,624
	1984-85	3,035	1,116
	1985-86	1,935	920
	1986-87	1,974	782
Wear Valley	1978-79	5,298	3,160
	1979-80	3,983	3,208
	1980-81	3,926	2,600
	1981-82	2,750	2,343
	1982-83	2,915	2,500
	1983-84	3,862	2,955
	1984-85	5,279	2,160
	1985-86	4,566	1,750
	1986-87	3,621	1,491
Alnwick	1978-79	3,207	1,837
	1979-80	3,051	2,053
	1980-81	2,759	1,562
	1981-82	2,616	1,549
	1982-83	2,206	2,061
	1983-84	2,647	1,936
	1984-85	3,483	1,536
	1985-86	2,900	1,310
	1986-87	3,322	890
Berwick-upon-Tweed	1978-79	2,240	1,020
	1979-80	1,930	1,366
	1980-81	1,922	1,055
	1981-82	1,952	1,080
	1982-83	1,140	1,515
	1983-84	2,096	1,303
	1984-85	2,337	1,217
	1985-86	2,716	1,010
	1986-87	3,039	852
Blyth Valley	1978-79	6,275	5,106
	1979-80	5,586	5,187
	1980-81	6,211	4,021
	1981-82	4,714	3,498
	1982-83	5,038	3,870
	1983-84	4,846	2,810
	1984-85	5,316	2,097
	1985-86	5,870	1,920
	1986-87	8,438	1,615
Castle Morpeth	1978-79	5,078	3,679
	1979-80	5,539	4,446
	1980-81	5,587	3,374
	1981-82	4,703	3,320
	1982-83	3,971	3,212
	1983-84	4,931	3,232
	1984-85	6,603	1,918
	1985-86	5,199	1,550
	1986-87	6,039	1,273
Tynedale	1978-79	2,306	1,632
	1979-80	2,632	1,961

Local Authority		Bid	Final Allocation
	1980-81	3,365	1,697
	1981-82	2,465	1,500
	1982-83	1,561	1,396
	1983-84	1,720	1,620
	1984-85	2,124	1,315
	1985-86	1,911	1,075
	1986-87	2,808	921

Heritage

Mr. Murphy asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will indicate the main achievements of Her Majesty's Government with respect to the heritage in the last seven years.

Mr. Tracey: Looking first at the natural heritage, the passage of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 greatly strengthened the statutory framework for species and habitat protection while respecting the legitimate interests of landowners and users. By the end of January 1986, 2,595 sites of special scientific interest had been given the full protection of the Act, 256 management agreements covering 9,775 hectares had been completed, and over 600 more were in negotiation. 19 nature conservation orders have been made to protect sites of national importance that were under threat. There has also been a substantial increase in the resources made available to the Nature Conservancy Council and the Countryside Commission. The national parks, following an efficiency review, have also had their resources increased, and a national awareness campaign has been mounted by the Countryside Commission with the help of the Council for National Parks.

The Government have ratified the Bern convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife, the Bonn convention on Migratory Species and the convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. We continue to work for the implementation of the RAMSAR convention and the EEC birds directive. We have taken further steps to control trade in whales, seals and other endangered species. We have taken measures to improve British zoos through the provision of the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 and to support the Zoological Society of London. And we shall introduce legislation to establish a statutory Broads Authority.

Turning now to the architectural and cultural aspects of our heritage, the Government established the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to manage and better present 400 monuments to the public, and the Royal Armouries to present the national museum of arms and armour at the Tower of London. The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission has already made excellent progress in attracting both membership and commercial sponsorship, and in improving its presentation of its monuments. In 1984 we set up an independent trust to promote and manage Chatham historic dockyard. We accelerated the national survey of listed buildings in 1981 and have so far added a further 100,000 buildings to the statutory list. Calke Abbey was accepted in lieu of taxes and a special grant of £25 million was given to the National Heritage Memorial Fund to safeguard the future of Kedleston Hall, Weston Park and Nostell Priory, and to continue its varied tasks of assisting in preserving the heritage.

Government measures to improve the marketing and presentation of royal palaces open to the public produced consistent growth in visitor numbers, gate receipts and sales. The Court Dress Collection in Kensington palace was opened by HRH Princess Margaret in May 1984 and attracted over 60,000 visitors in its first nine months.

The Property Services Agency, which forms part of the Department of the Environment, continued to maintain historic buildings in the Government estate with care and sensitivity. At the Palace of Westminster stone repairs have now been completed on the west front of the House of Lords, the Terrace and the Clock Tower, while the first phase of refurbishments to the Foreign Office will be achieved on schedule later this year.

The above are necessarily selective rather than comprehensive and confined to areas of responsibility of my Department. Further progress has been made by the Scottish Office, the Welsh Office and the Office of Arts and Libraries. Taken together, these achievements demonstrate the very high regard this Government have for the national heritage.

Housing Stock

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is the number of dwellings needing capital works of renovation in *(a)* the borough of Sunderland and *(b)* all other local authorities in the northern region, as estimated by "The Inquiry into the Condition of the Local Authority Housing Stock in England: 1985"; and what are the estimated costs of such works in *(a)* the borough of Sunderland and *(b)* all other local authorities in the northern region.

Sir George Young: Local authorities responded to the inquiry on the understanding that their figures would be used only in aggregate form and not published by the Department at the individual authority level. In the northern region, the inquiry indicated that 302,300 dwellings require renovation at an estimated total cost of £1,426 million.

Crown Suppliers

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if the Crown Suppliers will remain as the procurement agency within his Department.

Sir George Young: The functions of the Crown Suppliers is to provide furniture and equipment to the whole of the Government service and to other public sector bodies, not just to one Department. It will continue to do so as long as it remains an efficient and economical source of supply.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if any study has been carried out on the value of individual departments of the service supplied to them by the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: The recent report of the Cabinet Office review team contains information on the value of services provided by the Crown Suppliers and the central unit on purchasing also keeps these matters under review.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will continue the policy of asking Crown Suppliers to buy from Remploy.

Sir George Young: Yes, where this continues to be an economical source of supply.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement on the future of the Crown Suppliers.

Sir George Young: I am still considering the recommendations of the team of officials which was asked to consider whether it would be in the public interest to transfer to the private sector all or part of the activities of the Crown Suppliers. I shall also take into account the views of the central unit on purchasing.

Nuclear Industry

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer to the hon. and learned Member for Mid-Bedfordshire (Mr. Lyell) of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *358*, he will set out the total volume of each category of nuclear waste, by source, arising if the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel were deferred until 2030.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to table 2 of the report on the "Assessment of Best Practicable Environmental Options for Management of Low—and Intermediate-level solid Radioactive Wastes." In column 3, about 75 per cent. of waste arising from oxide fuel reprocessing and about 5 per cent. of the waste arising from Magnox fuel reprocessing is associated with the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel. If the reprocessing of foreign spent fuel were deferred until 2030 the figures in column 3 would be reduced accordingly.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Great Grimsby of 12 May, *Official Report*, column *357*, if low and intermediate-level waste produced from the reprocessing of spent thermal oxide fuel from West Germany has been returned to West Germany, what was done with the plutonium separated out from that fuel; and if he will make it his policy to send back all low and intermediate-level waste to those countries from whose thermal oxide fuel it arose in reprocessing.

Mrs. Rumbold: The low and intermediate-level waste arising from the reprocessing of German oxide fuel in the early 1970s has not been returned to West Germany, but the plutonium has. I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave him on 6 May, at column 61, regarding the return of waste from the reprocessing of overseas contracts.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the Department's test study of the geology suitable for nuclear waste disposal was abandoned; why it was abandoned; if he will publish the evidence so far acquired; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Minister for Local Government and Environment Services announced on 16 December 1981, at columns 171-72, that the feasibility of disposing of heat-generating wastes in geological formations had been established; and that in consequence the United Kingdom programme of exploratory drilling in respect of these wastes was being halted. The results of the drilling that had taken place at Altnabreac in Caithness have been published by the British Geological Survey of the Natural Environment Research Council in 36 reports in the environmental protection unit and fluid processes research group reports series, and copies were placed in the British National Library, Boston Spa.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the basis of his statement to the Environment Committee that 15 per cent. of United Kingdom geology was suitable for disposal of dangerous radioactive waste; whether he will publish the studies on which this statement was based; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: I refer the hon. Member to a paper by Mather JD, Gray DA, and Greenwood, PB, entitled "Review of geological criteria and site selection for high-level radioactive waste repositories in the United Kingdom. Proceedings of Symposium on the Underground Disposal of Radioactive Waste, Otaniemi, Finland, 2-6 July 1979". Paper IAEA-SM-243/29, which has been published.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether the permission given to NIREX in the special development order to initiate geological explorations also extends to contractors employed by NIREX; what supervision NIREX is required to exercise; and what arrangements ensure in the event of the financial failure of a contractor.

Mrs. Rumbold: The special development order permits geological investigations to be carried out by or on behalf of NIREX. NIREX would be expected to ensure that work carried out on its behalf was within the terms of the order. Financial arrangements are a matter for NIREX.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment who will be responsible for paying the Anglian water authority for work necessary for the assessment of the suitability of the four sites being surveyed for suitability as nuclear dumps.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is a matter for the Anglian water authority and NIREX.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment on what date NIREX appointed consultants to investigate the geology of the four sites for nuclear dumps under the special development order; when contracts were signed; and on what basis payments are to be made.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is a matter for NIREX.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what proportion of the total of radioactive waste disposed of at Drigg arose from the activities of the civil nuclear power industry and medical research.

Mrs. Rumbold: In 1984, the latest year for which figures are available, the proportions by volume of wastes disposed of at Drigg, by source, are:

	per cent.
Civil nuclear power industry (CEGB and SSEB)	8
BNFL	78
Others (including medical research)	14

From 1987, when BNFL has announced its intention to compact its waste before disposal at Drigg, an overall volume reduction to one third of its wastes is likely to be achieved.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information was made available to him by NIREX about the aquifers below the clay at the South Killingholme site; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: Only a general indication of the geological strata below the South Killingholme site has been provided so far. Further information will come from the site investigations to be carried out by UK NIREX Ltd.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make it his policy that no nuclear waste resulting from reprocessing of spent thermal oxide nuclear fuel will be dumped in any new disposal sites.

Mrs. Rumbold: No.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what representations he has received from the Anglian water authority expressing its concern about the disposal of radioactive waste in shallow bored trenches above aquifers.

Mrs. Rumbold: The board is naturally concerned that any near-surface facility should not have an adverse effect on water supplies. The chairman has written to me, however, acknowledging that no informed view of this possibility can be taken until the detailed investigations sanctioned by the special development order have been carried out. I can assure the hon. Gentleman that if it seems likely that the integrity of the water supply would be compromised no planning permission will be given.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether he will make available the survey work and suitability studies carried out by the Central Electricity Generating Board on the site of South Killingholme when it was being considered for a nuclear or conventional power station.

Mr. Goodlad: I have been asked to reply.

I have asked the chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board to write to the hon. Member.

Radioactive Waste

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what estimated proportion of the low-level nuclear waste produced up to the year 2030 will come from *(a)* hospitals and laboratories *(b)* nuclear power plants and *(c)* reprocessing.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to the reply*, 22 May 1986, c. *295*]: Of the 1·2 million cu m of conditioned low-level radioactive waste expected to arise up to the year 2030, assuming a moderate growth in nuclear power generation, approximately 6 per cent. will come from research, medical and industrial sources; approximately 24 per cent. will come from committed and proposed reactors and from decommissioning; and about 70 per cent. will come from reprocessing.

Rent Rebates and Allowances

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if, pursuant to the answer of 12 May, *Official Report*, columns *363-6*, he will present the information about rent rebate and rent allowance payments, taking into account the payment of rent under the supplementary benefit scheme.

Mr. Major: I have been asked to reply.

I shall let the hon. Member have the information that is available as soon as possible.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made by the London Docklands Development Corporation over opening its files to the public in respect of planning applications.

Sir George Young: I shall answer this question shortly.

Parking Fines

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what was the total amount paid by his Department in 1985 in respect of parking fines incurred by Government Departments;

(2) when his Department became responsible for paying parking fines on behalf of Government Departments;

(3) if he will provide an analysis of the parking fines incurred by each of the Government Departments as listed in his answer of 15 May, *Official Report*, column *554*, excluding the Scottish Office and the Department of Energy; and how many of the fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles in each case.

Sir George Young: I shall answer these questions shortly.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Foreign Visitors

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many Syrians are in the United Kingdom; how many Iranians are in the United Kingdom; how many Syrians have overstayed their visas; how many Iranians have overstayed their visas; if he is taking steps to find out how many Syrians and Iranians are in the United Kingdom illegally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington: Precise estimates of the numbers of nationals of particular countries in the United Kingdom at any particular time are not available. However, based on the results of the labour force survey, we estimate that there are about 25,000 Iranian nationals and about 2,000 Syrian nationals resident in Great Britain.

In 1985, 36,000 Iranian visitors, 1,000 Iranian students and 10,000 Iranian transit passengers were admitted at United Kingdom ports. The equivalent figures for Syrians were 11,500 visitors, 1,000 students and nearly 1,500 transit passengers. More detailed information about Iranians and Syrians admitted at United Kingdom ports in 1984 was published in the "Control of Immigration: Statistics" (Cmnd. 9544). Similar information for 1985 will be published later this year.

There are no special arrangements for recording the landings and embarkations of all Syrians and Iranians, so that the information requested in the second part of the question is not available. As with other nationalities, the recording of landing and embarkation is selective;

investigation of apparent overstaying is also conducted on a selective basis. We are satisfied that this approach represents the best use of available resources.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department to what extent immigration records accurately show the number of foreigners leaving the United Kingdom; how many foreigners have overstayed their visa; how many Libyans have overstayed their visa; if he is taking any steps to find out how many Libyans are in the United Kingdom illegally; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Waddington [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *516*]: The recording of landings and embarkations is selective. Where landing details are recorded, subsequent embarkation or the subsequent grant of leave to remain can be readily confirmed in about 95 per cent. of cases. The remaining 5 per cent., who may have overstayed, are selectively investigated; in most of the cases investigated embarkation is confirmed, or an application for renewed leave to remain is received. Statistics relating to all foreign nationals are not, however, available in the form requested.

Since May 1984 the landings and embarkations of all Libyan nationals admitted on conditions have been recorded and every indication of apparent overstaying is followed up. Of the 5,560 Libyan nationals so admitted between then and 31 March 1986 there were, as at 21 May 1986, 54 cases in which an individual's leave had expired but in which there was no evidence that he had left the United Kingdom, or applied for an extension of stay. These remaining cases are being vigorously investigated to establish whether embarkation, though not yet recorded, has in fact occurred, or whether action is necessary to enforce departure.

Fraud

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list for each of the last 10 years for which figures are available (i) the number of cases of fraud tried on indictment, (ii) the number of defendants convicted and acquitted, both expressed numerically and as a percentage of the whole and (iii) the value of the sums involved.

Mr. Mellor: Information on offences of fraud and forgery is published annually in "Criminal Statistics, England and Wales, Supplementary tables (Volume 1) in table S2.1(A) and corresponding tables for earlier years, under offence classifications 51 to 61. The information is summarised in the following table. Corresponding information for 1985 is not yet available. Information on the value of the sums involved is not collected centrally.

Defendants tried on indictment for offences of fraud and forgery in England and Wales.

Numbers of percentages 1975-84

	Tried on indictment	*Acquitted*	*Found guilty*	*Acquitted*	*Found guilty*
		Numbers		*Percentages*	
1975	3,845	585	3,260	15	85
1976	4,149	605	3,544	15	85
1977	4,086	534	3,552	13	87
1978	3,898	574	3,324	15	85
1979	3,589	584	3,005	16	84
1980	4,968	827	4,141	17	83
1981	5,392	834	4,558	15	85
1982	5,080	754	4,326	15	85
1983	6,012	749	5,263	12	88
1984	6,330	790	5,540	12	88

Police Consultative Committees

Mr. Wheeler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has used the powers conferred on him by subsections (10) and (11) of section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984;

(2) if any police authorities have failed to set up police consultative committees;

(3) how he ascertains the adequacy of arrangements for police consultative committees set up under section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Section 106 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 requires police authorities (in the Metropolitan police district and the City of London, the Commissioners respectively) to make arrangements for obtaining the views of people in their area about matters concerning the policing of the area and for obtaining their co-operation with the police in preventing crime in the area. The guidance provided to police authorities by Home Office circular 2/1985 explained that as the needs and problems of different areas vary, consultative arrangements should reflect these differences, and that a uniform pattern of methods of consultation would not be sensible. Consequently there is no requirement on police authorities to set up police consultative committees in all circumstances. Her Majesty's inspectors of constabulary take account in their inspections of police forces of the consultative arrangements in their area and report to my right hon. Friend on them on a regular basis. He has not felt it necessary to exercise the powers conferred on him by subsections (10) and (11) of section 106 of the 1984 Act.

London Fire Brigade

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the previous authorised complement of non-uniformed staff in the London fire brigade; and what is the current authorised complement of non-uniformed staff under the new organisation following the abolition of the Greater London council.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The establishment scheme approved by my right hon. Friend for 1986-87 provides for 1,181 non-uniformed posts. Before 1 April 1986 my right hon. Friend had no responsibility for the establishment of non-uniformed staff, but I understand that the number in post in the London fire brigade on 31 March was 997. My reply to my hon. Friend's previous question on 19 May, at column 16, explained the reasons for the change.

Criminal Convictions (Disclosure)

Mr. Cormack asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what progress has been made on the review of disclosure of criminal convictions; when he expects to publish the circular dealing with the conviction of those who have substantial access to children; if he plans to extend the review to the disclosure of convictions

for those who have access in a position of trust to people who are mentally or physically disabled by reason of age or infirmity; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: We expect to issue within a few weeks a joint circular to provide for the disclosure of the criminal background of those seeking positions, paid or unpaid, in local authority education and social services and in the probation service which will give them substantial access to children. Consideration is being given to the issue of a similar circular in relation to National Health Service staff. The review team is considering what arrangements can be made to provide disclosure in relation to people working with children in the voluntary sector and independent schools. Our first priority is to introduce the arrangements for children before consideration is given to any extension of the review.

Paramilitary Training

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he plans to seek to control the activities of private bodies offering paramilitary training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: It is already an offence under section 2 of the Public Order Act 1936 for a person to take part in the training of others for the purpose of usurping the functions of the police or the armed forces. The maximum penalty on indictment is two years imprisonment or an unlimited fine, or both.

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has received any representations concerning the activities of the Combat Shotgun Society of Great Britain in relation to paramilitary training; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: We have received one letter about the activities of this society.

Shotguns

Mr. Cartwright asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether he has any plans to review the Firearms Acts in order to restrict the availability of semi-automatic shotguns; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Self-loading shotguns are subject to control under section 2 of the Firearms Act 1968 and chief officers of police have power under the Act to refuse to issue or renew a shotgun certificate in certain circumstances. We have no plans to introduce further restrictions on ownership.

News International

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis has requested News International temporarily to close down its plant at Wapping on any occasion on the grounds of public order.

Mr. Giles Shaw: No.

Thames Valley Police

Mr. Tim Smith asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the current expenditure per head of population in the Thames Valley police area; and how this compares with the national average.

Mr. Giles Shaw: "Police Statistics 1985-86 Estimates", published by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, show that the estimated net expenditure of Thames Valley police per thousand population was £37,864 in the financial year 1985-86, compared with the average of £45,135 for forces outside London in England and Wales and £54,352 for all forces in England and Wales. Both these averages exclude the Merseyside police, for whom no figures are available.

Prison Officers

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many prison officers were on the payroll in *(a)* 1980, *(b)* 1981, *(c)* 1982, *(d)* 1983, *(e)* 1984, *(f)* 1985 and *(g)* 1986, respectively;

(2) what was the percentage change in the number of prison officers during each year from 1980.

Mr. Mellor: The number of staff of the prison officer class in post at Prison Department outstations on 1 April each year from 1980, with year-on-year percentage changes, is as follows:

Staff in Post and Percentage Change over Previous Year

		Staff	*Percentage*
(a)	1 April 1980	16,123	—
(b)	1 April 1981	17,065	+5·84
(c)	1 April 1982	17,025	−0·23
(d)	1 April 1983	17,538	+3·01
(e)	1 April 1984	18,100	+3·20
(f)	1 April 1985	18,409	+1·71
(g)	1 April 1986	18,887	+2·60

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many new entry prison officers attended and completed courses through the central training organisation in each of the years from 1980.

Mr. Mellor: The figures are as follows:

	Joined for training	*Completed training*
1980	1,319	1,345
1981	504	627
1982	677	464
1983	1,319	1,189
*1984-85	1,065	1,235
1985-86	1,016	†713

* The figures for 1984-85 cover a 15-month period following a change from calendar to financial year monitoring.

† Excludes 204 officers still undergoing training at the end of the year.

Licensing (Dorset)

Viscount Cranborne asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has as to the number of applications that have been received by Dorset licensing magistrates since 1981 for changing existing residential and restaurant licences into justices on licences; and how many of those applications have been granted.

Mr. Mellor: Information in this form is not collected centrally.

Police Manpower (West Midlands)

Mr. John Mark. Taylor asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will call for a report from the chief constable of the West Midlands on the

comparative police manpower figures expressed as head of population per officer for (i) the Solihull sub-division and (ii) the Chelmsley Wood sub-division of West Midlands L division; and if he will publish the figures.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the chief constable of the West Midlands that the population per police officer in these sub-divisions is as follows:

	Numbers
Solihull sub-division	1:954
Chelmsley Wood sub-division	1:694

These ratios leave out of account the police officers currently at L division headquarters, which covers both sub-divisions, and the police officers responsible for policing Birmingham airport, which is a responsibility of L division.

Parole

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners were granted parole in 1984 and 1985 who qualified for consideration at that point only because of the reduction in the qualifying period from 12 to six months; and what percentage this was of the total number of prisoners paroled in each of these years.

Mr. Mellor: It is estimated that about 7,900, or 66 per cent. of the 11,886 who were granted parole in 1984 had qualified for earlier consideration because of the reduction in the qualifying period from 12 to six months. The corresponding figures for 1985 were about 9,500, 66 per cent. and 14,395.

Northeye Prison

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what consideration he has given to the annual report to him by the board of visitors of Her Majesty's prison, Northeye, dated February 1986.

Mr. Mellor: My noble Friend is considering the report. He will shortly be writing to the chairman of the board about the matters of concern which the board has raised.

Mr. Peter Harvey

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, pursuant to his answer of 20 May, *Official Report*, column 126, what duties Mr. Harvey carried out whilst working in the legal adviser's branch in both of these periods.

Mr. Hurd: Both between 15 July 1948 and 17 April 1977 and since 1 October 1983 Mr. Harvey's duties have been to give legal advice, to assist in the preparation of legislation and to draft subordinate legislation, on a range of topics arising from my Department's responsibilities.

Prisons (Surgical Units)

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what proportion of the available beds in each of the surgical units in Her Majesty's prisons were occupied during each of the last five years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: I regret that the occupancy of beds in surgical wards is not recorded separately from that of other hospital beds at the establishments concerned.

Mr. Favell asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will publish a table indicating, for the surgical units at Parkhurst, Liverpool and Wormwood Scrubs prisons, the number of operations performed in each unit in each of the last five years, broken down by appropriate categories of surgery.

Mr. Mellor: The following table provides the information requested.

	General	*ENT*	*Eye*	*Plastic*	*Orthopaedic*	*Total*
1981						
Parkhurst	56	29	2	—	20	107
Liverpool	297	70	24	30	37	458
Wormwood Scrubs	252	38	26	35	30	381
1982						
Parkhurst	90	40	2	2	44	178
Liverpool	321	59	22	17	25	444
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—	—
1983						
Parkhurst	76	26	2	12	44	160
Liverpool	277	56	19	22	26	400
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—	—
1984						
Parkhurst	92	34	1	—	38	165
Liverpool	306	52	24	41	34	457
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—	—
1985						
Parkhurst	103	34	—	1	31	169
Liverpool	36	2	4	—	—	42
Wormwood Scrubs	—	—	—	—	—	—

The Wormwood Scrubs unit closed in December 1981 and the Liverpool unit was closed for most of 1985 for refurbishing.

BBC (News Reporting)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department when arrangements were made between his Department and the British Broadcasting Corporation in respect of news in times of national crisis; what were the terms of the arrangement; what arrangements exist with other broadcasting authorities; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Giles Shaw: In 1962 the BBC and the Government of that time reached an agreement about the handling of news and other information in a time of war emergency. The agreement applied only to the BBC because of the small size of the commercial broadasting sector at that time. Under the terms of the agreement the BBC restated that the corporation preserved its independence and the right to reach its own judgment on whether any particular item of news, or any other information, might if broadcast be prejudicial to the national interest. The BBC agreed that it would not reject any authoritative request purely on the ground that other broadcasters and publishers, whether at home or abroad, might not accept it; and the board of mangement of the corporation gave a formal assurance that it would act in these conditions with a full sense of responsiblitly and in close consultation with Her Majesty's Government.

Since 1980 the Government have been reviewing all emergency plans, many of which had remained unchanged since the early 1960s with a view to bringing them up to date with modern circumstances. The arrangements described above have never been used and their continued relevance is being considered as part of the development of Government policy towards all parts of the media in time of war along the lines described in the Government's response to the Beach report (Cmnd. 9499, April 1985).

Shoplifting (Suicides)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many people charged with shoplifting have committed suicide *(a)* before and *(b)* after their cases were heard in each of the last 10 years for which records are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information available to me relates to court proceedings reported to have been discontinued because the defendant committed suicide, which for magistrates' courts is published annually for all types of offence in "Criminal Statistics, in England and Wales, Supplementary Tables, Volume I" (table S1.1(a)(i) of the publication for 1984). No proceedings for shoplifting were reported to have been discontinued for this reason in 1984; the corresponding numbers were three in 1982 and one in 1978. Corresponding numbers for other previous years could be provided only at disproportionate cost. Information is not collected centrally on suicides before court proceedings begin or after the court has made its decision.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of the death by suicide of Mrs. Mary Wilcox, he will now issue guidelines to all police forces to ensure that, before a person who is elderly or very young or ill is charged with shoplifting, special consideration is given as to whether or not prosecution is the best way to deal with the matter, with particular regard to the risks of suicide.

Mr. Giles Shaw: Decisions whether to institute proceedings in individual cases are the responsibility of chief officers of police and my right hon. Friend has no authority to issue instructions to them in this. Home Office circular 14/1985 on the cautioning of offenders, issued in February 1985, provided guidance to chief officers on the circumstances in which a course of action other than prosecution, such as cautioning, might be appropriate. It drew particular attention to the suitability of cautioning in respect of juveniles, the elderly and infirm, and persons suffering physical or mental illness, mental impairment or emotional distress. Home Office circular 26/1983, issued in February 1983, drew the attention of chief officers of police to the Attorney-General's guidelines on prosecution practice, which also provided guidance on the decision to prosecute in cases involving the elderly, or infirm, or persons suffering from mental illness or stress. Copies of both circulars are in the Library.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department whether, in view of the death by suicide of Mrs. Mary Wilcox, he will hold an inquiry into the law on theft from shops and on the way in which it operates in practice.

Mr. Mellor: We have no plans to do so.

Terrorism

Mr. George asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will list in the *Official Report* the date and nature of terrorist incidents in the United Kingdom, showing Northern Ireland separately for each of the last three years.

Mr. Giles Shaw [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 March 1986, c. *541*]: Statistics of terrorist incidents which occurred in Great Britain in the years 1983-85 are as follows. These do not include incidents apparently caused by extremist nationalist or anarchist groups based in Great Britain, or by extremist animal rights activists.

Statistics of terrorist activity in Northern Ireland in the years 1971 to 1985 were given by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in reply to a question from the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull, North (Mr. McNamara) on 27 February 1986, at columns 636-42.

	1983	*1984*	*1985*
Shooting incidents	—	3	2
Bombing incidents			
exploded	4	6	2
neutralised	1	4	4
Arson attacks	—	—	1
Kidnappings	—	1	—
Finds of weapons and/or explosives	2	6	4
Deaths and injuries resulting from the attacks in the table above were:			
Deaths	6	8	1
Injuries	102	74	2

SOCIAL SERVICES

Family Credit Scheme

8. **Mr. Spencer** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he hopes to publish his consultation paper for employers about the family credit scheme.

Mr. Newton: We are currently undertaking the further discussions promised by my right hon. Friend during the Report stage of the Social Security Bill.

Medical Research Council

Mr. Dalyell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services for what purposes he gives grant-aid to the Medical Research Council; and what was the level of grant for the year ended 31 March.

Mr. Whitney: We do not give an annual grant to the Medical Research Council. We have given the MRC support for specific individual projects and commissions for research in important policy areas on an ad hoc basis. In the financial year 1985-86 the total cost of this project support and commissioned research was £255,185.

Consultant Surgeons

19. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has as to the percentage of an average National Health Service consultant surgeon's time spent per week on *(a)* operations and *(b)* consultations with patients; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that the information requested is not collected centrally. It is for consultants and health authorities to determine how much time should be allocated to particular clinical duties.

Heating Costs

20. **Mr. Raynsford** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many claims for single payments towards extra heating costs incurred by claimants during the exceptionally cold weather last winter have been submitted to his Department; how many payments have been made; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: Information on the total number of claims for a single payment in respect of extra fuel used during the exceptionally severe weather last winter is not available, but approximately 336,000 such payments had been made by 6 May. Details of the total number of payments will be collected later in the year, when the period during which such claims could be made is over.

Residential Care and Nursing Homes

21. **Mr. Peter Bruinvels** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if there are any plans to increase the number of inspectors of residential care homes and nursing homes.

Mr Whitney: The duty to register and inspect residential care homes and nursing homes under the Registered Homes Act 1984 is placed on local social service authorities and district health authorities respectively. It is for each registering authority to decide the staff required to enable it to discharge its statutory duty.

Primary Health Care Services

22. **Mr. Yeo** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding his Green Paper on "Primary Health Care Services."

Mr. Hayhoe: About 50 representations have been received from individual practitioners and members of the public.

Portman Clinic

23. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what representations he has received concerning the future and funding of the Portman clinic; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Records show that, since October 1985, only two representations including this inquiry had been received at 19 May 1986 about the future and funding of the Portman clinic.

The Government are acting to bring to an end uncertainty that has surrounded the future and funding of both the Portman and Tavistock clinics. An independent group has now reported on the role of the clinics. A second report has looked at how resources are currently used. Both reports have recently been consulted upon. Ministers will shortly be considering the results of consultations and how best to resolve outstanding issues over the future and funding of the clinics.

Benefits (Students)

24. **Mr. Freud** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received in respect of the proposal to restrict student eligibility for benefits.

Mr. Newton: Since publication of the White Paper we have received approximately 1,230 written representations and inquiries on these proposals.

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those elements of the mandatory student grant, other than the £181 for books and equipment, which are deductible for the calculation of the student's entitlement to supplementary benefit during term-time; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Major: The other grant elements which are deducted when calculating any entitlement to supplementary benefit during term time are any grant paid to a disabled student in respect of his additional expenditure by reason of his disability; any grant paid in respect of any dependent child or spouse outside the United Kingdom; any sum which is intended and used for meeting expenses reasonably incurred by a student while living in accommodation away from his home for the purpose of attending his course; any sum which is intended and used for travelling expenses; any sum awarded in respect of special equipment requirements.

Supplementary Benefit

25. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people are presently in receipt of supplementary benefit in Coventry; and what was the comparable figure in May 1979.

Mr. Major: 39,769 people are in receipt of supplementary benefit at the two Coventry local offices compared with 22,088 in May 1979.

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) since the introduction of the Supplementary Benefits (Requirements) Amendment Regulations in November 1985 *(a)* how many requests local offices of his Department have received under schedule 2A, paragraph 5(4)*(m)* of those regulations for him to use his discretion in order to avoid exceptional hardship being suffered, *(b)* how many such requests have been referred on to the section dealing with them in headquarters and *(c)* in how many cases he has used his discretionary power;

(2) since the introduction of the Supplementary Benefits (Requirements) Amendment Regulations in November 1985 *(a)* how many requests have been received by each of the Stockton, Middlesbrough, Redcar, Eston and Hartlepool offices of his Department under schedule 2A, paragraph 5(4)*(m)* of those regulations for him to use his discretion in order to avoid exceptional hardship being suffered, *(b)* how many such requests from each of the above local offices have been referred on to the section dealing with them in headquarters and *(c)* in how many cases for each of the above local offices he has used his discretionary power.

Mr. Major: Requests to local social security offices under schedule 2A, paragraph 5(4)*(m)* of the Supplementary Benefit Requirements Regulations are referred to headquarters. In respect of the individual offices mentioned by the hon. Member, four requests have been forwarded, all from the local office in Middlesbrough, of which one was successful. Overall, 94 requests have been received, of which 21 were successful.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people were in receipt of supplementary benefit in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Major: Sunderland is covered for social security purposes by the Department's offices at Sunderland (South) and Sunderland (North) and is situated in the Department's north-eastern region. North-eastern region was formed in 1982 by the amalgamation of the former Yorkshire and Humberside region with the major part of the former northern region. The table shows the total number of people receiving supplementary benefit in *(a)* both Sunderland local offices and *(b)* Northern and Yorkshire Humberside regions together for 1979-81 and north-eastern region from 1982 onwards. Figures given show the position at 6 May 1986, the latest available, and at comparable dates for each of the years since 1979.

Year	*Sunderland*	*Region*
1979	22,859	489,380
1980	23,137	497,297
1981	26,456	524,270
1982	31,272	663,069
1983	33,490	710,426
1984	36,248	756,721
1985	37,572	791,634
1986	38,678	804,115

Source: 100 per cent. count of live cases in action.

Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has considered an application for an exhibition relating to the Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children to be displayed in the Upper Waiting Hall.

Mr. Newton: I understand that, under procedures agreed by the Services Committee, arrangements have been made with the authorities of the House for the exhibition to be held in the Upper Waiting Hall from 9 to 13 June 1986.

British Home for Incurables Hospital

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the financial consequences for the British Home for Incurables hospital in Crown Lane, London SW16 of changes in the payment of housing allowances for those admitted under the age of 65 years.

Mr. Newton: I presume the hon. Member is referring to changes in the supplementary benefit limits for residential care and nursing homes. Information on which to base the estimate requested is not available. However, prior to April 1985, when the new structure was introduced, the weekly supplementary benefit entitlement of residents in the home ranged from £136·15 to £164·75. The national limit for disabled residents below pension age in this type of home was £198·60 a week from April to November 1985 and has been £230 a week since then.

AIDS

Mrs. Renée Short asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if the Government will issue guidance to travellers from the United Kingdom to countries where the incidence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome virus is known to be high about the risks of infection and on precautions to avoid infection; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has any plans to advise travellers to Africa of the risks of contracting HTLV III virus infection.

Mr. Hayhoe: A reference to acquired immune deficiency syndrome was included this year for the first time in my Department's leaflet SA35 entitled "Protect your health abroad".

Fuller information for travellers about the risks of infection and on appropriate precautions is now being prepared.

Parliamentary Constituencies

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the 20 largest parliamentary constituencies by electorate, with their electorates; and what is the average constituency electorate on the current register.

Mr. Whitney: The 20 constituencies in the United Kingdom with the largest electorates, and the average electorates are:

Parliamentary Constituency	*1986 Electorate*
Isle of Wight	98,645
Milton Keynes	93,562
Eastleigh	87,416
East Berkshire	87,336
Devizes	86,336
East Hampshire	86,085
Horsham	85,574
Huntingdon	84,807
Swindon	84,734
Westbury	84,539
Crosby	84,362
Wokingham	84,018
Cirencester and Tewkesbury	83,971
South Colchester and Maldon	83,881
Peterborough	83,580
Ryedale	82,684
The Wrekin	82,508
Woking	82,414
Chelmsford	82,411
North Colchester	82,288
Average Constituency Electorate	
(i) United Kingdom	66,757
(ii) England	69,137

Circulars (Cover Charge)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether his Department has any plans to put a cover charge on indices of circulars issued by his Department.

Mr. Whitney: The Department publishes an index of health circulars, notices and other guidance material annually and this has a cover charge; copies are issued free to those authorities which receive the circulars as of right. The index is designed as an aid to the use of published material and the charge is made partially to cover the cost of production.

NHS (Disciplinary Inquiries)

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, pursuant to his answer of 8 May, *Official Report*, column *231*, he plans to collect information centrally on the cost and duration of National Health Service disciplinary inquiries.

Mr. Hayhoe: No.

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received, and from which organisations or individuals, about the system of National Health Service disciplinary inquiries.

Mr. Hayhoe: Excluding representations about individual cases, three letters from individuals and a paper from the Trent regional health authority about the general system of disciplinary inquiry for hospital doctors have been received.

Community Health Councils

Mr. Kirkwood asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what advice his Department issues to regional health authorities and community health councils on staff appointments to community health councils.

Mr. Whitney: The Community Health Councils Regulations (S.I. 1985 No. 304) govern the appointment of staff for community health councils. In addition, regional health authorities are required to follow the relevant Whitley Council agreements on pay and conditions of service.

Patients (Statistics)

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what proportion of reductions in patients awaiting inpatient treatment can be ascribed to *(a)* patients dying, *(b)* patients moving from their district of residence, *(c)* patients indicating they no longer wish to be admitted to hospital and *(d)* patients not responding to inquiries about their continuation on waiting lists.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally.

Mr. Sean Hughes asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what reductions in patients awaiting inpatient treatment have resulted from Government initiatives in 1985 and 1986.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible to estimate from information held centrally the reason for the fall in waiting lists which has been continuous from March 1983 to the latest date, 30 September 1985, for which figures are available. The reasons for the reduction are complex and would include both the increased number of patients treated and action which Ministers asked health authorities to take to ensure that all names on waiting lists actually relate to people still requiring treatment.

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many *(a)* inpatients and *(b)* outpatients were treated in the northern region in 1983, 1984 and 1985; and what were the percentage changes in each year.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend all the information he seeks. Information on individual patients treated is not available centrally and figures for 1985 are not yet available. The available information is given in the table.

National Health Service Hospitals in Northern Regional Health Authority

All specialties	*1983*	*1984*	*Percentage increase 1983-1984*
In-patient cases	409,115	420,080	2·7
Day cases	66,093	68,658	3·9
Out-patient attendances:			
New attendances	557,125	569,743	2·3
Total attendances	2,451,627	2,508,759	2·3

X-ray Radiation

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any estimation of the number of deaths caused by cancer resulting from radiation from medical X-rays.

Mr. Whitney: It is not possible from statistics available to the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys to estimate the number of deaths caused by cancer resulting from radiation from medical X-rays.

Pharmacists (Contract)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what timing amendments are proposed to the transitional arrangements in the light of the delayed introduction of the proposed new contract for pharmacists.

Mr. Hayhoe: I assume my hon. Friend is referring to possible changes to the transitional arrangements pending the implementation of the pharmacists' new contract agreement as set out in the draft guidelines, copies of which have been placed in the Library. Until the NHS (Amendment) Bill completes its passage through Parliament, and a new date for implementation of the contract is known, no new transitional arrangements will be announced.

Pharmacy Practices Sub-committees

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the estimated cost of setting up the proposed new pharmacy practices sub-committees.

Mr. Hayhoe: The cost of the pharmacy practices sub-committees will be borne from within family practitioner committees' allocated budget for administration.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether any pharmacy practices sub-committees have already been set up and persons nominated to serve.

Mr. Hayhoe: Not to my knowledge.

Rural Dispensing

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the annual cost of the rural dispensing national appeal machinery for the latest year available.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not held separately from other departmental expenditure.

Pharmacies (Practice Allowance)

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many current pharmacies do not receive the basic practice allowance.

Mr. Hayhoe: On 31 December 1985, there were approximately 335 pharmacies in England and Wales not in receipt of a basic practice allowance.

Pharmacies

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many pharmacies there are per thousand population in Great Britain compared to France, Italy and West Germany, at the latest available date.

Mr. Hayhoe: Each of the countries quoted operates different primary health care schemes and comparisons of levels of pharmaceutical services based solely on the numbers of pharmacies are not necessarily valid. Apart from Great Britain, there are no official statistics on the numbers of pharmacies in these countries. But using information available, in 1982 there was approximately one pharmacy for every 5,100 persons in Great Britain compared with 3,750 in West Germany; 3,000 in France; and 4,000 in Italy.

Mr. Michael Morris asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether the Government intend to ensure that all family practitioner committees shall publish the number of pharmacies per thousand population in their area compared to a national norm.

Mr. Hayhoe: There is no national norm. The ratio of pharmacies to population might be one of many items of information a family practitioner committee would need to collect to assess the adequacy of services provided to the public.

"Guide to Healthy Eating"

Mr. Coombs asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide additional funding for the Health Education Council to enable wider circulation of its "Guide to Healthy Eating".

Mr. Whitney: The costs associated with this publication were included in the council's estimated expenditure for 1986-87. We would normally expect printing or distribution above the planned level to be contained within the council's resource allocation.

Disposal Certificate

Mr. Alex Carlile asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any proposals for re-titling the disposal certificate issued by the Registrars of Births, Marriages and Deaths; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: Disposal certificates are issued in respect of stillbirths as well as deaths. From 1 January 1986 all disposal certificates relating to stillbirths bear the title "Certificate for Burial or Cremation" and future prints of disposal certificates for deaths are being similarly retitled.

NHS (Leeds, East)

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many patients have been treated by the National Heath Service within the Leeds, East district in

each year since 1977; and what was the average size of the waiting list for treatment in each such year for people living within that district.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend information in precisely the form requested. The information available centrally is given in the tables.

Leeds Eastern district health authority: activity during the year and waiting list

	1977	*1978*	**1979*	*1980*	*1981*	**1982*	*1983*	*1984*
In-patient discharges and deaths	50,542	50,893	51,012	54,687	56,070	50,592	56,815	57,647
Day cases	5,082	4,549	4,965	5,248	6,063	4,805	6,501	5,784
New out-patients	44,542	45,666	51,538	54,901	54,623	53,886	56,803	56,812
Total out-patient attendances	224,898	235,965	257,350	267,299	269,828	267,158	287,097	297,734
In-patient waiting list at:								
31 March	3,070	2,904	4,455	3,829	3,878	4,415	5,984	5,248
30 September	2,996	3,301	3,941	3,818	3,995	6,169	5,512	4,874
31 December	3,283	4,037	4,252	4,162	4,259	6,478	5,308	5,150

* Activity levels in 1979 and 1982 were in general affected by industrial action in the health service.

Domestic Assistance Addition

Mr. Wigley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish, on the basis of his latest available information, the number of people who are in receipt of domestic assistance addition; if he will analyse the distribution of the weekly value of this payment by £10 bands; and if he will publish an analysis of the general categories of disablement in respect of these persons.

Mr. Newton: From information from the December 1983 annual statistical inquiry for supplementary benefit it is estimated that there were some 2,400 claimants receiving an additional requirement for domestic assistance with an average payment of £3·59. Provisional estimates from the December 1984 inquiry indicate about 3,150 cases with an average payment of £3·90. Because of the few claimants shown in the inquiries as receiving the addition, estimates are subject to the normal uncertainties implicit in a small sample size. A more detailed breakdown by range of payment is as follows:

Range of payment £	*Estimated number of cases*
10·00	3,000
10·00–19·99	100
20·00–29·99	—
30·00–39·99	—
40·00–49·99	50
50+	—
Total	3,150

Source: 1984 ASE provisional figures.

The information about ranges of payment should be regarded as giving only a broad indication of the numbers involved. In particular, the estimated numbers receiving additions over £10 is based on only three sample cases.

None the less, the estimates suggest that receipt of the additional requirement continues to be on a modest scale and, generally, for relatively small amounts. Information is not available about the type of disability.

Local Authority Expenditure

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86, showing local authority expenditure on personal social services, distinguishing between wages/salaries and administration.

Mr. Whitney: The available information is given in the table. The 1984-85 figures are still provisional. The 1985-86 gross current expenditure figure is based on local authorities' present estimates of expenditure in that year and cannot be broken down into employee costs, etc.

England figures in £ million cash

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
Employee costs	1,455	1,546	—
Administration	307	318	—
Other running expenses	724	773	—
Gross current expenditure	2,486	2,637	2,792

Pensions (Tax Expenditures)

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish figures comparing estimated tax expenditures on private pensions in 1985-86, in 2000-01 and on maturity of the state earnings-related pension scheme, as a result of pension changes in the Social Security Bill; and if he will show the extent to which these increased tax expenditures are expected to offset the savings in benefit expenditure.

Mr. Newton: Estimates of the costs in 1985-86 of tax allowances and reliefs for occupational pension schemes and retirement annuities are given in table 2.24 of volume two of "The Government's Expenditure Plans 1986-87 to 1988-89" (Cmnd. 9702-II).

I regret that the forward projections requested are not available and could be produced only at disproportionate cost; such projections would depend on a number of subjective assumptions, including estimates of the future coverage of occupational and personal pension schemes.

Statutory Sick Pay

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the total cost of statutory sick pay in each year since it was introduced.

Mr. Major: Statutory sick pay was introduced in April 1983 and the latest information available is that payments totalling £430 million and £509 million were made in 1983-84 and 1984-85 respectively.

Hip Operations

Sir David Price asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* the number of hip replacement operations which have taken

place in England for each of the last 10 years; what is the latest estimate of the average waiting time between diagnosis and operation; and what is the average cost to the National Health Service of such operations.

Mr. Whitney: The available information for the 10 years up to 1984, the latest year for which information is held centrally, is given in the table.

Estimated number of operations for total hip replacement or other arthroplasty of hip, NHS hospitals in England

Year	Estimated number
1975	22,350
1976	25,400
1977	27,430
1978	28,090
1979	30,730
1980	33,420
1981	34,780
1982	33,730
1983	37,320
1984	37,970

The estimated median interval between the date a patient was placed on the waiting list and the date of admission to hospital for such operations in England in 1984 was 24 weeks.

The estimated average cost of a hip operation, based on average length of stay of 24 days, and costs in large acute hospitals, is £3,300 at 1986-87 prices, allowing for capital costs and the cost of the prosthesis.

Geriatric Beds

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any estimate of the number of people on the waiting list for geriatric beds in Leicester.

Mr. Whitney: On 31 March 1986 there were 61 people awaiting admission to beds in geriatric departments in Leicestershire district health authority.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list those hospitals which have reduced their waiting lists most in the last three years; and if he will make a statement about Scunthorpe General Hospital's performance in this regard.

Mr. Whitney: Hospital waiting lists are usually managed on a district basis. Districts recording the biggest percentage decrease in total numbers of hospital in-patient waiting lists are shown in the tables. They show that Scunthorpe district health authority made the biggest reduction in total cases between 1984 and 1985 and the 19th biggest between 1982 and 1985.

TABLE 1

Waiting list: Ranking of District Health Authorities by percentage decrease of total waiting list cases between September 1984 and 1985

District health authority	1984	1985	Percentage change	Rank*
SCUNTHORPE	4,654	2,962	−57·1	1
Newham	1,560	999	−56·2	2
Macclesfield	1,767	1,152	−53·4	3
Darlington	2,073	1,360	−52·4	4
Grimsby	1,783	1,204	−48·1	5
Tunbridge Wells	7,071	4,859	−45·5	6
Salisbury	5,903	4,261	−38·5	7
Rugby	589	432	−36·3	8
Norwich	10,677	7,926	−34·7	9
South Sefton	5,150	3,850	−33·8	10
Bromsgrove and Redditch	2,647	1,991	−32·9	11
North West Durham	847	643	−31·7	12
Frenchay	5,846	4,483	−30·4	13
The Maudsley Hospital	148	115	−28·7	14
Moorfields Eye Hospital	1,720	1,350	−27·4	15
Aylesbury Vale	5,111	4,024	−27·0	16
Victoria†	2,739	2,180	−25·6	17
North West Hertfordshire	2,409	1,930	−24·8	18
Coventry	8,106	6,501	−24·7	19
Northallerton	627	506	−23·9	20

* Out of 191 district health authorities

† Now part of Riverside District Health Authority

TABLE 2

Waiting list: Ranking by percentage decrease of total waiting list cases between September 1982 and 1985

District health authority	1982	1985	Percentage change	Rank*
Darlington	3,140	1,360	−56·7	1
Newham	2,222	999	−55·0	2
North West Durham	1,325	643	−51·5	3
Rugby	864	432	−50·0	4
Macclesfield	2,302	1,152	−50·0	5
North Tees	1,938	995	−49·2	6
Grimsby	2,355	1,204	−48·9	7

District health authority	1982	1985	Percentage change	Rank*
North Manchester	4,726	2,490	−47·3	8
Barnsley	3,934	2,080	−47·1	9
Chester	2,940	1,573	−46·5	10
Durham	1,489	880	−40·9	11
Blackburn, Hyndburn and Ribble Valley	3,294	1,994	−39·2	12
South Sefton	6,332	3,850	−39·5	13
Haringey	1,708	1,055	−38·2	14
Gateshead	1,661	1,036	−37·6	15
Aylesbury Vale	6,450	4,024	−37·6	16
East Yorkshire	1,924	1,205	−37·4	17
West Cumbria	1,870	1,186	−36·6	18
SCUNTHORPE	4,609	2,962	−35·7	19
Wakefield	3,216	2,074	−35·5	20

* Out of 191 district health authorities

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what has been the change in waiting lists for inpatient hospital treatment for hospitals within the Bradford district health authority for each year from 1979 to the latest year for which figures are available.

Mr. Whitney: The requested information is given in the table.

Number of cases on inpatient waiting list in Bradford district health authority at 30 September for each year from 1978 to 1985

Year	Number	Change from previous year	
		Number	Per cent.
1978	3,150	—	—
*1979	5,060	†1,910	+60·6
1980	4,357	−703	−13·9
1981	4,191	−166	−3·8
1982	6,663	+2,472	+59·0
1983	5,442	−1,221	−18·3
1984	5,610	+168	+3·1
1985	5,956	+346	+6·2

* Figures for 1979 and 1982 were affected by industrial action in the Health Service.

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide details of the waiting lists in the Basildon and Thurrock district health authority area in (i) gynaecology, (ii) orthopaedic and (iii) ear, nose and throat; and if he will state how these compare with the regional averages.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 27 February 1986, c. *684*]: The information requested is given in the table.

Cases on inpatients waiting list for admission to National Health Service hospitals at 30 September 1985

	Urgent		Non-urgent		Total of all cases
	All cases	Percentage of urgent cases waiting for more than one month	All cases	Percentage of non-urgent cases waiting for more than one month	
Basildon and Thurrock District Health Authority					
Gynaecology	30	73·3	449	40·8	479
Traumatic and Orthopaedic surgery	139	82·7	597	50·4	736
Ear, nose and throat	3	0	164	0	167
North East Thames Regional Health Authority					
Gynaecology	737	57·9	6,627	9·1	7,364
Traumatic and Orthopaedic surgery	1,498	78·5	12,944	34·5	14,442
Ear, nose and throat	772	65	11,763	23·9	12,490

Medical Staff (Scunthorpe)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and other staff there are at Scunthorpe general hospital; how these figures compare with 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) by what absolute amount spending at Scunthorpe general hospital has increased since 1979, expressed at constant prices; and if he will make a statement;

(3) if he will make a statement about the programme of improvements to catering facilities at Scunthorpe general hospital;

(4) if he will make a statement about hospital expenditure at Scunthorpe general hospital, identifying in which areas new or improved facilities have been provided, at what cost, and what the future programme is;

(5) what recent improvements have been made in patient care at Scunthorpe general hospital; what further improvements are proposed; and if he will make a statement;

(6) how many more beds will be available for the treatment of patients in Scunthorpe health district and Scunthorpe general hospital after the completion of the

capital programme; how this figure compares with 1979; what will be the effect on patient care; and if he will make a statement;

(7) how many day cases were treated at Scunthorpe general hospital between April 1985 and December 1985 compared with the same period in 1984; and if he will express any increase in absolute and percentage terms;

(8) what is the anticipated increase in the number of doctors, nurses, paramedical staff and staff in all other departments of Scunthorpe general hospital and Scunthorpe health district upon completion of the capital programme.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the Scunthorpe health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Scunthorpe General Hospital

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) by how much as a percentage spending has increased in real terms at Scunthorpe general hospital since 1979; and if he will list those hospitals in the Yorkshire region where spending has increased in real terms since 1979 in order of priority;

(2) if he will make a statement about the operation of the resource allocation working party formula and its effects upon the Scunthorpe health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not collected centrally. My hon. Friend may wish to write to the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many beds are available for the treatment of patients in Scunthorpe general hospital now; how this figure compares with 1979; and if he will make a statement;

(2) how many patients, including inpatients and outpatients, were treated at Scunthorpe general hospital in the last year for which figures are available; how this compares with that for the year ended June 1980; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend information in precisely the form he seeks. Hospital activity figures are collected centrally on a calendar year basis. The available information is given in the table.

Scunthorpe general hospital

	1979	*1984*
Average daily number of available beds	403	397
In-patient cases treated	14,871	17,144
New out-patients	20,209	21,525
Total out-patient attendances	82,071	93,625

Health Expenditure (Yorkshire)

Mr. Hickmet asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement about the operation of the resource allocation working party formula as it affects the Yorkshire regional health authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: The principle underlying the resource allocation working party (RAWP) formula is to distribute resources more fairly across the country so as to promote equality of access to health care for people in equal need. RAWP seeks to determine each region's target share of the available resources according to the size of its population, weighted to take account of age, relative mortality (as a proxy for morbidity) and other factors. These criteria are now being reviewed.

In 1977-78, the first year in which the RAWP formula was applied, regions ranged from 11 per cent. below their RAWP target to 15 per cent. above target, with the Yorkshire region at 4·4 per cent. below target. By 1986-87, all except the two North Thames regions are within 4 per cent. of their target, with the Yorkshire region 2·2 per cent. below target. The rate of progress towards target is influenced by a number of factors. The highest increases in funding have generally been allocated to the regions furthest from target, but increases are constrained by the need to proceed at a manageable pace to allow regions time to adjust their plans. Population growth or decline also affects the extent to which funding increases effectively bring a region closer towards its target. Thus some regions with declining populations have moved towards their targets more rapidly than has the Yorkshire region.

A similar approach is used for the distribution of capital funding. An element of funding distributed on the basis of regions' capital stock is currently being phased out, and by 1991-92, capital will be distributed on the basis of weighted population only. In 1986-87, the RAWP element of Yorkshire region's £56 million capital allocation amounted to £49·5 million: this represents £13·38 per head of weighted population compared with a national average of £12·70.

Hospital Development

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he will list the major hospital developments completed or under construction in the northern region in each year since 1979 and the estimated cost of each at current prices.

Mr. Whitney: The following table lists the major hospital schemes in the northern region each with a total cost of over £5 million at current prices which have either been completed since 1979 or are currently under construction.

Scheme	*Year completed*	*Estimated total cost at current prices £ million*
Completed		
South Cleveland general phase 1	1981	14·2
North Tyneside phase 1	1983	16·4
Furness (Barrow) DGH phase 1	1984	23·8
Royal Victoria infirmary phase 4	1984	33·5
Hartlepool DGH phase 1	1984	7·3
Queen Elizabeth Gateshead phase 1	1985	10·3
Currently under construction		
South Cleveland general phase 1B	—	8·1

Ambulance Service

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what mileage was covered by ambulances run by the London ambulance service in 1985 and in the first quarter of 1986; and what is the estimate of that to be run in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: The information requested is as follows:

	Emergency	*Non-emergency*	*Total*
Mileage in 1985	3,695,393	7,772,822	11,468,215
Mileage in first quarter of 1986	949,377	1,689,232	2,638,609
Estimated mileage in 1986	3,800,000	6,000,000	9,800,000

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what were the hours worked by the personnel of the London ambulance service and how many were employed by them full time in 1985; and what are his estimates of numbers of personnel and hours to be worked in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that I am unable to give the hon. Member precisely the information he requires. The number of hours worked by the London ambulance service is not available. However, a normal working week is 40 hours and applying that to the following staffing figures should give a reasonable approximation:

	Actual 1985	*Target 1986*
Average number of staff in post	2,062	2,328
Average weekly overtime (wte)* worked	491	116
Average weekly total (wte)*	2,553	2,444

* Whole-time equivalent.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will state the number of non-emergency cases carried by the London ambulance service in each of the years 1984 and 1985 and the numbers he expects to be carried in 1986.

Mr. Whitney: I regret that I am unable to give the hon. Member all the information he requires as the number of cases carried by the London ambulance service is not collected. However, the number of actual non-emergency journeys is as follows:

Number of non-emergency patient journeys

	Number
1984*	2,269,009
1985*	2,200,627
1986†	2,038,000

* Actual.
† Projected.

Mr. Spearing asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what requests have been made by the South-West Thames regional health authority to district health authorities in respect of use of the London ambulance service; what is the target of that authority's request of redirection in the number of "non-emergency" cases to be carried.

Mr. Whitney: In a letter dated 20 March 1986, the South-West Thames regional health authority asked district health authorities to reduce the demand for non-emergency ambulance transport for walking cases by 40 per cent.

Hospital Activity Returns

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library a copy of each health district's SH3 hospital activity return for each year since 1978.

Mr. Whitney: No. The very detailed information the hon. Member has asked for would consist of about 10,000 pages, and I do not consider its production would be an appropriate use of departmental resources.

Benefits

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the effect of increasing long-term national insurance benefits by £5 a week for a single person and £8 for a married couple and raising child benefit by £3 a week on the numbers claiming *(a)* supplementary benefit, *(b* housing benefit and *(c)* family income supplement, if no corresponding adjustments were made to the eligibility levels for income tested support.

Mr. Newton: Parts *(a)* and *(b)* cannot be answered without incurring disproportionate costs. Part *(c)* implies minimal reductions in the numbers claiming family income supplement.

Leukaemia

Mr. O'Brien asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the number of patients receiving treatment for leukaemia in each of the area health districts in west Yorkshire; and what were the numbers in each district in west Yorkshire in each of the last three years.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give the hon. Member the information he seeks. It is not collected centrally. He may wish to write to the chairman of the Yorkshire regional health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Epilepsy

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if there are any plans to include epilepsy as a prescribed disease for exemption from prescription charges; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy is included in the list of medical conditions which confer entitlement to exemption from prescription charges.

Prescription Charges

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list the prescribed diseases which confer exemption from prescription charges.

Mr. Hayhoe: The following medical conditions are those which confer entitlement to exemption from prescription charges.

(i) a permanent fistula (including caecostomy, colostomy, laryngostomy or ileostomy) requiring continuous surgical dressing or an appliance;
(ii) one of the following disorders for which specific substitution therapy is essential:
Addison's disease and other forms of hypoadrenalism,
diabetes insipidus and other forms of hypopituitarism,
diabetes mellitus,
hypoparathyroidism,
myastenia gravis,
myxoedema;
(iii) epilepsy requiring continuous anti-convulsive therapy;
(iv) a continuing physical disability which prevents the patient from leaving his residence without the help of another person.

Potassium Iodate Tablets

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) how many of the potassium iodate tablets held to counter possible ionising radiation have been in stock for more than 10, five, two and one years, respectively; (2) what is the shelf life of potassium iodate tablets.

Mr. Whitney: I shall let the hon. Member have replies as soon as possible.

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many potassium iodate tablets would be required to prevent radioactive iodine collecting in the thyroid of five, 10 and 18-year-olds, respectively, at levels of radiation reported within five miles of Windscale in 1957 and within five, 10 and 20 miles of Chernobyl in 1986.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 23 May 1986, c. *385*]: I am advised that there is no indication for taking potassium iodate tablets unless it is estimated that the radiation dose to the thyroid from exposure to radioactive iodine may reach 50 mSv or more and that the recommended dose of potassium iodate to anyone over four years old is 200 milligrams which is provided by two tablets.

I am also advised that the estimated dose to the thyroid for persons within five miles of the Windscale fire was always less than 50 mSv and that information is not available to estimate the radiation dose to the thyroid received by persons in the area surrounding Chernobyl.

Limited List Prescribing

Mr. Dobson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he has any plans to include Comfeel Ulcus and Granuflex on the limited list.

Mr. Hayhoe: These are two of a number of modern wound care products which the Department has been asked to consider for the list of prescribable dressings. The manufacturers have been advised that further evidence is needed from controlled clinical trials on the efficacy and cost-effectiveness of the products. This information should enable the claims made for the new dressings to be assessed.

Speech Therapists

Mr. Yeo asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will establish an inquiry into the need for speech therapists in the light of his policies on care in the community.

Mr. Whitney: District health authorities are responsible for the provision of speech therapy services for people both in hospital and in the community. We would expect that authorities are already taking proper account of our policies for care in the community in formulating their development plans for speech therapy services.

Child Benefit

Mr. Michael Forsyth asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what representations he has received regarding the ineligibility for child benefit of parents with children aged over 16 years being educated at home; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: Twelve letters have been received from hon. Members and 15 from the general public. A Government amendment has been made to the Social Security Bill to provide for child benefit to be paid for children who continue to be educated at home after reaching the age of 16 years, having been educated at home before reaching that age. Under the Child Benefit Act, at present, benefit is not paid in these circumstances.

Hospital Waiting Lists

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will set out the number on the waiting lists for surgery in *(a)* the Yorkshire regional health authority and *(b)* the Harrogate health authority now and at approximately the same date in each of the last three years.

Mr. Whitney: I am sorry I cannot give my hon. Friend precisely the information he seeks. The latest available information is given in the table. The number of surgical in-patient cases treated in Harrogate district health authority increased from 8,455 to 8,605 between 1982 and 1984.

Number of cases on in-patient waiting list for admission to surgical beds in NHS hospitals at 30 September

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority	51,670	48,055	46,158	44,934
Harrogate District Health Authority	1,155	1,180	1,335	1,446

Hospital Closures

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make it his policy to decline to approve any hospital closures in Burnley; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hayhoe: Any proposal for permanent closure is subject to full local consultation in line with established procedures. If agreement cannot be reached locally and with the regional health authority, the proposal is referred to Ministers for final decision.

Benefits (Burnley)

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the total cost in Burnley of payments to the unemployed in each year since 1979 of (i) unemployment benefit, (ii) supplementary allowances and (iii) housing benefits, respectively.

Mr. Major: I regret that this information is not available.

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish a table showing the numbers of unemployed people in Burnley, by entitlement to benefit for each year since 1979 and distinguishing between the following (i) unemployment benefit only, (ii) unemployment benefit and supplementary benefit, (iii) supplementary benefit only, (iv) no benefit and (v) housing benefit.

Mr. Major: The following table shows the numbers of unemployed people in Burnley in November each year

since 1979 receiving the following benefits (i) unemployment benefit only, (ii) unemployment and supplementary benefits, (iii) supplementary benefit only and (iv) no benefit. Similar information is not available for housing benefit.

Burnley

Thousands

	Unemployment benefit	*Unemployment and supplementary benefit*	*Supplementary benefit*	*No benefit*	*Total*
1979	1·0	0·2	1·0	0·6	2·8
1980	3·3	0·6	1·7	0·9	6·5
1982*	2·6	0·9	3·9	1·5	8·9
1983	2·2	0·7	4·5	1·3	8·7
1985*	1·8	0·6	4·1	1·4	7·9

* Figures for 1981 and 1984 are not available because of industrial action.
Source: Quarterly count of unemployed claimants.

Medical Laboratory Scientific Officers

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate the number of medical laboratory scientific officers who have ceased employment with the National Health Service in the past 18 months.

Mr. Whitney: This information is not available centrally. The number of medical laboratory scientific officers in post in each of the three years up to September 1984, the latest date for which information is available, varied only marginally.

Diabetics

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services, what steps are being taken in the National Health Service to seek to ensure that diabetic children carry out their blood tests correctly.

Mr. Whitney: Careful monitoring of the blood sugar levels of a diabetic child is part of the clinical management of the condition by the doctor responsible, who would normally be a hospital consultant. Education and training of the patient, and family if appropriate, are essential parts of this managment. In some areas specialist nurses are available to assist with this.

Mr. Frank Field asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether plastic disposable syringes are available on National Health Service prescriptions to diabetics who require insulin injections.

Mr. Hayhoe: Disposable syringes are not included in the list of appliances which general practitioners may prescribe on the National Health Service. The prescribable list includes a range of reusable hypodermic equipment. If it is medically necessary for a diabetic, or any other patient, to use disposable syringes they may be supplied on the National Health Service through the hospital service.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many new cases of diabetes have been diagnosed in each of the last five years; what is the patient age distribution of diagnosis; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: There are no centrally collected statistics on the incidence or age distribution of diabetes. It has been estimated that in the United Kingdom over a million people suffer from the condition and that some 30,000 new cases are diagnosed each year, of whom 1,500 are children. Diabetes can occur at any age but the incidence of non-insulin-dependent diabetes is more common after middle age. The peak years for the incidence of insulin-dependent diabetes occur in childhood.

Andersen Report

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he intends to give any further consideration to the recommendations of the Andersen report.

Mr. Hayhoe: I presume the hon. Member is referring to the "Report of a study of family practitioner services administration and the use of computers" by management consultants Arthur Andersen and Co., which was published in July 1984. The programme of computerising the administration of the family practitioner services is now well under way and all the committees should be computerised by April 1988.

Primary Health Care

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if additional resources are to be allocated to the provision of primary health care for the over-75s in inner city practices.

Mr. Hayhoe: A major review of primary health care is under way: the Command Paper "Primary Health Care: An Agenda for Discussion" (Cmnd. 9771) issued in April includes a chapter on promoting primary health care in inner cities for people of all ages. Consultations on the paper will continue until the end of the year and I intend to await the outcome of the review before reaching conclusions.

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what provision is made for the after-care of diabetics discharged from hospital.

Mr. Whitney: The after-care of a diabetic patient discharged from hospital is the responsibility of the general practitioner. Many diabetics, however, continue attending hospital clinics regularly. Specialist nursing, dietetic advice and chiropody services are also available.

Aspartame

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what recent representations he has received about the possible side-effects of aspartame in low-calorie drinks on diabetics.

Mr. Whitney: We have received no recent representations on this subject. I am advised that there is no evidence to suggest that the artificial sweetener aspartame is unsafe for diabetics.

Cancer Units

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will list all applications received from district health authorities since the beginning of 1986 to close cancer units; which are currently under consideration; and which have to date been refused.

Mr. Hayhoe: Since the beginning of 1986 no proposals concerning the closure of cancer units have come before Ministers for consideration.

NHS Training Authority

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the role of and the budget provided for the National Health Service training authority.

Mr. Whitney: The role of the authority is to identify the training needs of National Health Service staff in England and Wales; to formulate, co-ordinate and develop national training policies and standards; to provide, or make arrangements for the provision of, training programmes, courses and research; to stimulate, monitor and review training activities; and to advise the Secretary of State and health authorities on all matters related to training. The authority covers the training needs of all National Health Service staff, except for those for whom another statutory body has responsibilities for training. The authority's budget for 1986-87 is £4·734 million.

Pay Beds

Mr. Galley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is the average cost of a National Health Service pay bed, including all relevant overheads *(a)* nationally and *(b)* in the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available in the form requested. Charges for National Health Service pay beds are set by reference to costs specific to classes of hospitals in which there are authorised pay beds. Nationally costs (and therefore charges) range from £54 to £256 per day according to the class of hospital. Five of the eight classes of hospital are represented in the Yorkshire region with charges—set at national rates—ranging from £54 to £133. In fact the range of costs at the specific classes of hospitals authorised to treat patients in Yorkshire is lower than the national average for those classes, ranging from £50 to £120.

Hospital Staff (Charges)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date board and lodging and meals charges for nurses and auxiliary staff in hospitals were last raised.

Mr. Hayhoe: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

NHS (Pay)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the minimum and maximum annual pay for each grade of nurses, midwives and health visitors at 1 April, the amounts they will receive after the recent pay awards and the percentage increase they will receive for the whole year; and what is the day in July from which the award will be operative.

Mr. Hayhoe: Salary rates for all grades as at 1 April and from 1 July are set out in appendix A to the review body report (Cmnd. 9782). The following table shows, for the main nursing pay grades and a number of the more senior grades, minimum and maximum basic annual salaries as at 1 April 1986 and 1 July 1986, the date from which the salaries recommended by the pay review body will be paid. It also shows the effective percentage increases payable in the financial year 1986-87. The percentage increases in salary points are higher.

Grades	*Basic pay scales:*				*Percentage increase 1986-87*	
	At 1 April 1986		*As from 1 July 1986*			
	Minimum £	*Maximum* £	*Minimum* £	*Maximum* £	*Minimum Per cent.*	*Maximum Per cent.*
Nursing Sister II (Ward Sister/Midwifery Sister/District Midwife)	7,480	10,000	8,070	10,800	5·9	6
Staff Nurse RGN (Staff Midwife)	6,000	7,175	6,475	7,750	5·9	6
Enrolled Nurse	5,270	6,500	5,700	7,020	6	6
Nursing Auxiliary	3,950	5,120	4,265	5,525	6	5·9
Student	4,100	4,580	4,325	4,875	4·1	4·8
Tutor	9,650	11,425	10,420	12,345	6	6
Clinical Teacher	8,900	10,675	9,610	11,535	6	6
Senior Nurse 8 (Clinical/Educational/Managerial)	8,660	10,460	9,350	11,300	6	6
Health visitor	8,400	10,200	9,070	11,020	6	6
Regional Nursing Officer—R1	21,520	27,550	23,240	29,750	6	6
District Nursing Officer—DHA1(T)	19,955	26,135	21,545	28,225	6	6
Director of Nursing Services I, Director of Nursing Education I	16,280	19,060	17,585	20,585	6	6
Senior Nurse 6 (Clinical/Educational/Managerial)	10,080	11,555	10,880	12,480	5·95	6

Neasden Hospital (Ward Closure)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many extra district nurses and health visitors have been appointed by the Brent district health authority since November 1985 when the Minister's approval to close a ward in Neasden hospital was accompanied by a letter to the hon. Member for Brent, South stating that the resources released by this change would be accompanied by increased staff in these two specialties.

Mr. Hayhoe: I regret that this information is not available centrally. The hon. Member may wish to approach the chairman of the Brent district health authority who may be able to provide the information requested.

Chernobyl Accident

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) what is the best estimate of immediate exposure to radiation from cloud gamma dose received by British students in *(a)* Minsk and *(b)* Kiev at the time of the Chernobyl incident; what assessment has been made for neutron dose; and if he will make a statement;

(2) what is the best estimate of the range of whole body dose received by those British students in *(a)* Minsk and *(b)* Kiev at the time of the Chernobyl incident and immediately afterwards; and if he will make a statement;

(3) what traces of alpha contamination were found on the clothes of the British students who were in Minsk and Kiev at the time of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant; what were the levels; and what were the different radionuclides; (4) if he will define the specific limit referred to by the National Radiological Protection Board in relation to its statement that those British students who have returned from the vicinity of the Chernobyl reactor accident had received an iodine dose to the thyroid gland of 10 per cent. of the International Commission on Radiological Protection limit; and what were the thyroid doses for *(a)* those students who had been in Minsk and *(b)* those students who had been in Kiev at the time of the accident and up to the day they left the Soviet Union.

Mr. Whitney: As the general information requested by the hon. Member is of a highly technical nature, I suggest that he write to the chairman of the National Radiological Protection Board. Information relating to individual students must be protected by the normal rules on disclosure of medical data.

Registered Homes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Registered Homes Act 1984, so as to increase the number of inspections of such homes.

Mr. Whitney: I refer my hon. Friend to my reply to him on 28 January at column *487* and that to my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Leicester, South (Mr. Spencer) on 29 April at column *383*. An interim report on the two-year study by the Social Services Inspectorate dealing with the systems that local authorities are devising to implement the legislation has just been sent to directors of social services to assist them in the continuing development of registration work. A copy of the report is in the Library. There will be a further report by the inspectorate around the turn of the year. This will consider the impact of the changes on the quality of care provided in the homes themselves. This will include an examination of the standards being set locally by authorities and the degree to which the legislation is being implemented in ways that seek to develop constructive partnerships between statutory, voluntary and private sectors of residential care.

Meanwhile the inspectorate will be organising a programme of workshops for registration and inspection staff and their managers.

Spectacle Vouchers

Mrs. Viginia Bottomley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what the range of spectacle vouchers and their values will be on introduction of the scheme on 1 July.

Mr. Hayhoe: The Government's measures to end the opticians' monopoly on the supply of spectacles and to remove unjustified barriers to advertising have had their intended effect. Prices have come down, budget price spectacles are widely available and the standards of services have improved.

The voucher scheme being introduced on 1 July will allow children and those on low incomes to share in the advantage of consumer choice. They will no longer be restricted to the existing range of National Health Service frames, most of which have remained unchanged over many years.

Instead they will be provided with vouchers so that they can shop around for the best buy from the many low-price frames that will become increasingly available. They may, if they wish, use their vouchers towards the cost of more expensive frames that are on the market at more competitive prices than formerly. Sight-tests will, of course, remain free.

I am pleased to announce that the necessary financial help will be provided through a range of six vouchers. There will be three vouchers for single vision spectacles with values of £14·25, £22 and £33, depending on the complexity of the individual prescription. Similarly there will be three vouchers for bifocal spectacles with values of £27, £42 and £66. Certain additions will be made for clinically necessary prisms and tints. For those requiring complex lenses, but who do not qualify on income grounds, the help currently provided will be continued by means of vouchers intended as a contribution towards the cost of their spectacles. These will be priced at minimum values of £2 for complex single vision spectacles and £14 for complex bifocals but may be as high as £11 and £26 where both prisms and tints are required.

The Government are satisfied that in the currently more competitive spectacle market these vouchers will allow people to be assured of a basic pair of spectacles suitable for their clinical needs.

Accident and Emergency Departments

Mr. Evans asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many general hospitals have accident and emergency departments without having the back-up facility of an intensive care unit within the hospital.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many hopitals have accident and emergency departments without the back-up of an intensive care unit on the same site.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his replies*, 24 March and 25 March 1986, c. *383-459*]: In 1984, the latest year for which figures are available centrally, there were 462 National Health Service hospitals in England which recorded patient activity in accident and emergency departments and which did not have an intensive care unit.

Written Answers to Questions

Wednesday 4 June 1986

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

EC (Export Rebates)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what was the cost per day in 1985 of European Economic Community payments of export rebates for food surpluses, storage of food surpluses and disposal through destruction or other internal disposal of surpluses, respectively, expressed in £ sterling; and what were the comparable totals for 1980.

Mr. Gummer: The table sets out Community expenditure on export refunds public storage and disposal of commodities which have been in structural surplus (cereals, sugar, milk products, beef and wine).

	1985	*1980*
Export Refunds (£/day)	9·4 million	8·2 million
Storage costs (£/day)	2·1 million	0·6 million
Disposal costs (£/day)	8·6 million	4·1 million

Sources: 1980 EAGGF Financial Report
1985 EC Commission provisional outturn figures.

Agricultural Development and Advisory Service

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food if, pursuant to his reply of 27 February, to the hon. Member for Teignbridge (Mr. Nicholls) *Official Report*, column *644*, he is now able to announce further details of the economies and improvements in the efficiency of the Agricultural Development and Advisory Service; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Jopling: My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Wales and I have now revised our proposals for economies and improvements in the efficiency of ADAS, so as to save a total of 334 ADAS posts and 75 non-ADAS posts. These savings take account of independent market research on certain animal health schemes, which suggests that demand for these schemes justifies the retention of a number of posts which would otherwise have been lost. As a result, the post losses in the State Veterinary Service can be reduced from 141 to 108. The new figures also take account of 30 badger operator posts which are no longer needed, consequent on the recommendations of the report on badgers and bovine tuberculosis by Professor Dunnet's review team which was published on 7 April. The revised distribution of ADAS post losses is accordingly Agriculture Service, 107; Agricultural Science Service, 82; Land and Water Service, 37; and the State Veterinary Service, 108.

As part of the measures to improve efficiency and economy it is intended to make some changes in the local organisation of ADAS. In a number of cases, adjacent animal health offices will be amalgamated under one divisional veterinary officer, although veterinary services will continue to be provided from most of the offices affected. Analytical chemistry facilities will be withdrawn from Newcastle, Reading and Bristol to concentrate this discipline on one laboratory per region. The local offices at Chester and Brigg (Humberside) will close, with services being provided from the divisional offices at Crewe and Beverley respectively. The Ulverston (Cumbria) office will also close, except for market days, service at other times being provided from the Kendal area office.

I have placed in the Library of the House a more detailed statement of these economies.

Radiation

Mr. Campbell-Savours asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food whether he will make a statement on the results of tests being carried out into the absorption of radioactive elements by sheep and cattle in the county of Cumbria.

Mrs. Fenner [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 June 1986]: Results of tests issued by my Department on 30 May show that levels of Iodine 131 are now very low in milk and meat from sheep and cattle in Cumbria and continuing to fall. Levels of Caesium 137 and 134, which are more persistent radionuclides, are generally low, but higher readings have been found in the meat of some hill sheep and lambs in upland areas in Cumbria which were subject to high rainfall over the weekend of 2-3 May. These animals are not yet ready for slaughter and no specific action is required at present. My Department will continue to keep a close watch on levels in livestock in Cumbria and other areas of high deposition throughout the summer and as animals become ready for slaughter.

SOCIAL SERVICES

General Practice Finance Corporation

Mrs. Currie asked the Secretary of State for Social Services whether he has any plans to review the financing of the General Practice Finance Corporation.

Mr. Hayhoe: The corporation's net borrowing has been cash limited since 1 April 1985 and this seems an opportune time to review the corporation's financing in the light of the experience gained. My right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Wales and Scotland and I propose to commission an independent study by consultants.

The terms of reference will be:

"To examine the scope for and means of reducing public sector involvement in funding loans to gmps for the provision of surgery premises and in particular to advise on the feasibility and cost effectiveness of sales from the General Practice Finance Corporation's loan portfolio."

Residential Care

Mr. David Atkinson asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he expects to receive the Ernst and Whinney report on private and voluntary residential care; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Newton: We have now received the report from Ernst and Whinney and are considering whether and, if so, in what form it should be published.

National Insurance

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many instances have been recorded of employers' failure to pay national insurance contributions in full or in part *(a)* as a total nationally, *(b)* in the north-east of England, *(c)* within Cleveland county, *(d)* in Stockton-on-Tees and *(e)* broken down between major industries in line with standard Department of Trade and Industry classifications, in each of the last three years for which figures are available.

Mr. Major: The Department does not keep records in the form requested, but the following table gives some relevant information.

Action in respect of employers who have failed to pay N.I. contributions

	Number of employers prosecuted	*Number of employers sued*	*Number of employers where arrears were written off*
Great Britain:—			
April 1983 to April 1984	1,971	2,080	4,990
April 1984 to April 1985	1,326	1,570	6,310
April 1985 to April 1986	13	1,259	4,652
North East Region:—			
April 1983 to April 1984	437	344	522
April 1984 to April 1985	235	145	469
April 1985 to April 1986	Nil	120	470

Numbers of employers who became insolvent owing arrears of N.I. contributions

	Company liquidations	*Personal bankruptcies*
April 1983 to April 1984	13,716	1,435
April 1984 to April 1985	13,980	1,876
April 1985 to April 1986	14,042	1,846

Note: No separate figures are available for the north east.

Number of employers involved in Inland Revenue actions to obtain payment of employees' N.I. contributions

	Number
November 1982 to November 1983	20,808
November 1983 to November 1984	22,642
November 1984 to November 1985	22,287

Note: No separate figures are available for the north east.

Notes:

(a) The marked reduction in the numbers of employers prosecuted in 1985-86 was due to the announcement on 12 November 1984 of the intention to repeal section 152(4) of the Social Security Act 1975. Previously a criminal conviction was sought under that section against a limited liability company before proceeding against the directors personally for recovery of outstanding arrears of NI contributions. The announcement resulted in the cessation of criminal proceedings under that section.

(b) Under section 152(4) (now repealed), the same employer will often have been both prosecuted and sued. The sum of the two figures does not therefore represent the number of employers involved.

(c) Some of the insolvent employers will be also included in the prosecution or civil action figures, because civil proceedings can result in petitions to make an employer insolvent, and most section 152(4) proceedings were instituted against limited companies in liquidation.

(d) The Inland Revenue initiate action against employers to recover unpaid NI contributions but if they are unsuccessful they transfer the outstanding debt to my Department for continuing action. Therefore the figures of Inland Revenue actions will include some employers included in the figures in the first two tables.

Benefits

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in Slough are in receipt of *(a)* child benefit, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* additional heating allowance, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance, *(f)* special diet allowance and *(g)* sickness benefit.

Mr. Major: Separate records for the Slough area are not held detailing the numbers of claimants in receipt of child benefit, housing benefit, additional heating allowance, mobility allowance or special diet allowance. The number of claimants at the Department's local office at Slough in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit as at 6 May 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) is 2,384. Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many people in the London borough of Newham are in receipt of *(a)* child benefit, *(b)* housing benefit, *(c)* additional heating allowance, *(d)* invalidity benefit, *(e)* mobility allowance, *(f)* special diet allowance and *(g)* sickness benefit.

Mr. Major: The London borough of Newham is served by three of the Department's local offices, Canning town, Plaistow and Woodgrange park. Separate records are not kept by local office areas on the number of claimants who are in receipt of child benefit, housing benefit, additional heating allowance, mobility allowance or special diet allowance. The number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit at these offices as at 6 May 1986 (the latest date for which information is available) is as follows:

Sickness and Invalidity Benefit

	Number
Canning Town	748
Plaistow	1,632
Woodgrange Park	1,988

Separate records are not kept of the number of claimants in receipt of sickness and invalidity benefit.

Disabled Persons

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many registered disabled persons there are in Slough.

Mr. Newton: This information is not available centrally for the area requested.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many registered disabled persons there are in the London borough of Newham.

Mr. Newton: The latest available data about the number of persons registered with the Newham social services department as physically or sensorily handicapped are set out in the table. There is no information held centrally about the numbers of registered mentally disordered persons.

Newham—Number of registered handicapped people

As at 31 March	Type of Register	Number of persons registered
1982	Blind and Partially Sighted*	880
1983	Deaf and Hard of Hearing*	334
1984	General Classes*†	5,416

* Includes persons multiply handicapped and therefore on other registers.
† But excludes persons on the Register of the Blind.

Supplementary Benefit (Blind People)

Mr. Ashley asked the Secretary of State for Social Services (1) if he will estimate the number of blind householders aged over 85 years now claiming supplementary benefit who will be entitled to less than their current income under the provisions of the Social Security Bill, disregarding the protection of the transitional arrangements; and if he will give the basis of his calculations;

(2) how many blind people claiming supplementary benefit now get a diet addition; and how many of these will be entitled to less than their current income under the provisions of the Social Security Bill, disregarding the protection of the transitional arrangements;

(3) how many blind people claiming supplementary benefit also get mobility and attendance allowance; and how many of these will be entitled to less than their current income under the provisions of the Social Security Bill, disregarding the protection of the transitional arrangements.

Mr. Newton: No such estimates can be made, since no decisions have yet been taken about either the benefit rates payable from April 1987 under the present system, or the benefit rates payable from April 1988 under the system proposed in the Social Security Bill.

Legionnaire's Disease (Stafford)

Mr. Cash asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will make a statement on the report of the public inquiry into the outbreak of legionnaire's disease at Stafford district general hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe: I refer my hon. Friend to my statement earlier today.

Housing Benefit

Mr. Raynsford asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will estimate *(a)* the number of awards of the supplementary benefit non-householder housing addition to those aged 21 to 24 years, *(b)* the number of households receiving housing benefit containing non-dependants between the ages of 21 and 24 years, in respect of whom deductions from housing benefit are made and *(c)* the net annual saving in benefit expenditure he expects to make as a result of the proposed changes to the rules governing non-householders and non-dependants aged between 21 and 24 years in July 1986.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 12 May 1986, c. *381*]: Precise information is not available. We estimate that there are 180,000 non-householders aged 21-24 in receipt of supplementary benefit who receive the non-householder addition. Information is not collected centrally on non-dependent deductions from housing benefit but we can make some estimates based on a computer simulation model of housing benefit entitlement. These suggest that some 180,000 households which receive housing benefit contain non-dependants between the ages of 21-24 in respect of whom deductions are made. Of these there are about 30,000 where the non-dependants receive supplementary benefit. The figures available would suggest a gross saving of about £8 million to £9 million in 1986-87 and £26 million in 1987-88. We estimate that the corresponding change to the arrangements for non-dependants might reduce the gross savings by around a tenth. The year 1987-88 is the only full year before the wider social security changes which are planned, and since the change applies to new claims it will not affect all claimants.

Westminster Hospital

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will place in the Library copies of the correspondence he has exchanged with the Riverside health authority concerning the future of Westminster hospital.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *66*]: In accordance with normal practice, I have placed in the Library a copy of my letter of 22 May 1986 to the chairman of the North-West Thames regional authority following the annual review meeting held with that authority. That letter briefly records the outcome of a discussion with the chairman of riverside health authority about the future provision of services in Riverside district.

Nursing Staff (Lodging Charges)

Mr. Pavitt asked the Secretary of State for Social Services on what date board and lodging and meals charges for nurses and auxiliary staff in hospitals were last raised.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: Lodging charges for nursing and midwifery staff, including nursing auxiliaries, were last raised on 1 April 1985. The prices of most meals are set locally, but nursing staff are also entitled to standard meals at charges agreed nationally for ancillary staff by the ancillary staffs councils. These standard meal charges were last increased on 4 October 1985.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

Animal Waste

Mr. Forth asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what action has been taken on the Monopolies and Mergers Commission report on the supply of animal waste; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Howard: In his statement of 3 April 1985 my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh, Central (Mr. Fletcher) the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State with responsibility for corporate and consumer affairs, set out the commission's findings and recommendations and said that the Government were arranging for discussions to be opened with Prosper De Mulder Limited about giving effect to the commission's recommendations.

Following discussions with the Office of Fair Trading, Prosper De Mulder has given undertakings not to offer for or enter into gut-room contracts without having first established a reasonable expectation that the operation of any particular gut-room, taken on its own, would be carried on at a profit or to engage in cross-subsidisation between the gut-room business and other parts of the company's business or between any individual gut-room operations. The company has undertaken to provide the Director General of Fair Trading with financial information to enable him to monitor these undertakings. In addition, the company has given assurances that it will not pursue a policy of conditional buying and that it will notify the Director General of Fair Trading in advance of any proposal to acquire any other rendering business.

The commission also expressed an interest in a suggestion made to it that a system of voluntary arbitration might be set up under which a member of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and a member of the United Kingdom Renderers Associations would visit plants with odour problems and suggest remedies. My hon. Friend asked the Secretary of State for the Environment to consider the commission's suggestion, and I am pleased to say that, in response to this request, the commission's suggestion will be taken into account in a consultation paper discussing possible changes in the clean air legislation that the Government hope to publish in due course.

I welcome the undertakings given by Prosper De Mulder and the action being taken by the Department of the Environment. I consider them sufficient to remedy and prevent the adverse effects specified in the commission's report.

I have arranged for copies of the full text of the undertakings to be placed in the library of the House.

British Shipbuilders

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many people were employed by British Shipbuilders in *(a)* the northern region and *(b)* Sunderland for each year since 1979.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information, which reflects disposals and closures as well as reductions in employment, is as follows:

	(a) Northern Region	*(b) Sunderland*
June 1979	28,400	9,400
June 1980	25,600	8,500
March 1981	23,800	7,000
March 1982	22,800	7,000
March 1983	19,100	5,800
March 1984	14,800	4,600
March 1985	11,100	3,750
March 1986	5,400	3,500

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry if he will give the terms of reference, membership and current budget of the city action team referred to in his statement of 14 May, *Official Report*, column 1705, on British Shipbuilders.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The main task of the city action team is to target and co-ordinate the range of Government programmes, to bring them to bear most effectively, and to further new initiatives, working with private sector interests and local authorities. This city action team, originally set up for Newcastle—Gateshead, comprises the regional directors of the Manpower Services Commission (chairman), the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment. It has no normal budget as such, since it draws on the resources available to the three Departments. It will however have available, for the region as a whole, the £1 million referred to in the statement on 14 May by my right hon. Friend.

South Africa

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what guns have been imported from South Africa in each of the past five years.

Mr. Butcher: The information is not available.

Director General of Fair Trading

Mr. Amess asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry when he intends to publish the report by the Director General of Fair Trading for the year 1985.

Mr. Channon: The 12th annual report by the Director General of Fair Trading, covering the period 1 January 1985 to 31 December 1985, is published today. Copies of the report have been laid before Parliament.

Regional Aid

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what is his estimate of the number of firms in the northern region which have received regional development grant payments since 1979 and have subsequently closed down or announced redundancies; and if he will give an estimate of the number of jobs involved.

Mr. Peter Morrison: [*pursuant to his reply* 3 June 1986, c. *409*]: As the hon. Gentleman will appreciate, the precise information requested is not available. To provide estimates could only be misleading.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Ex-gratia Payments

Mr. Portillo asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he has any plans to seek to amend the legislation for taxing ex-gratia lump sums paid to individuals on the termination of their employment.

Mr. Norman Lamont: The Inland Revenue has been advised that the effect of the legislation governing the tax treatment of such payments where they exceed £50,000 is to give more relief than was originally intended when these rules were amended in 1982, or than the Revenue has hitherto believed the legislation permitted. The Government therefore propose to amend the rules for the future so that they accord with our original intentions. The necessary provision will be introduced at Committee stage of the Finance Bill and a new clause to that effect has been tabled. We propose that the corrected rules should apply to lump sums paid in respect of a termination of employment, or such other event which gives rise to a charge to tax under section 187 of the Income and Corporation Taxes Act 1970, occurring on or after today's date—4 June 1986.

This also means that tax relief given on any lump sums exceeding £50,000 paid since 6 April 1982 will have been calculated incorrectly. As a result, anyone who has paid tax on such a lump sum may now be entitled to a repayment of tax. The Inland Revenue press release issued today, of which copies are available in the Library, explains fully what steps a taxpayer should now take to claim a repayment.

Charities

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what representations he has received about the provisions on charities in the Finance Bill; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lawson: In the Budget I announced important new tax reliefs to encourage charitable giving by individuals and businesses. These reliefs have been widely and warmly welcomed, and it is already clear that charities will be seeking to ensure that they are well used.

I also proposed measures to curb the growing misuse in some quarters of charity reliefs for tax avoidance purposes. In the light of consultations on these proposals, it is agreed that the provisions as drafted—in clause 29 and schedule 7 to the Finance Bill—were drawn too widely and would have unintended and undesirable effects on some genuine charities. I have decided, therefore, that they need to be substantially amended, in order to overcome the legitimate concerns.

The consultations have revealed a wide agreement that effective action should be taken to curb the most serious of the abuses in the interests of encouraging charitable giving and the good reputation of the vast majority of responsible charities, especially in the light of the generous extensions of relief this year, as well as to protect the revenue. I have concluded, therefore, that the right course is to concentrate this year on tackling situations where a charity: applies its funds for non-charitable purposes; or passes funds to an overseas body, without taking reasonable steps to satisfy itself that the funds will be applied for charitable purposes; or loans or invests funds in certain limited ways, for example by lending or returning them back to the original donor, or to those connected with him, in circumstances in which the charity cannot show that the loan or investment is made for genuine charitable purposes.

Accordingly, a charity will be subject to a restriction of its tax relief only if its funds are used in any of the above ways and, even then, only if its taxable income and gains exceed its allowable expenditure and certain specific reserves.

I propose to retain in the Bill provisions under which: grants paid by one charity to another are to be regarded as chargeable to tax, but eligible for exemption if applied to charitable purposes; covenant payments made by a subsidiary company to its parent charity are to be paid under deduction of tax. The tax will, however, be repayable to the parent, provided the charity satisfies the conditions for exemption; and in these cases arrangements will be made to ensure that the charity and its subsidiary do not suffer a cash-flow disadvantage; higher rate relief for covenanted donations may be withheld where, under the revised rules, the donee charity's own relief is restricted.

I am proposing generally to exclude from some aspects of the new provisions all charities whose taxable income and gains (including grants from other charities) do not exceed £10,000. Furthermore, for the vast majority of charities there will be little or no change in the extent (if any) to which they are required to supply information to the Inland Revenue.

On this basis, I do not propose to proceed in this year's Finance Bill with two particular features of the original proposals which caused nearly all of the concern: the distinction betwen "private indirect" and other charities; and the possible restriction of tax relief where the charity accumulates income.

I have concluded that action in these areas is not essential in the current Finance Bill, but rather that they are matters which should be considered further, over the coming months, in consultation with the charity movement, with a view to establishing as far as possible a consensus on whether any further legislation is needed here and, if so, what form it should take.

The Government will be bringing forward revised proposals accordingly, when we come to discuss clause 29 and schedule 7 to the Finance Bill in Committee. The Inland Revenue will be issuing a press notice giving the text of the amendments as soon as they are tabled.

Personal Taxation

Mr. Chapman asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will publish a table in the *Official Report* showing the total percentage tax liability, including national insurance contributions, of the gross wage of *(a)* a single person, *(b)* a married person, *(c)* a married person with one child, and *(d)* a married person with two children each earning £40, £60, £80, £100, £120, £140, £160, £180 and £200 per week, as a result of his 1986 Budget proposals and as compared with the 1984 Budget proposals and the 1978 Budget proposals.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let my hon. Friend have a reply as soon as possible.

EC (Budget)

Mr. Teddy Taylor asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will propose at the next meeting of the Council of Finance Ministers that the budget of the European Assembly should be reduced by the sum which the European Court determined recently had been unlawfully granted by that Assembly to certain political parties; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Brooke [*pursuant to his reply*, 22 May 1986, c. *308*]: As my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs stated in his answer on 22 May, at column 303, this is a matter for the Bureau of the European Parliament, which is still considering the implications of the judgment of the European Court of Justice.

PRIME MINISTER

Nuclear Weapons

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Prime Minister if she will identify Government funds currently devoted to investigation of means of independent verification of nuclear weapon tests of other states; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: The most important verification technology is seismology. Government expenditure on unclassified work in this area is currently £1·6 million. The Government also undertake classified work in related areas, details of which cannot be revealed on grounds of national security.

Republic of Ireland (Territorial Claims)

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the obligations of the United Kingdom Government and the Irish Republic under the Helsinki agreement, Her Majesty's Government will raise with the Irish Government the future of their claim, in article 2 of their constitution, to part of the national territory of the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The agreement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed on 15 November 1985—in particular the joint affirmation that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would come about only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland — is fully consistent with the commitments of the two Governments under the Helsinki accords in regard to the inviolability of frontiers, the territorial integrity of participating states and the right to self-determination of peoples.

Mr. A. Cecil Walker asked the Prime Minister if, in the light of the obligations of the United Kingdom Government and the Irish Republic under the Treaty of Rome, Her Majesty's Government will raise with the Irish Government the future of their claim, in Article 2 of their constitution, to part of the national territory of the United Kingdom; and if she will make a statement.

The Prime Minister: No. The agreement between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland signed on 15 November 1985—in particular the joint affirmation that any change in the status of Northern Ireland would come about only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland — is fully consistent with the obligations of the two Governments under the Treaty of Rome. Indeed, the preamble to the Anglo-Irish agreement begins by emphasising the wish of the two parties to develop the unique relationship between their peoples and the close co-operation between their countries as friendly neighbours and as partners in the European Community.

Nuclear Free Zones

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister (1) if she will list the local authorities which have notified Her Majesty's Government that they have declared a nuclear-free zone in their area;

(2) what response has been sent to local authorities which have notified Her Majesty's Government that they have declared a nuclear-free zone in their area.

The Prime Minister: Local authorities are not required to notify the Government of any decision to declare a so-called nuclear-free zone in their area, and there is no central list of local authorities which have done so.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Fines (Non-payment)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many men and how many women, respectively, have been imprisoned for non-payment of fines during each of the last five years for which records are available;

(2) of those men and women, respectively, who have been imprisoned for non-payment of fines during each of the past five years for which records are available, what has been the minimum, the maximum and the average length of such sentences.

Mr. Mellor: The readily available information on the numbers of male and female defaulters received into Prison Department establishments in each of the years 1980 to 1984 and the periods of imprisonment or detention imposed is published in table 7.3 of "Prison Statistics England and Wales 1984" (Cmnd. 9622). Data for 1985 are not yet available. For the longest period in default to be served by a male received in 1984, I would refer the hon. and learned Member to the reply given to a question from the hon. Member for Knowsley, North (Mr. Kilroy-Silk) on 17 April 1986, at column *467*. The rest of the information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of the men and women respectively who have been imprisoned for non-payment of fines during each of the past five years for which records are available, what has been the maximum, the minimum and the average amount of the unpaid fine in respect of which imprisonment has been imposed.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the estimated average cost of keeping a person in prison in the United Kingdom; and what is the average cost of keeping in prison a person sentenced to one week for non-payment of a fine.

Mr. Mellor: The average weekly cost of keeping a person in prison in England and Wales in the financial year 1984-85—the latest year for which figures are available—was £256.

It is not possible to distinguish the costs of keeping different types of prisoner in prison. It is, however, likely that a person committed to prison for one week in default of payment of a fine would be held in a local prison, for which the average weekly cost per inmate in the financial year 1984-85 was £241.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what has been the total cost of keeping in prison persons sentenced to prison for non-payment of fines, during each of the last five years for which records are available.

Mr. Mellor: The information is not available.

Terminally Ill Prisoners

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what means a reminder will be given to prison medical officers of the need to give urgent and sympathetic consideration to cases of prisoners who are terminally ill and who seek early release on that ground;

(2) what was the frequency of review of first refusals of release to terminally ill patients seeking release on the grounds of their illness; and how frequent are the reviews now that such frequency has been increased;

(3) what was the frequency of review where there was a need for further information regarding terminally ill patients seeking release on the grounds of their illness and how frequent the reviews are now that such frequency has increased;

(4) by whom additional guidance will be given to prison medical officers in respect of the treatment of terminally ill patients and when; and whether he will place a copy in the Library;

(5) when he proposes undertaking a sample study of cases of all seriously ill prisoners, in order to check that merit worthy cases are not overlooked; by whom such sample study will be carried out and where; when he expects the results of that sample study to be available; and whether he will place a copy thereof in the Library;

(6) who is to conduct a study of cases to give him a better basis for whether further changes may be needed in the arrangements for deciding whether to grant early release to terminally ill prisoners; when such a study will be carried out; when he expects its findings to be completed; and whether he will then place a copy of the results thereof in the Library.

Mr. Mellor: The director of Prison Medical Services proposes to write to all prison medical officers in charge of medical arrangements at Prison Department establishments in England and Wales. The letter will remind medical officers of the need to give urgent and sympathetic consideration to cases of prisoners thought to be terminally ill, and will give further guidance on the consideration and reporting of these cases. A copy of the letter will be placed in the Library.

Officials dealing with such cases in the criminal department have been reminded both orally and in writing by their line managers of the need to take particular and urgent care in the consideration of cases of prisoners whose illnesses may mean that their early release by special remission under the royal prerogative of mercy is justified.

There is and can be no fixed period for review of decisions not to recommend special remission. The period of review must be determined by the circumstances of each case. All officials concerned with these cases have been instructed to ensure that no undue delay in reviewing cases is allowed to occur.

We intend to start a monitoring exercise relating to cases of seriously ill prisoners this month. Prison medical officers are required by the prison standing orders to submit reports on seriously ill prisoners to the governor. For a limited period they will be asked to send copies of such reports to the directorate of Prison Medical Services and to the criminal department which will consider whether the cases thus presented call for consideration of the grant of special remission. We expect to be able to make the results of this exercise known to the hon. and learned Member and the House later this year.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many representations he has received from hon. Members concerning the failure to release prisoners alleged to be suffering from terminal illnesses, during each of the last seven years for which records are available.

Mr. Mellor: Records of such representations are not kept in a form which enables precise information to be provided without disproportionate cost. However, I can say that apart from the hon. and learned Member's own, I can recall representations on this matter from only one hon. Member in the last three years.

Mr. Karman Zahoor

Mr. Freeson asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department if he will order a full investigation as to what took place on Wednesday 23 April when police and immigration officers went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Naqvi of 7 Park Lodge, Olive Road, London NW2, looking for Mr. Karman Zahoor, a visitor to the United Kingdom, Home Office reference number Z 68597.

Mr. Waddington: Inquiries are being made and I shall write to the right hon. Member as soon as they are completed.

Football Hooliganism

Mr. Lawler asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what information he has about the recent trends in the incidents of football hooliganism; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Hurd: The Association of Chief Police Officers for England and Wales has now collected figures which show that the numbers of arrests at Football League Division 1 games fell from 3,752 in the 1984-85 season to 2,005 in 1985-86, and at Division 2 games from 1,765 in 1984-85 to 1,086 in 1985-86. This represents a general reduction of 44 per cent., and is a clear and welcome indication of the progress which has been made in combating football hooliganism.

The package of measures agreed between the Government and the football authorities, the unremitting efforts of the police and the co-operation of clubs have helped to bring about this improvement. The new controls

on alcohol and the use of closed circuit television have made an important contribution. The Government remain determined to achieve further progress next season, in partnership with the football authorities, through agreed measures, including, for example, the wider adoption of membership card schemes and the use of exclusion orders.

ENVIRONMENT

Nuclear Reactors

Mr. Batiste asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to how many nuclear reactors are situated within 250 miles of the United Kingdom; in which countries; and what intergovernmental machinery exists for consultation on their environmental impact and for notification of accidents.

Mrs. Rumbold: According to "Nuclear Power in Western Europe; Status Report for 1986" published by FORATOM, there are 12 foreign nuclear power stations within 250 miles of the coast of the United Kingdom (excluding research reactors). Seven are in France, two in Belgium, two in the Netherlands and one in West Germany. An Anglo-French "Nuclear Emergency Information Exchange Agreement" was made on 18 July 1983 (Cmnd. 9041).

Water Prices

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will set out the average increase in water prices for the domestic user in real terms for each of the last six years, in each of the English water authorities.

Mr. John Patten: Increases in average household bills for unmeasured consumers, deflated by RPI, for the past six years are as follows:

Water Authority	*1980-81 per cent.*	*1981-82 per cent.*	*1982-83 per cent.*	*1983-84 per cent.*	*1984-85 per cent.*	*1985-86 per cent.*
North West	6·2	4·9	2·1	0·8	2·9	8·3
Northumbrian	6·3	5·3	7·8	8·5	11·0	1·8
Severn Trent	4·0	4·1	2·5	−1·1	0·0	6·9
Yorkshire	7·1	4·7	6·4	0·7	0·5	7·9
Anglian	10·9	7·0	2·7	1·5	1·9	7·4
Thames	6·5	2·3	4·0	5·0	4·7	4·8
Southern	11·1	6·3	3·5	0·7	0·0	6·1
Wessex	−1·7	0·0	0·4	−0·7	−0·1	6·1
South West	5·1	1·2	0·7	3·5	1·2	6·6
English Averages:	6·5	3·9	3·5	2·7	1·8	6·3

Firm figures for 1986-87 cannot yet be given, as inflation for the year is not yet known. if the increase in RPI is 3½ per cent., in line with FSBR forecasts for 1986 Q4 and 1987 Q2, the average real increase will be about 4·3 per cent.

Tower Blocks (Rochester and Strood)

Mr. John Fraser asked the Secretary of State for the Environment whether his consent has been sought by the district of Rochester upon Medway for the sale or demolition of 360 units of accommodation in tower blocks at Rochester and Strood.

Sir George Young: While there have been some discussions with my Department, it was Rochester upon Medway district council which took the decision to demolish these properties. My right hon. Friend's consent was not required.

Domestic Rates

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will publish the overall average unrebated domestic bill paid by householders in England in each year since 1966-67 on a constant price basis.

Mrs. Rumbold: The estimated figures are as follows:

*Average (unrebated) domestic rate bills in England at 1986-87 prices**

	£
1966-67	260
1967-68	256
1968-69	250
1969-70	249
1970-71	249
1971-72	262
1972-73	277
1973-74	278
1974-75†	278
1975-76	281
1976-77	257
1977-78	254
1978-79	259
1979-80	280
1980-81	294
1981-82	322
1982-83	340
1983-84	351
1984-85	356
1985-86	362
1986-87	400

* Estimated average rate bills have been inflated to 1986-87 prices by using the retail prices index for April of each year.

† Figures up to 1973-74 are not comparable with those for 1974-75 and later years. This is due to the change in local authorities' responsibilities in 1974, in particular the transfer of water and sewerage services from local authorities to water authorities.

Leicester (Empty Houses)

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what information he has as to *(a)* how many and *(b)* what percentage of houses in (i) the public and (ii) the private sectors in the city of Leicester are now empty.

Sir George Young: The latest information available is from the city council's housing investment programme

return for 1985, a copy of which is available in the Library. This return showed that 1,096, or 2·8 per cent. of the dwellings owned by the council and housing associations were vacant at 1 April 1985 and 3,851, or 5·6 per cent., of the privately owned dwellings. The council was unable to supply an estimate of how many of the 325 public sector dwellings other than those owned by the council and housing associations were vacant.

Land Use

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his latest estimate of the land area of England and Wales covered by *(a)* national parks, *(b)* green belt areas, *(c)* areas of outstanding natural beauty and high landscape value, *(d)* heritage coasts, *(e)* conservation areas and *(f)* sites of special scientific interest.

Mrs. Rumbold: Estimates of land area are as follows:

	Million hectares
National parks	1·36
Green belts	1·8
Areas of outstanding natural beauty	1·71
Sites of special scientific interest	0·82

Heritage coasts are measured by length rather than area. The latest estimate is that 1,260 kilometres of the coast of England and Wales are covered.

No figures are available of the amount of land area covered by conservation areas, of which however there are some 5,500. There is some overlap between the categories — for example, there are extensive SSSIs in national parks and AsONB.

Departmental Telephone and Telex Charges

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how much was spent by his Department on telephone calls and telex charges; and what was the total cost of telephone rental for each year since 1979.

Mr. Ridley: The costs to my Department of British Telecom telephone calls, telex charges and telephone rental since 1979-80 were:

£ Thousands (cash)

	1979-80	*1980-81*	*1981-82*	*1982-83*	*1983-84*	*1984-85*	*1985-86**
Telephone calls							
DOE(C)	796	1,301	1,310	1,260	1,112	917	1,107
PSA	1,963	2,483	2,503	2,527	2,514	2,542	2,187
Total	2,759	3,784	3,813	3,787	3,626	3,459	3,204
Telex charges							
DOE(C)	n/a	n/a	18	20	26	38	34
PSA	n/a	n/a	63	59	60	78	85
Total	—	—	81	79	86	116	119
Telephone rental							
DOE(C)	n/a	n/a	1,184	1,365	1,432	1,452	1,155
PSA	n/a	n/a	1,541	1,716	1,870	1,706	2,001
Total	—	—	2,725	3,081	3,302	3,158	3,156

* Provisional.
n/a=Not readily available.

Landowners (Footpaths and Bridleways)

Mr. Nicholas Baker asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will bring forward proposals to pay a subsidy to landowners for footpaths and bridleways which cross their land.

Mrs. Rumbold: This is one of a number of propositions on which views are currently being canvassed by the Countryside Commission in its "Recreation 2000" discussion paper, and I would wish to await any recommendation the commission might make following its consultations.

Joint Manpower Watch

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will make a statement regarding the joint manpower watch arrangements.

Mrs. Rumbold: The joint manpower watch has been in operation, in England and Wales, since 1975. The figures are published each quarter and are discussed within the Consultative Council on Local Government Finance. We are now incorporating the new authorities—bodies in the survey following the Local Government Act 1985. Although the arrangements are under constant review by the joint manpower watch working group, which has both central and local government representation, there are currently no plans to make major changes. In the main, the arrangements have worked well.

World Conservation

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what response he is making to the world conservation strategy document.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government welcomed and endorsed the principles of the world conservation strategy when it was published in 1980. My hon. Friend the Minister for Environment, Countryside and Local

Government is attending a conference in Ottawa called by the authors of the strategy to assess it six years after its publication.

The Government have published a report — "Conservation and Development; The British Approach" — setting out the ways in which the United Kingdom has approached the issues raised by the strategy. Copies have been made available in the Vote office.

Radiochemical Inspectorate (Annual Report)

Mr. Couchman asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when the annual report by Her Majesty's radiochemical inspectorate for 1984-85 will be published.

Mr. Waldegrave: The report has now been published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office and a copy has been placed in the Library of the House of Commons.

Housing (Land Release)

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what is his policy towards proposals in development plans for phasing the release of land for housing and other development; and whether he will make a statement.

Mr. Ridley: Paragraph 8 of my Department's circular on land for housing (15/84) refers to phasing the release of housing land. It recognises that the provision of infrastructure and other services may affect the programming of development, but advises that phasing should not be used as an arbitrary rationing process governing the release of land available for development. The purpose is to discourage the practice of specifying in development plans the precise number of acres or houses to be developed each year. Such precision is inappropriate in plans covering several years ahead. Room for flexibility is necessary to enable developers to respond to short-term changes in housing demand. Highly detailed phasing can impose unnecessary costs and constraints on orderly site development.

Where the plan extends over a long period and there are strong pressures for development which it is desirable to resist, it is reasonable for the planning authority to indicate in its plan, in reasonably broad terms, how it intends development to be programmed over the period of the plan. In the absence of such broad phasing, it would be impossible to prevent planning provision from being exhausted in the early years of the plan. The key requirement is that such proposals for phasing should be explained and justified.

London Docklands Development Corporation

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what arrangements are made by the LDDC over opening its files to the public in respect of planning applications.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: The London Docklands Development Corporation makes open to the public its planning committee meetings, officers' reports on applications, its planning register, and it publishes a weekly list of applications received. Like other local planning authorities, it has no arrangements for public inspection of its planning files.

Parking Fines

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what was the total amount paid by his Department in 1985 in respect of parking fines incurred by Government Departments.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: The total amount paid in parking fines by the Department in 1985 was £4,334·50.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when his Department became responsible for paying parking fines on behalf of Government Departments.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: The Department became responsible for paying parking fines on behalf of GCS vehicles used by Government Departments in 1973.

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will provide an analysis of the parking fines incurred by each of the Government Departments as listed in his answer of 15 May, at column 554, excluding the Scottish Office and the Department of Energy; and how many of the fines were in respect of ministerial vehicles in each case.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: All but six of the 106 parking fines incurred by Government Departments listed in the answer of 15 May were in respect of ministerial vehicles. These were incurred at the following locations.

Welsh Office
34 parking offences occurred in Whitehall, SW1

Department of Employment
9 parking offences occurred in Tothill Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Duke Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Warwick Way, SW1

Cabinet Office
10 parking offences occurred in Whitehall, SW1

Department of the Environment
1 parking offence occurred in South Audley Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Petty France, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in St. James Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Clifford Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Emery Hill Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in London Bridge Street, SE1
1 parking offence occurred in Causton Street, SW1

Management and Personnel Office
2 parking offences occurred in Victoria Embankment, SW1
2 parking offences occurred in Victoria Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Stanhope Gate, W1
1 parking offence occurred in Ave Maria Lane, EC4
1 parking offence occurred in Lombard Street, EC3
1 parking offence occurred in Greek Street, W1

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
6 parking offences occurred in Whitehall Place, SW1

National Audit Office
6 parking offences occurred in Victoria Embankment, EC4

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
2 parking offences occurred in Victoria Street, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Howick Place, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Buckingham Palace Road, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Great Peter Street, SW1

Department of Trade and Industry
1 parking offence occurred in Arlington Street, W1

1 parking offence occurred in Warwick Way, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Berkley Square, W1
1 parking offence occurred in Bayliss Road, SE1
1 parking offence occurred at London Airport

Her Majesty's Treasury
2 parking offences occurred in Thirleby Road, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Vauxhall Bridge Road, SW1
1 parking offence occurred in Queen Victoria Street, EC5
1 parking offence occurred in Beresford Square, SE18

HMSO
1 parking offence occurred in High Holborn, WC1
1 parking offence occurred in Endell Street, WC2

Department of Education and Science
1 parking offence occurred in Basil Street, SW3
1 parking offence occurred in Erasmus Street, SW1

Central Office of Information
2 parking offences occurred in Fleet Street, EC4

Northern Ireland Office
1 parking offence occurred in Victoria Street, SW1

National Economic Development Corporation
1 parking offence occurred in Clerkenwell Road, EC1

ACAS
1 parking offence occurred in St. James's Square, SW1

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what departmental business took a ministerial car to Greek Street, W1 in 1985 which led to a parking ticket being issued.

Sir George Young [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986]: I regret that in my reply of 23 May, at column *369*, this offence was wrongly attributed to the Scottish Office. The fine was in respect of a Government car service pool vehicle ordered by the Management and Personnel Office to collect an official from No. 10 attending an official lunch-time engagement in the area.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

South Africa (Sharpeville Six)

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what representations Her Majesty's Government have made to the Government of South Africa concerning the prisoners known as the Sharpeville Six; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Eggar: The South African Government are well aware of our views: the British ambassador at Cape Town has made representations about the Sharpeville Six to the South African Deputy Foreign Minister. The six were recently granted leave to appeal against their convictions. In the circumstances, I do not believe that it would be appropriate for us to make further representations at this stage.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Council of Ministers

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will publish in the *Official Report* a statement of forthcoming business in the European Community Council of Ministers.

Mr. Eggar: The usual forecast was deposited in the House earlier today. Heads of State and Government will meet at The Hague on 26, 27 and 28 June. At present 13 meetings of the Council of Ministers are planned for June.

The Energy Council met on 3 June. The Council was to consider the new Community energy objectives. Further consideration was also expected to be given to the coal dossiers—coal state aids and coal social measures—and to Commission papers on new and renewable sources of energy, the oil market and refinery industry, rational use of energy in industry, and on peat and lignite. It was proposed that nuclear issues would be discussed over lunch.

The Labour and Social Affairs Council will meet on 5 June to consider directives on occupational social security equal treatment for self-employed women and the proscription of certain specified carcinogens, a recommendation on the employment of the disabled and an action programme for women. Ministers are also expected to debate long-term unemployment and give preliminary consideration to a discussion paper put forward jointly by the UK, Italy and Ireland on "Employment Growth into the 1990s: a strategy for the Labour Market."

The Industry Council will meet on 9 June and is expected to consider a Commission proposal for a directive concerning the first phase of the establishment of the mutual recognition of type approval for telecommunication terminal equipment. The Council is likely to discuss a proposal for a Council directive on the adoption of common standards for direct broadcasting by satellite. The Council may discuss the inter-institutional integrated services information system (INSIS). The Council is likely to consider a proposal on an action plan for standardisation in the field of information technology and telecommunications. It is expected that the Commission will, after discussions with member states, be in a position on 9 June to outline to Industry Ministers its proposals for the arrangements to follow the fifth directive on aid to shipbuilding. The Commission will submit an analysis of the factors which have affected the competitive performance of European industry and invite the Council to discuss the implications for industrial policy in the Community. The Council may also consider the progress of the Commission's proposed directive on the legal protection of original topographies of semiconductor products.

The Education Council is due to meet on 9 June. It will discuss the proposal for a European Community action scheme for the mobility of university students (ERASMUS) and a presidency paper on the medium-term activities in the field of education. It is expected that a resolution on consumer education will be adopted.

The Research Council will meet on 10 June. The Council is expected to discuss various aspects of the EC research and development framework programme for 1987-91.

The Environment Council will meet on 12 June. The Council will consider a draft directive on large combustion plants which aims to reduce emissions of sulphur dioxide, oxides of nitrogen and dust. It is expected that further consideration will be given to the Seveso directive on industrial handling of dangerous chemicals. The Council will look at proposals to amend the waste oils directive. In addition, it is expected that the Council will consider draft directives on sulphur content of gas oil, vehicle emissions, titanium dioxide and animal experimentation.

The Economic and Finance Council will meet on 16 June. The Council is expected to discuss: monetary and financial relations between the European Community and Japan; the work of the high level group on tax approximation; and the liberalisation of capital movements within the Community. The Council may also continue its consideration of the Community's current budgetary situation; and may discuss the economic situation in preparation for the European Council later in the month.

The Foreign Affairs Council will meet on 16-17 June. It is likely to discuss the new GATT round and in particular its overall approach towards a new round of multilateral trade negotiations with a view to reaching agreement on a broad strategy. The Council again may discuss the overall climate in EC-US relations. The Council is likely to consider two Commission proposals for community programmes under the ERDF main regulation. The first proposal (STAR) is to provide ERDF aid towards improving access to advanced telecommunications services and the other (VALOREN) towards the exploitation of indigenous energy potential, both in least-favoured regions of the Community, including Northern Ireland. The Council is also expected to consider a revised mandate for negotiations with Mediterranean third countries on the adaptation of their Co-operation-Association agreements to take account of enlargement; to fix a date for the EC-Turkey Association Council and review progress on the normalisation of relations; and to review relations between the EC and the Gulf Co-operation Council.

The Transport Council is due to meet on 18 and 19 June. The Council will discuss Community policy on shipping and civil aviation. The Council is also expected to give further consideration to transport issues and, in particular, to road haulage liberalisation.

The Internal Market Council will meet on 23 June. The Council is likely to discuss progress on the implementation of the Commission White Paper, including a report by the Commission and the report to be presented by the Dutch presidency to the European Council 26-27 June. The Council is likely to discuss a presidency report on public purchasing and in particular the Commission's proposals for improving the effectiveness of the supplies directive. The Council may discuss the proposed commercial agents directive which seeks to regulate the relationship between commercial agents and their principals. The industrial truck directive, which seeks to harmonise construction and safety standards, will be discussed. The Council is likely to discuss standards for simple pressure vessels. The Council will also discuss directives on frontier controls, noise of motor cycles, tractors (roll-over protection controls) and a right of residence.

The Consumer Council will meet on 24 June. The Council will discuss further the proposal for a directive on consumer credit. Following inconclusive discussions at an earlier Council meeting, the Consumer Council is also likely to discuss further proposals for unit pricing directives.

The Agriculture Council is expected to meet on 24 and 25 June to discuss the Commission's proposed socio-structural package, less-favoured areas in Germany, Spain and Portugal, flavourings, extraction solvents, quick frozen foodstuffs, animal feedingstuffs (Aflatoxin) and food harmonisation. The Fisheries Council is also expected to meet on 25 June to discuss technical conservation measures, fisheries structural policy, inspection and control and relations with third countries. An informal meeting of Ministers will be held on 8, 9 and 10 June to debate the effects on agricultural policy of developments in international markets.

The European Council will meet on 26 and 27 June in The Hague.

SCOTLAND

Less-favoured Area Status

12. **Mr. Kirkwood** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has any plans to meet the Scottish National Farmers Union to discuss the possibility of designation of the whole of Scotland as a less-favoured area within the common agricultural policy.

Mr. John MacKay: No. My right hon. and learned Friend has received no request for such a meeting from the National Farmers Union of Scotland.

Government Agencies (Aberdeen)

13. **Mr. Bruce** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received about proposed closures and cutbacks of Government agencies and Government-funded institutions in Aberdeen.

Mr. John MacKay: My right hon. and learned Friend has received a number of representations about this matter, including a request to meet a delegation from Grampian regional council, which he is considering.

Scottish Development Agency

14. **Mr. Allen Adams** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what percentage of the Scottish Development Agency budget was spent in each Scottish district other than Renfrew district.

Mr. Rifkind: The information is as follows:

Scottish Development Agency expenditure by district and islands council area
1 January to 30 April 1986

District	*Total £'000*	*Per cent.*
Argyll and Bute	113	0·3
Dumbarton	131	0·3
Clydebank	1,413	3·4
Bearsden/Milngavie	14	—
Strathkelvin	37	0·1
Cumbernauld/Kilsyth	42	0·1
Monklands	1,920	4·6
Glasgow City	12,900	31·1
Renfrew	717	1·7
Inverclyde	2,415	5·6
Cunninghame	872	2·1
Kilmarnock and Loudon	317	0·8
Eastwood	14	—
East Kilbride	3	—
Hamilton	225	0·6
Motherwell	2,667	6·4
Clydesdale	80	0·2
Cumnock & Doon	175	0·4
Kyle and Carrick	244	0·6
Wigtown	143	0·3
Stewartry	12	—
Nithsdale	84	0·2
Tweedale	23	0·1
Ettrick and Lauderdale	767	1·9

District	Total £'000	Per cent.
Roxburgh	21	0·1
West Lothian	1,270	3·1
Edinburgh City	1,024	2·5
Midlothian	240	0·6
East Lothian	131	0·3
Stirling	306	0·7
Clackmannan	255	0·6
Falkirk	903	2·2
North East Fife	92	0·2
Kirkcaldy	160	0·4
Dunfermline	1,182	2·9
Angus	212	0·5
Perth and Kinross	219	0·5
Dundee City	2,422	5·8
Moray	25	0·1
Banff and Buchan	133	0·3
Aberdeen City	2,332	5·6
Caithness	70	0·2
Sutherland	3	—
Inverness	26	0·1
Lochaber	7	—
Shetland	252	0·6
Annandale and Eskdale	81	0·2
Berwick	23	0·1
Gordon	124	0·3
Kincardine and Deeside	12	—
Western Isles	6	—
Orkney	34	0·1
Badenoch and Strathspey	—	—
Skye and Lochaber	—	—
Nairn	—	—
Unallocated	4,604	11·1
	41,497	99·9

Notes:

1. Figures do not add up to 100 per cent. because of rounding.
2. The figures in the above table exclude expenditure on running costs. The unallocated entry is made up of categories of spend which the Agency does not allocate to districts. These are under the following headings:
   Maintenance—Dilapidations, estate land maintenance, security, land marketing signs, fire and engineering insurances.
   Land and Buildings—Plant and equipment, notice boards, owner controlled insurance, gas, water and electricity supplies, feasibility studies and surveys.
   Development Grants — Programme for Rural Initiatives and Development, Development of Rural Area Workshops, Better Business Services, Training and Employment Grants Scheme and Craft Grants.
3. Figure for Renfrew adjusted to take into account final settlements. (see *Hansard* 6 May 1986, column 13).

Scottish Development Agency Budget
Total Budget

	Initial Gross Provision £ million	Revised Gross Provision £ million	Spend £ million
1980-81	104·2	—	97·8
1981-82	111·8	—	97·8
1982-83	123·2	123·2	122·7
1983-84	123·2	123·3	115·9
1984-85	125·6	137·2	117·8
1985-86	127·9	—	*131·0
1986-87	136·5	—	—

* Estimate.

Notes:

1. Gross provision represents the gross grant-in-aid provision plus net provision for investment finance from the National Loans Fund and public dividend capital.
2. The excess of expenditure over provision in 1985-86 was financed by additional receipts.

Council House Sales

15. **Mr. Knox** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he is satisfied with the progress being made with the sale of council houses in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: Yes. Since 1979, over 78,000 public sector tenants have bought their houses, binding contracts of sale having been concluded in a further 3,300 cases, and there are approximately another 5,800 applications at an earlier point in the pipeline. Local authorities are also increasingly appreciating the need to process sales quickly. The average time to complete transactions continues to fall and is now approximately eight months.

Radiation

Mr. Willie W. Hamilton asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the radiation levels recorded in Scotland as a consequence of the nuclear accident in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Mr. Ancram: I would refer the hon. Member to the replies which I gave to the hon. Member for Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley (Mr. Foulkes), on 8 May, at columns 217-19 and on 21 May, at columns 225-28, to the reply to the hon. Member for Gordon, (Mr. Bruce) on 9 May, at column 294 and to the hon. Member himself on 14 May at column 472.

These replies provided a broad range of information on the radiation levels in Scotland resulting from the nuclear accident at Chernobyl. In general levels have been raised above the normal background levels of radioactivity which are always present in the environment. With the exception of rainwater, where advice against continuous consumption of fresh rainwater was issued for the limited period from 5 May to 10 May, radioactivity levels in the environment and in food such as milk, milk products and vegetables have remained below the internationally recommended levels at which action would have been considered, and have now declined considerably. Monitoring will be continued as necessary and the results will be issued to the press.

Hill Farming Research Organisation

17. **Mr. David Steel** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he expects to announce a decision about the future of the Hill Farming Research Organisation.

Mr. Rifkind: I hope to be able to announce a decision as soon as possible.

Local Government Finance

18. **Mr. Maxton** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to increase local government expenditure in Scotland.

Mr. Ancram: My right hon. and learned Friend is presently considering the provision to be made for local authority current expenditure in 1987-88 and will be consulting the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

21. **Mr. Wilson** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he plans to make any additional funds available to local authorities to defray the cost of the recent teachers' pay award; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Ancram: In respect of 1985-86, I have nothing to add to my answer on 29 April, at column *368*. For

1986-87, the Government are awaiting the outcome of the main committee's inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions before deciding whether to provide additional resources for 1986-87.

Sir Russell Johnston asked the Secretary of State for Scotland whether he will extend the date for submissions from bodies other than local authorities on the Green paper, "Paying for Local Government".

Mr. Ancram: I see no need to do so.

Football (World Cup)

19. **Mr. Canavan** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what recent consultations he has had with the Scottish Football Association about Scotland's participation in the World Cup in Mexico.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I have been in constant touch with the Scottish Football Association in the run-up to the World Cup, paying particulr attention to issues relating to the behaviour of Scottish football supporters in Mexico. I am confident that their record of good behaviour will be sustained.

Nuclear Development

20. **Mr. Donald Stewart** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what representations he has received against nuclear development and reprocessing in the light of the Chernobyl accident.

Mr. Rifkind: In addition to the right hon. Member's letter to me of 29 April, my Department has received, up to 22 May, 11 letters from right hon. and hon. Members concerning nuclear development or reprocessing in the light of the Chernobyl accident. A further 30 letters have been received from the general public.

Economic Trends

22. **Mr. David Marshall** asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when next he expects to meet the new general secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress to discuss the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply my right hon. and learned Friend gave earlier today to the hon. Member for Motherwell, North (Mr. Hamilton).

Annan Bypass and Carrutherstown Diversion

Sir Hector Monro asked the Secretary of State for Scotland when he hopes to let the contract for the Annan bypass on the A75; and when he will announce the line for the Carrutherstown diversion on the A75.

Mr. Rifkind: I expect to let the contract for the Annan bypass in September. Discussions are still proceeding on the route of the Carrutherstown to Hetland diversion, but I hope to be in a position to announce the preferred line by about the same time.

Rating Relief (Disabled Persons)

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland obtained rating relief under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 in the latest year for which figures are available: what was the total value of the relief; and what was the cost *(a)* to his Department and *(b)* to local authorities.

Mr. Rifkind: For 1984-85 total rebates granted by rating authorities under the Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 amounted to £12·328 million, of which £17,000 was not eligible for the 90 per cent. Government grant payable; the grant therefore was £11·080 million. It is estimated that some £11·976 million was in respect of 790 institutions for the disabled and £0·352 million for facilities for disabled persons in some 5,924 households.

Police Establishment

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he has plans for the expansion of the authorised police establishment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: It is for police authorities in the first instance to determine what level of police manpower is required for the effective policing of their areas. Already this year I have approved applications involving a net increase of 99 posts in the authorised police establishment. No other applications for increases in authorised establishments are currently before me, though I am aware that manpower reviews are being conducted in some Scottish forces. I am ready to consider further modest increases in police manpower to meet proven needs.

Fine Enforcement Officers

Mr. Dewar asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many fine enforcement officers are now in post in Scotland; in what sheriff court districts they are based; whether the percentage of fines unpaid in those districts as a percentage of total fines imposed has varied since their appointment; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: Following the completion of a successful experiment, fines officers are presently in post in Scotland based in the sheriff courts at Glasgow (three), Edinburgh (two), Airdrie (one) and Hamilton (one). The fines officers based at Edinburgh, Airdrie and Hamilton were appointed on 1 July 1985, and those based at Glasgow on 3 February 1986.

Given the relatively recent appointment of the seven fines officers, it is still too early to determine whether the percentage of fines unpaid in those districts as a percentage of total fines imposed has changed.

Arrangements are in hand for the appointment of an additional eight fines officers once consultation on their possible deployment has been completed.

Oil Prices

Mr. Kennedy asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the effect of falling oil prices on the Scottish economy.

Mr. Allan Stewart: Lower oil prices should generally be of benefit to consumers and to the non oil-related sector of industry in Scotland. For the oil-related sector we expect production from existing fields to be largely unaffected by lower prices. Some cutbacks in exploration and development activity have been announced. These could have adverse implications for parts of the Scottish economy.

Designated Land

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his latest estimate of the land area of Scotland covered by *(a)* national scenic areas, *(b)* conservation areas and *(c)* sites of special scientific interest.

Mr. Ancram: There are 40 national scenic areas with a total area of 1,001,800 hectares. Conservation areas designated under the Town and Country Amenities Act 1974 are generally small parts of built-up areas of architectural or historic importance; there are 527 areas in this category.. There were, at 31 December 1985, 1,075 sites of special scientific interest in Scotland with a total area of 604,330 hectares.

Longannet Power Station

Mr. Douglas asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will make a statement on the amount of radioactive material discharged by Longannet power station during the course of its operation and the component and sources of the discharge.

Mr. Ancram: Coal ash produced at Longannet generating station contains naturally occurring radioactive potassium, uranium and thorium and uranium and thorium decay products. Some 8 gigabecquerels of activity are normally discharged annually in ash in flue gases to atmosphere and 680 gigabecquerels to the ash lagoons. The concentrations of radioactive materials in the ash are smaller than those for which authorisation under the Radioactive Substances Act 1960 is required.

Under an authorisation given to the Hunterston generating station to dispose of lubricating oil to Longannet for incineration, some 36 cu m of oil containing in aggregate some 9 gigabecquerels tritium, 1·7 gigabecquerels beta and 70 kilobecquerels alpha activity were disposed of in the years 1977 to 1979. No lubricating oil has been disposed of to Longannet since 1979.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will list the number of vacancies at each careers office in Scotland and the number of school leavers in each town served.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As at 4 April 1986, the latest date for which figures are available, the number of unfilled employment vacancies at each careers office in Scotland is as set out in the table.

Data on the number of school leavers are not available centrally in the form sought.

Unfilled Vacancies at Careers Offices in Scotland as at 4 April 1986

Education Authority and Careers Office	*Vacancies Unfilled*
Borders	
Duns	0
Galashiels	5
Hawick	5
Central	
Alloa	1
Falkirk	1
Grangemouth	0
Stirling	3

Education Authority and Careers Office	*Vacancies Unfilled*
Dumfries and Galloway	
Annan	1
Castle Douglas	2
Dumfries	0
Stranraer	1
Fife	
Cowdenbeath	2
Cupar	6
Dunfermline	2
Glenrothes	2
Kirkcaldy	1
Leven	6
Grampian	
Aberdeen	30
Banff	0
Buckie	0
Elgin	5
Fraserburgh	1
Keith	1
Peterhead	3
Turriff	1
Highland	
Alness	0
Dingwall	6
Fort William	4
Inverness	6
Portree	8
Thurso	0
Wick	2
Lothian	
Bathgate	1
Clermiston	23
Dalkeith	2
Edinburgh	12
Haddington	0
Livingston	0
Musselburgh	0
Penicuik	1
South Bridge	42
Sighthill	2
STRATHCLYDE REGION	
Argyll	
Campbeltown	1
Dunoon	0
Oban	0
Ayr	
Ardrossan	1
Ayr	0
Cumnock	0
Irvine	1
Kilmarnock	0
Dunbarton	
Clydebank	2
Cumbernauld	0
Dumbarton	0
Kirkintilloch	2
Glasgow	
Cambuslang	0
Glasgow City	3
Govan	1
Parkhead	5
Partick	0
South Side	5
Springburn	0
Lanark	
Bellshill	0

Education Authority and Careers Office	Vacancies Unfilled
Coatbridge	1
East Kilbride	1
Hamilton	2
Lanark	0
Larkhall	0
Motherwell	0
Wishaw	0
Renfrew	
Barrhead	0
Eastwood	0
Greenock	0
Johnstone	0
Paisley	0
Port Glasgow	0
Renfrew	1
Tayside	
Arbroath	1
Dundee	0
Perth	11
Orkney	
Kirkwall	0
Shetland	
Lerwick	21
Western Isles	
Stornoway	0
Scotland Total	247

Radioactive Cargoes

Mr. Foulkes asked the Secretary of State for Scotland, pursuant to the answer of the Chancellor of the Exchequer of 22 May, *Official Report*, columns *306-7*, what levels of radioactivity were discovered on the cargoes arriving from Europe and the Eastern bloc at the Scottish ports listed.

Mr. John MacKay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Teachers (Pay)

Mrs. McCurley asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will report on progress that he has made in the inquiry into teachers' pay and conditions of service.

Mr. Allan Stewart: As I told the House on 6 March, the committee of inquiry has been asked to report by the end of the summer. The Government have submitted evidence to the committee. A copy of the Government's evidence has been placed in the Library.

SOLICITOR-GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND

Official Secrets Act

28. **Mr. Wallace** asked the Solicitor-General for Scotland on how many occasions since May 1979 the Lord Advocate has formally considered the bringing of prosecutions under the Official Secrets Act.

The Solicitor-General for Scotland: Three such cases were reported for the Lord Advocate's consideration.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Student Awards

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will publish figures for 1983-84, 1984-85 and 1985-86 showing expenditure in Northern Ireland on *(a)* student awards, distinguishing between awards for fees and awards for maintenance, and on *(b)* vocational training allowances, job creation allowances and similar outlays, which in the rest of the United Kingdom are administered by the Manpower Services Commission.

Dr. Mawhinney: The information is as follows:

£ million

	1983-84	*1984-85*	*1985-86*
(a) Awards			
Fees	10·298	11·260	11·933
Maintenance	25·251	26·411	27·053
(b) Allowances			
Vocational training	15·651	16·144	17·678
Job creation	11·528	16·813	21·221
Similar outlays	0·155	0·282	0·299

Labour Statistics

Mr. Nellist asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will list the number of vacancies at each careers office in Northern Ireland and the number of school leavers in each town served.

Dr. Boyson: The numbers of unfilled vacancies for young people (aged under 18) at each Jobmarket in Northern Ireland is as follows:

Unfilled vacancies for young persons at 4 April 1986

Jobmarket	Number
Antrim	11
Armagh	19
Ballymena	16
Ballymoney	7
Ballynahinch	12
Banbridge	9
Bangor	7
Belfast	149
Carrickfergus	7
Coleraine	22
Cookstown	14
Downpatrick	9
Dungannon	33
Enniskillen	50
Kilkeel	4
Larne	12
Limavady	7
Lisburn	22
Londonderry	16
Lurgan	19
Magherafelt	20
Newcastle	1
Newry	21
Newtownards	26
Omagh	29
Portadown	24
Strabane	10
Total	576

Information is not available on the number of school leavers in each jobmarket area, but it is estimated that there will be about 20,000 people under age 18 leaving

school in Northern Ireland in 1986. Not all of these will be available for employment as some 20 per cent. continue their education in full-time non-advanced courses in further education colleges. In the 12 months to 4 april 1986, 8,554 young persons were placed in employment by careers sections of Jobmarkets in Northern Ireland.

EMPLOYMENT

Restart Scheme

Mr. Andrew F. Bennett asked the Paymaster General what discussion the Manpower Services Commission has had with local education authorities and local education authority associations about rates of remuneration for colleges providing courses under the restart scheme.

Mr. Lang: Fee rates for colleges of further education in England and Wales were discussed and agreed with the Association of County Councils and the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. Fee rates for colleges of further education in Scotland were agreed with the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General how many job vacancies there were in the Burnley travel-to-work area at the last date for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in 1979 and subsequent years.

Mr. Lang: The table shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies at the Burnley and Padiham jobcentres, which cover an area closely corresponding to the Burnley travel-to-work area, for April of each year from 1979 to 1986. Vacancy figures before April 1982 exclude self-employed vacancies.

	Number
April 1979	409
April 1980	268
April1981	114
April 1982	215
April 1983	429
April1984	267
April 1985	249
April1986	250

Mr. Pike asked the Paymaster General what was the level of long-term unemployment in Burnley at the latest date for which figures are available; and what were the comparable figures in 1979 and subsequent years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. On 10 April 1986 the number of claimants in the Burnley travel-to-work area who had been unemployed for more than 12 months was 2,425. The corresponding figures for April 1984 and April 1985 were 2,360 and 2,411 respectively. This comparison is affected by the change in the timing of compilation of unemployment statistics in March 1986. Larger discontinuities occurred in the local area statistics in 1982 and 1983, with the change in the basis of the count, the 1983 Budget provisions, the introduction of ward-based statistics and the revision to boundaries of travel-to-work areas. Therefore the figures for earlier years are not directly comparable.

Health and Safety

Mr. Janner asked the Paymaster General if he proposes to amend section 6 of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act to ensure that *(a)* an element of reasonable foresight on the part of designers, manufacturers, importers and suppliers is clearly established as a legal requirement, *(b)* imports and domestic products are treated the same and *(c)* health and safety information reaches product users.

Mr. Trippier: Yes. Changes to secure these effects are included in the proposals referred to in the answer I gave to the hon. Member on 29 January 1986.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General whether he will seek the agreement of those responsible for the "Programmes Analysis Review on Tourism" in 1974 to make the study papers available.

Mr. Trippier: I understand that the programmes analysis review on tourism was submitted to the then Government in 1974. It has not been made public and in accordance with practice it has not been available to subsequent Governments. I do not intend to depart from this practice in this instance.

Unemployment (Slough)

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General how many people in Slough are unemployed under the age of 25, between 25 and 40 and between 41 and 60 years.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed claimants in the Slough local authority district on 10 April 1986

Age years	*Number*
Under 25	1,342
25 to 39	1,562
40 to 59	1,549

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Paymaster General what is the number of people in Slough who have been unemployed for *(a)* less than six months, *(b)* six months to one year, *(c)* one year to two years and *(d)* more than two years for the latest date available.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library.

Unemployed Claimants in the Slough local authority district on 10 April 1986

	Numbers
Under six months	2,201
Six months to one year	894
One year to two years	633
Over two years	936

YTS Courses

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Paymaster General if he will list the benefits, payments and education authority grants, where appropriate, to which young people on YTS courses are entitled.

Mr. Trippier: Young people on YTS courses receive training allowances. In general, this precludes their

receiving any other payments from public funds. However where, exceptionally, the allowances paid fall short of a trainee's overall financial needs as assessed by the Department of Health and Social Security, the balance may be paid by that Department in the form of supplementary benefit.

YTS trainees do not themselves receive education authority grants for their off-the-job training, because the block grant paid to managing agents by the Manpower Services Commission makes provision for the necessary tuition fees.

Careers Offices (Vacancies)

Mr. Nellist asked the Paymaster General if he will list the number of vacancies currently on offer at each careers office and the number of school leavers in each town served.

Mr. Lang: The following table shows the numbers of unfilled vacancies at careers offices in England and Wales as at 4 April 1986. Data on the numbers of school leavers are not available centrally for areas smaller than local education authorities. I understand that my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State for Scotland, is replying in respect of vacancies at Scottish careers offices.

Unfilled vacancies at Careers Offices—4 April 1986

Careers office	*Vacancies unfilled*
South East	
Abingdon	41
Aldershot	24
Alton	14
Amersham	59
Andover	10
Ashford	6
Aylesbury	27
Basildon	25
Basingstoke	28
Bedford	40
Bexhill	4
Bognor Regis	13
Boreham Wood	22
Bracknell	44
Braintree	17
Brentwood	8
Brighton	123
Camberley	15
Canterbury	13
Chelmsford	28
Chichester	21
Clacton	15
Colchester	20
Cosham	14
Crawley	82
Crowborough	9
Dartford	7
Deal	2
Dorking	19
Dover	10
Dunstable	29
Eastbourne	32
East Grinstead	15
Eastleigh	24
Epsom	25
Esher	33
Fareham	8
Farnborough	19
Farnham	30
Faversham	3
Folkestone	10
Gillingham	7
Godalming	30

Careers office	*Vacancies unfilled*
Gosport	6
Gravesend	4
Grays	12
Guildford	58
Hailsham	7
Harlow	5
Hastings	20
Havant	9
Haywards Heath	27
Heathfield	6
Hemel Hempstead	61
Herne Bay	6
High Wycombe	46
Hitchin	7
Horsham	42
Leatherhead	24
Letchworth	12
Lewes	12
Littlehampton	2
Loughton	8
Luton	40
Lymington	22
Maidenhead	67
Maidstone	25
Malling	4
Margate	2
Medway	8
Milton Keynes	37
Newbury	30
Newhaven	2
Newport	2
Oxford	89
Portsmouth	23
Ramsgate	3
Rayleigh	43
Reading	220
Redhill	29
Ryde	4
Saffron Walden	17
Sandwich	4
St. Albans	38
Sevenoaks	39
Sheerness	1
Shoreham	14
Sittingbourne	7
Slough	106
Southampton	89
Southend	13
Staines	59
Stevenage	8
Sunbury	27
Tonbridge	7
Totton	15
Tunbridge Wells	20
Uckfield	14
Wadhurst	4
Ware	53
Waterlooville	7
Watford	63
Welwyn Garden City	23
Weybridge	37
Whitstable	2
Winchester	20
Woking	11
Worthing	33
East Anglia	
Bury St. Edmunds	37
Cambridge	117
Dereham	3
Great Yarmouth	14
Huntingdon	19
Ipswich	23
Kings Lynn	5
Lowestoft	17
North Walsham	16

Careers office	Vacancies unfilled
Norwich Central	52
Peterborough	15
Thetford	6
Wisbech	4
Greater London	
Acton	12
Balham	14
Barbican	25
Barking	11
Barkingside	3
Barons Court	42
Bermondsey	0
Bexley	12
Brixton	25
Bromley	28
Camden Town	47
Carshalton	23
Catford	4
Central London	1,317
Clapham Junction	11
Croydon	103
Dagenham	12
Ealing	25
East Ham	2
Edmonton	32
Elephant and Castle	54
Eltham	3
Enfield	18
Feltham	17
Finchley	29
Greenford	28
Hackney	46
Haringey	26
Harold Hill	8
Harrow	60
Hayes	9
Edgware	34
Hornchurch	10
Hounslow	41
Ilford	10
Holloway	114
Kingston on Thames	36
Lewisham	23
Merton	26
Paddington	231
Peckham	27
Poplar	10
Putney	8
Rainham	6
Richmond	42
Romford	13
Ruislip	10
Shepherds Bush	41
Stepney	26
Stoke Newington	6
Stratford	10
Sutton	15
Uxbridge	33
Vauxhall	34
Waltham Forest	82
Wembley	27
Willesden	45
Woodford	13
Woolwich	22
South West	
Barnstaple	4
Bath Central	10
Bideford	2
Bodmin (North Cornwall)	3
Bournemouth	52
Bristol East and Central	20
Bristol North West	9
Bristol South	12
Camborne	1
Cheltenham	20
Chippenham	6
Cinderford	5
East Avon Area	11
East Dorset	57
East Somerset	15
Exeter	21
Falmouth	0
Gloucester	14
Helston	0
Liskeard	1
Mid-Somerset	23
Newquay	1
Newton Abbot	4
North Avon	10
North Dorset	13
North West Somerset	4
Paignton	7
Penwith Area	0
Plymouth	15
St Austell	0
Salisbury	11
South Dorset	15
South East Somerset	11
Stroud	22
Swindon	24
Torquay	4
Trowbridge	17
Truro	1
West Avon	23
West Somerset	23
West Midlands	
Aldridge	2
Atherstone 3	
Bedworth	0
Birmingham	201
Bridgnorth	7
Bromsgrove	5
Brownhills	1
Burslem	15
Burton on Trent	8
Cannock	1
Chelmsley Wood	1
Coleshill	1
Coventry	27
Cradley Heath	10
Droitwich	5
Dudley	8
Evesham	10
Handsworth	25
Hanley	1
Hereford	12
Kidderminster	9
Kingsheath	45
Leamington	42
Leek	6
Leominster	1
Lichfield	2
Longton	2
Ludlow	2
Madeley	3
Malvern	5
Market Drayton	7
Newcastle Under Lyme	7
Nuneaton	0
Oakengates	3
Oldbury	13
Oswestry	1
Perry Barr	87
Pershore	6
Redditch	4
Ross On Wye	3
Rugby	8
Rugeley	3

Careers office	Vacancies unfilled
Selly Oak	14
Shrewsbury	4
Smethwick	5
Solihull	6
Stafford	6
Stechford	30
Stratford on Avon	97
Sutton Coldfield	15
Tamworth	12
Telford	6
Tipton	3
Walsall	13
Wednesbury	4
West Bromwich	12
Willenhall	11
Wolverhampton	35
Wolverhampton Fringe	1
Worcester	5
Yardley	31
East Midlands	
Alfreton	7
Arnold	4
Beeston	25
Boston	3
Brackley	9
Buxton	6
Carlton	6
Chesterfield	18
Coalville	9
Corby	15
Daventry	8
Derby	28
Eastwood	2
Gainsborough	4
Glossop	3
Grantham	2
Hinckley	39
Hucknall	0
Ilkeston	4
Kettering	11
Leicester Central	231
Lincoln	8
Long Eaton	4
Loughborough	20
Louth	8
Mansfield	5
Market Harborough	8
Matlock	1
Melton Mowbray	16
Newark	19
Northampton	24
Nottingham	44
Oakham	3
Retford	6
Rushcliffe	11
Rushden	15
Skegness	8
Sleaford	0
Spalding	3
Stamford	14
Staveley	3
Sutton-in-Ashford	10
Swadlincote	9
Wellingborough	4
Wigston	7
Worksop	1
Yorkshire and Humberside	
Barnsley	4
Batley	10
Beverley	3
Bransholme	6
Bradford	172
Bridlington	7
Castleford	2

Careers office	Vacancies unfilled
Dewsbury	5
Doncaster	6
Goole	2
Grimsby	18
Halifax	30
Harrogate	26
Heddon	3
Hemsworth	0
Huddersfield	41
Hull	14
Hull (East Riding)	6
Leeds	70
Northallerton	28
Pontefract	1
Rotherham	34
Scarborough	23
Scunthorpe	10
Selby	8
Sheffield	14
Skipton	7
Wakefield	17
York	26
North West	
Altrincham	16
Ashton-under-Lyne	7
Bebington	14
Birkenhead	7
Blackburn	49
Blackpool	33
Bolton	19
Bootle	3
Burnley	15
Bury	8
Chester	15
Chorley	22
Colne	2
Congleton	9
Crewe	7
Crosby	5
Darwen	0
Deeside	3
Eccles	2
Ellesmere Port	2
Fylde	12
Halewood	0
Halton (Runcorn)	0
Halton (Widnes)	2
Heywood	1
Huyton	1
Hyde	2
Hyndburn	6
Knowsley College	0
Kirkby	0
Lancaster	9
Leigh	0
Leyland	0
Liverpool	13
Longsight	5
Macclesfield	26
Macclesfield Wimslow	5
Manchester	25
Middleton	0
Morecambe	9
Moss Side	8
Newton le Willows	2
North Manchester	6
Oldham	1
Ormskirk	9
Openshawe	8
Pendle	9
Prescot	3
Preston	39
Ribble Valley	8
Rochdale	7
Rossendale	10

Careers office	Vacancies unfilled
St. Helens	7
Salford	21
Southport	5
South Ribble	2
Stockport	21
Stretford	7
Swinton	2
Vale Royal	9
Wallasey	8
Warrington	12
West Lancashire	41
Winsford	1
Wigan	1
Withington	4
Wyre	3
Wythenshawe	4
North	
Alnwick	6
Ashington	8
Barrow	2
Berwick	1
Billingham	0
Bishop Auckland	0
Blaydon	2
Blyth	14
Carlisle	16
Chester le Street	0
Consett	2
Crook	0
Darlington	22
Durham	3
Easington	0
Eston	0
Gateshead	15
Guisborough	0
Hartlepool	1
Hebburn	2
Hexham	6
Houghton le Spring	2
Kendal	14
Middlesbrough	1
Newcastle	38
Newton Aycliffe	3
North Shields	8
Penrith	2
Redcar	0
South Shields	20
Spennymoor	1
Stanley	4
Stockton on Tees	1
Sunderland	34
Ulverston	8
Wallsend	2
West Moor	5
Washington	58
Whitehaven	5
Whitley Bay	7
Workington	4
Wales	
Aberdare	0
Abertillery	4
Aberystwyth	2
Acrefair	1
Ammanford	0
Bangor	0
Barry	4
Blackwood	9
Brecon	0
Bridgend	6
Caernarvon	0
Caerphilly	1
Cardiff	31
Carmarthen	9
Colwyn Bay	6
Conwy	2
Cross Keys	1
Dolgellau	0
Flint	1
Gorseinon	0
Haverfordwest	5
Holyhead	1
Holywell	0
Llandrindod Wells	1
Llanelli	2
Merthyr Tydfil	1
Mold	1
Morriston	1
Neath	0
Newport	2
Newtown	9
Pembroke	1
Pontypool	6
Pontypridd	0
Port Talbot	2
Pwllheli	4
Rhyl	1
Shotton	3
Swansea District	7
Tonypandy	2
Usk	3
Wrexham	3

Occupational Health Services

Mr. Soames asked the Paymaster General what action the Government have taken with regard to the ratification of International Labour Convention No. 161 and acceptance of International Labour Recommendation No. 171, concerning occupational health services, adopted by the International Labour conference in June 1985.

Mr. Lang: The texts of the convention and recommendation were included in a White Paper (Cmnd. No. 9727) presented to Parliament on 31 January. Before reaching decisions on the action to be taken on these instruments, the Government have sought the advice of the Health and Safety Commission, and the commission issued a consultative document in February inviting the comments of all interested parties as a basis for considering its advice. The Government's decision on whether to ratify the Convention and accept the Recommendation will be taken when this advice has been received, and an announcement will be made to Parliament in due course.

ENERGY

Nuclear Power Stations

Mr. Chris Smith asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will publish *(a)* the total capital investment costs, in present-day prices, of the nuclear facilities at British Nuclear Fuels Ltd. Springfields, Capenhurst, and Sellafield, the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority facilities at Atomic Energy Research Establishment Harwell, and the nuclear power development plant at Dounreay and *(b)* the percentage investment and upkeep cost of each of these establishments paid for by the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Goodlad: The information is as follows:

British Nuclear Fuels plc (BNFL)

Capital expenditure to 31 March 1986 on the facilities

operated at Springfields is £260 million; at Capenhurst £610 million; and at Sellafield £1,980 million. These figures are in March 1986 prices. They exclude the Calder Hall reactors, but include expenditure prior to 1971, when BNFL was formed, on facilities which were inherited from the AEA and are still in use. Each of BNFL's sites renders services to a range of costomers and the cost allocations differ from year to year and site to site. However, in the financial year 1984-85 some 54 per cent. of total sales reflected services to the two generating boards.

The United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority (AEA)

Information on the AEA's facilities at Harwell and Dounreay is not readily available in this form. I am asking its chairman to write to the hon. Member.

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd.

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Energy how many jobs have been created in the northern region by NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. in each year since it was established; and how many are expected to be created in the current year.

Mr. David Hunt: By 26 April 1986 NCB (Enterprise) Ltd. had, since its foundation in October 1984, contributed to the creation of 920 job opportunities in the north-east. During 1986-87 the company intends to double its activities nationally and is aiming to support projects to create 10,000 new job opportunities.

Manoil Process

Sir Fergus Montogmery asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he is planning to investigate the viability of the Manoil process for producing oil from refuse.

Mr. David Hunt: The Manoil process for the liquefaction of rubbish to oil was looked at by the energy technology support unit (ETSU) at Harwell in 1985. The indications at that time were that although there appeared to be great potential in the process, a number of technical and economic factors still needed to be overcome. In particular, the process appeared to provide less energy, at considerably higher cost, than direct combustion of refuse.

In April this year my Department again considered the Manoil process and I personally discussed its prospects with our technical advisers at ETSU. As a result of this, I have decided that it would be useful to have an independent evaluation of the process carried out by a firm of consulting engineers. This assessment will be put in hand shortly and will provide an up-to-date appraisal of the technical and economic prospects and of the major problems that remain to be overcome.

Coal, Gas and Electricity Prices

Mr. Robert Banks asked the Secretary of State for Energy what information he has on the changes in real terms for each of the previous six years in domestic coal, gas and electricity prices.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith The information requested is set out in the table.

	Coal per cent.	*Gas per cent.*	*Electricity per cent.*
1979 to 1980	+8·9	−0·6	+8·5
1980 to 1981	+5·9	+13·6	+8·3
1981 to 1982	−0·7	+15·2	+1·5
1982 to 1983	+2·1	+7·6	−0·3
1983 to 1984	+2·4	−1·6	−3·8
1984 to 1985	+0·4	−1·9	−2·8

Source: Department of Energy

North Sea Oil

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list all those countries to which oil exporting companies have refused to export United Kingdom North sea oil, as a consequence of the Government's declared policy which limits the export of North sea oil to members of the European Economic Community, the international Energy Agency and according to established patterns of trade.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: The information requested, which concerns the commercial activity of individual companies exporting North Sea oil, is not held by Her Majesty's Government. On the scope of the guidance given by Her Majesty's Government to these companies, however, I refer my hon. Friend to the answer I gave him on 22 April of this year, at column 117.

Mr. William Shelton asked the Secretary of State for Energy, in view of the Government's declared policy of restricting exports of United Kingdom North sea oil to members of the European Economic Community, the International Energy Agency and according to established patterns of trade, what information he has about North sea oil being exported in the last few years to a number of countries outside those permitted areas; and what penalties have been applied to the exporting companies.

Mr. Buchanan-Smith: I am aware of two instances since 1979 in which cargoes of North sea crude oil were by oversight exported to destinations outside the scope of the guidance given by Her Majesty s Government in that year to companies exporting such oil. I am satisfied that there was no intention on the part of the companies concerned to disregard the guidance, and they have taken steps to prevent any repetition.

National Coal Board (Recruitment)

Mr. Andy Stewart asked the Secretary of State for Energy what proportion of new recruits required by the National Coal Board between the ages of 16 and 19 years during the past two years have been rejected on medical grounds, both nationally and in the Nottinghamshire area.

Mr. David Hunt: I shall ask the chairman of British Coal to write to the hon. Member.

Magnox Reprocessing Plant, Sellafield

Mr. Maclean asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether agreement has been reached on the introduction of an inspection regime by Euratom of the Magnox reprocessing plant at Sellafield; and if he will make a statement about the reprocessing of civil and non-civil spent fuel in the plant.

Mr. Peter Walker: Euratom safeguards inspectors have had access to all areas at Sellafield except the mixed civil/non-civil areas, because of the presence of non-civil material which has been co-processed with civil material.

Consultations on an inspection regime to cover the mixed areas have now been completed. Following meetings between Euratom, United Kingdom officials and BNFL, agreement has now been reached with Euratom to commence inspection on a routine basis of the civil material in the mixed Magnox reprocessing plant and

associated process areas of the Sellafield site. The Government welcome the agreement enabling the inspectorate to verify all the civil material at Sellafield.

The co-processing of civil and non-civil material will phase out during 1986 and thereafter separate civil and non-civil reprocessing operations will be carried out sequentially, rather than simultaneously. During the transitional period Euratom will be enabled to verify the flows and inventories of the civil material.

Basic technical characteristics of plants involved have been provided to Euratom and its inspectors have visited the plant to verify that the data are correct. Euratom inspectors were also present at the plant at the end of March 1986 when the latest verification of stocks of civil nuclear material took place.

The safeguards procedures to be followed will meet the requirements of the treaty establishing the European Atomic Energy Community. They include:

(a) the keeping of records of the flow and stocks of civil nuclear material;

(b) the provision of monthly accountancy reports to Euratom;

(c) Inspector access to the records and to the civil nuclear material to verify the opening and closing physical holdings and all inventory changes to verify that there has been no net gain to the non-civil cycle in either quantity or quality. These verifications procedures will include the application of non-destructive measurement techniques and the taking of samples for analysis including the determination of the isotopic composition of the nuclear material.

Euratom inspectors will have access to all civil material at Sellafield on a continuing basis.

Mr. D. E. Thomas asked the Secretary of State for Energy if, pursuant to his reply to the hon. Member for Walthamstow, East, Mr Deakins, *Official Report*, column 292, of 5 December 1985, he will *(a)* make an estimate of the cost of implementation of the full separation of civil and military facilities and activities at Sellafield and *(b)* state what proportions of the annual United Kingdom payment to the International Atomic Energy Agency such a safeguards system would require.

Mr. Goodlad: *[pursuant to his reply,* 3 June 1986]: I refer the hon. Member to the answer my right hon. Friend has given today to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and the Border (Mr. Maclean) in which he announced the agreement with Euratom of an inspection regime to cover the mixed civil-military areas at Sellafield. The co-processing of civil and defence material will phase out during 1986, and thereafter separate civil and defence operations will be carried out sequentially rather than simultaneously. The costs of the new inspection regime will be met by Euratom, which is funded from the European Community's resources.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mr. Simon Fletcher

Mr. Ashdown asked the Attorney-General if he will publish the information which led him to apply for an order under section 42 of the Supreme Court Act 1981 in respect of Mr. Simon Fletcher.

The Attorney-General: No. All the evidence upon which I relied was served upon Mr. Simon Fletcher before the commencement of the section 42 proceedings. The documents may be inspected with leave of the court in accordance with order 63, rule 4 of the Rules of the Supreme Court.

Illegitimacy

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General if he has given consideration to the cost implications of the recommendations made by the Law Commission in its 1982 report "Family Law: Illegitimacy" Law Commission (No. 118) to reform the law relating to illegitimacy; and if he will make a statement.

The Attorney-General: The Government have considered the cost implications of the recommendations made by the Law Commission in its report on illegitimacy. If and when the Family Law Reform Bill appended to that report is enacted, the cost implications will have to be considered again when determining the dates on which the provisions of the Bill should be brought into effect.

Mr. Best asked the Attorney-General what plans he has to implement the recommendations of the Law Commission (No. 118) report "Family Law: Illegitimacy."

The Attorney-General: The recommendations of the Law Commission in its report No. 118 on illegitimacy have been accepted by the Government and legislation will be introduced at the earliest possible opportunity.

Commons Registration Act 1965

Sir Peter Mills asked the Attorney-General what, over the last two years, has been the average interval between the close of a hearing by a Commons Commissioner under section 6 of the Commons Registration Act 1965 and the publication of his decision; what decisions currently outstanding have been outstanding for a longer period; and if he will in each such case give the date on which the hearing was concluded.

Mrs Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

Over the past two years the average interval between the close of a hearing by a Commons Commissioner and the publication of the decision has been four months. This figure has been to some extent distorted by a series of very complex Dartmoor decisions, which involved hearings lasting for over 90 days, and over 8,000 applicants.

Currently outstanding for a longer period are 12 South Yorkshire cases which were heard on 2 December 1985 and one Devon case, West Anstey, which went to the Court of Appeal and was reheard on 8 October 1985.

Sir Peter Mills asked the Attorney-General how many disputed claims under the Commons Registration Act 1965 remain to be heard by a Commons Commissioner in accordance with section 6 of that Act; how long these hearings have been outstanding and when he expects all such hearings to be completed.

Mrs Rumbold: I have been asked to reply.

Seventeen local authorities have outstanding cases, but they are not all able to estimate the exact number. It is thus not possible to provide figures for the total number of disputed claims, nor how long it will take to resolve these.

TRANSPORT

M25 (Traffic Figures)

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for Transport what are the latest traffic figures for the stretch of the M25 from Hunton bridge to the M40; and how they compare with the original forecast.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The information is as follows:

M25 Traffic Flows (Thousands)

Section	Junction Numbers	April 1986 Average 16-hour Weekday flow	Forecasts for 1987 Original	Forecasts for 1987 Updated (1984)
M40-A412	16-17	76	55-60	61-64
A412-A404	17-18	78	55-65	61-69
A404-A405	18-19	76	65-75	72-80
A405-A41	19-20	Opening late 1986	45-55	50-58

London Transport Works, Aldenham

Mr. Bidwell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will discuss with the chairman of London Regional Transport the future prospects of the London Transport Works at Aldenham; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. David Mitchell: The future prospects of the Aldenham works are a management matter for LRT and its subsidiary BEL, and not something with which we would expect to interfere.

Air Services Agreements

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to ensure that the air service agreements between the United Kingdom and other European Economic Community member countries are compatible with the Treaty of Rome in the light of the recent judgment of the European Court in the Nouvelles Frontieres case.

Mr. Michael Spicer: We notified other member states in June 1984 that we would no longer require airlines to consult their competitors before submitting tariff proposals to us, even where the relevant air services agreement imposed such a requirement. To that extent we have anticipated the judgement. We are continuing our efforts to secure more liberal bilateral arrangements and, during our presidency of the EC council, will be giving high priority to securing an agreement to liberalise air transport in the Community.

Road Programme (London)

Mr. Chapman asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will list the new road programmes in the Greater London area *(a)* under construction, *(b)* approved but awaiting the start of construction and *(c)* planned, but not yet approved.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The Department's trunk road schemes over £1 million are as follows:

(a) under construction

(b) approved (ie statutory processes complete) but awaiting the start of construction

(c) proposed, but not yet approved (ie subject to completion of statutory processes)

Number	Trunk road
A20	Sidcup Bypass
A2	Rochester Way Relief Road
A406	South Woodford-Barking Relief Road
A406	Great Cambridge Road (A10) junction
A13	Hackney Wick-M11 link, Thames Avenue-Launders Lane
A13/A117	Junction improvement
A40	Ealing, Gipsy Corner junction
A40	Ealing, Western Circus junction
A40	Hillingdon, Swakeleys Road junction
A40	Hillingdon, Long Lane junction
A406	Chingford Road-Hale End Road
A406	Falloden Way-Finchley High Road
A406	Hanger Lane-Harrow Road
A406	Popes Lane-Western Avenue
A406	Bounds Green-Green Lane
A406	Dysons Road-Hall Lane
A406	East London River Crossing
A406	Golders Green Road junction
A406	Regents Park Road junction
A406	East of Silver Street-A1010

Schemes of London's other roads are the responsibility of the boroughs concerned.

British Airports Authority

Mr. McCrindle asked the Secretary of State for Transport what restrictions are proposed on the ownership of shares in the privatised British Airports Authority.

Mr. Michael Spicer: A provision will be included in the articles of association of the privatised BAA restricting the shareholding of any individual, or of parties acting in concert, to 15 per cent. of the total issued share capital. The Secretary of State will retain a special share which will give him the right to veto any proposed change to this article.

Buses (Redundancy Compensation)

Sir Fergus Montgomery asked the Secretary of State for Transport what arrangements he proposes in respect of the liabilities for redundancy compensation which may fall on the passenger transport executives and district councils for their bus operations during 1986-87.

Mr. Moore: I am aware of the particular problems which the PTEs and those shire districts with municipal bus companies face in ensuring that their bus operations are in a position to be formed into companies by October 26 according to the statutory timetable under the Transport Act 1985. Where redundancies are involved, calculations of costs will have been made on the assumption that redundancy rebate would be payable until 31 October 1986: in the case of the PTEs calculations on this

assumption were also made before determining in February this year the maximum precept which might be levied by the passenger transport authorities. However, the Government have announced that abolition of this rebate will take effect from 1 August. Accordingly, my Department has today written to all PTEs and to those shire districts with municipal bus companies, undertaking to reimburse them for additional costs resulting specifically from the effects which bringing forward the abolition of the redundancy rebate will have on the special circumstances of their bus operations. I understand that my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales will be giving similar undertakings to authorities in their areas.

WALES

Youth Training Scheme

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people are presently engaged in YTS courses in Wales; and if he will estimate the total for each year group in the two-year course beginning in 1986-87.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: There were 16,395 YTS trainees in Wales at 31 March 1986. It is estimated that 18,407 16-year-olds will enter YTS2 in 1986-87; it is also estimated that 7,857 17-year-olds who complete 1 year YTS places during 1986-87 will take up continuation places. In addition there are 2,952 17-year-old entrants who will be eligible for one year's training.

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Wales how many young people engaged in YTS courses in Wales presently qualify as part-time students.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: This information is not available. The question of student status primarily relates to the form of off-the-job training provided by managing agents on which information is not held centrally.

GCSE (Bilingual Syllabuses)

Mr. Gwilym Jones asked the Secretary of State for Wales what steps he is taking to ensure that bilingual syllabuses for the new GCSE courses will be available for secondary schools in Wales.

Mr. Wyn Roberts: The provision of bilingual syllabuses is a matter for the examining board. However, in view of the pressures on the Welsh joint education committee at this time, my right hon. Friend has offered, exceptionally, to provide the WJEC with Welsh translations of 24 syllabuses corresponding to the training manuals which have already been translated into Welsh.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Master of Business Administration Examination

Mr. Speller asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if he will list the number of students in the United Kingdom who have passed the master of business administration examination during the last 10 years; if he will list those business schools which offer full or full and part-time master of business administration courses; what measures the Government are taking to encourage this course; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Walden: The facts are set out in the tables below. The Government are keen to ensure that institutions providing post-graduate management education are more responsive to the needs of industry and commerce. The Department of Education and Science is contributing, with the Department of Trade and Industry, towards the cost of a study of management education sponsored by the British Institute of Management and the Confederation of British Industry. The purpose of this study is to obtain the views of companies and individuals on the quality or provision for business and management studies in higher education and on ways in which it might be improved. The project will provide market research on a number of issues, including the scope for increasing the amount of private sector funding for post-graduate and post-experience courses.

Students awarded masters degrees in business or management studies by universities in the United Kingdom

	Number
1975	775
1976	854
1977	987
1978	937
1979	1,049
1980	1,016
1981	1,240
1982	1,380
1983	1,567
1984	1,672

Notes:

1. Figures include students awarded MBA degrees for which information is not separately available.
2. Figures exclude 78 students awarded MBA degrees by the Council for National Academic Awards since 1983.

Institutions offering MBA courses in 1985-86:

Aston University
Queens University, Belfast
Birmingham University
Bradford University
Brunel University
Central London Polytechnic
City University
Cranfield Institute of Advanced Technology
Edinburgh University
Glasgow University
Leeds University
Leicester Polytechnic
Manchester University
Middlesex Polytechnic
North-East London Polytechnic
Newcastle University
Sheffield University
Sheffield City Polytechnic
Strathclyde University
Ulster University
University of Wales
Institute Science & Technology
Warwick University

Notes

1. The London Business School offers a similar Course in Business Studies. Leading to the degree of Master of Science from the University of London.

Students

Mr. Ron Davies asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science (1) what are the criteria for eligibility as a part-time student;

(2) what are the eligibility criteria for education authority payments to students, with particular reference to free meals, free travel and maintenance.

Mr. Dunn: Local education authorities are empowered to pay maintenance allowances in respect of full-time pupils or students over compulsory school age in schools or non-advanced further education. The powers are discretionary and it is for individual authorities to determine the qualifying circumstances and the rate of allowance. The Education Acts make separate specific provision for free school meals and for transport arrangements for pupils in schools irrespective of whether they are in receipt of education maintenance allowances. Allowances are not payable for part-time students.

School Curriculum

Mr. Gerald Bowden asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science when he will publish an account of local education authorities' responses to circular 8/83 on the school curriculum as promised in paragraph 40 of the White Paper "Better Schools"; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: I have placed in the Library a copy of an account published today of LEAs' responses to DES Circular 8/83 which asked about their curricular policies. Many of the responses on which the paper is based were made as early as 1984—since when the effects of current Government initiatives have been fully experienced. The paper documents the extent to which, through partnership between central and local government, progress is being made towards the broad agreement about the objectives and content of the school curriculum envisaged in "Better Schools". It is now widely accepted that local education authorities should have a curricular policy in order to carry out their functions, and there is much common ground on the principles on which that policy should be based. As authorities themselves recognise, much still has to be done to give their policies practical effect, but I am encouraged by the substantial progress which has so far been achieved.

Written Answers to Questions

Thursday 5 June 1986

SCOTLAND

Residential Homes

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people are at present resident in local authority homes; what was the comparable figure in 1979; and what is the present average occupancy of such residences.

Mr. John MacKay: On 31 March 1985, the latest date for which information is available, the number of residents in local authority homes was as follows:

	1979	*1985*	*Occupancy Rate 1985 per cent.*
Elderly	8,745	8,985	92
Children	2,659	1,720	73
Mentally handicapped	506	725	92
Mentally ill	117	129	71
Other	—	54	59
TOTAL	12,027	11,613	88

NHS (Land Sales)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what was the income to the Health Service in Scotland from the sale of land and properties owned by health authorities during each of the past five years.

Mr. John MacKay: Income from the sale of surplus NHS land and property is as follows:

	£ million
1981-82	0·454
1982-83	1·791
1983-84	1·750
1984-85	1·889
1985-86	2·432

Burglaries

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many Scottish homes have reported burglaries in each of the past 10 years.

Mr. John MacKay: The available information relates to cases of housebreaking, in both residential and commercial property, recorded by the police, and is as follows:

Cases of housebreaking recorded by the police—Scotland

	Number
1976	79,820
1977	91,150
1978	75,710
1979	76,635
1980	78,446
1981	95,681
1982	106,277
1983	108,520
1984	112,104
1985	100,698

Benefits (Crimes)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how many people in Scotland in each of the past 10 years have been convicted of crimes related to the claiming of supplementary or unemployment benefit.

Mr. John MacKay: I regret that the information is not maintained in the form requested. The information that is available is set out in the table.

Persons against whom charges were proved
Social Security and Supplementary Benefits Offences

	Number
1976	583
1977	593
1978	1,108
1979	774
1980	1,518
1981	981
1982	498
1983	317
1984	419
1985	463

Haemophiliacs

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland how much money the Scottish Office makes available to centres run by health authorities in Scotland at which haemophiliacs are treated and supported in counselling centres.

Mr. John MacKay: No specific funds have been made available for this purpose. It is for individual health boards to decide on the allocation of their resources, according to their priorities and their knowledge of local needs.

Social Services (Expenditure)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is the amount spent in Scotland per head on personal social services in the last year for which figures are available; and what are the comparable figures for *(a)* England and Wales and *(b)* each of the English and Welsh regions.

Mr. John MacKay: The last financial year for which relevant figures are available for Scotland and Wales is 1984-85 and for England 1983-84. In 1984-85 the gross amount per head of the population spent in Scotland by local authorities in the discharge of the responsibilities arising directly from the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 or referred to therein was £63. The equivalent figure for Wales is £55. 1983-84 figures for Scotland, Wales and England and for areas in England corresponding approximately to those of regional health authorities are as follows:

Approximate Gross Amount Spent per Head on Personal Social Services in 1983-84 (rounded to the nearest £)

England (by regions)	£
Northern	55
Yorkshire	49
Trent	50
East Anglia	37
North West Thames	68
North East Thames	75
South East Thames	68
South West Thames	51
Wessex	37
Oxford	40
South Western	42
West Midlands	45
Mersey	53
North Western	57
Average for England	53
Wales	53
Scotland	59

The figures are not directly comparable because those relating to Scotland include expenditure on probation and other services for offenders which are as integral part of the social work programme for Scotland but not in England and Wales.

Commonwealth Games

Mr. Ewing asked the Secretary of State for Scotland if he will publish the exchange of letters between himself and the chairman of the Commonwealth Games Committee regarding the anticipated shortfall in financing the Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: No. The chairman of the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee and I agree that our correspondence is confidential. I am confident that the Edinburgh Games will be a resounding success.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what is his estimate of the numbers of British fishing vessels engaged in monofilament net fishing in *(a)* North sea fishing grounds north of the Scottish border and *(b)* Scottish waters in each of the last three years: and what is his estimate of the value and volume of the catch landed in Scotland from such vessels.

Mr. John Mackay: I shall reply to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

Transport Grants

Mr. Henderson asked the Secretary of State for Scotland what arrangements he proposes for the operation in Scotland of the grants provided for by section 108 of the Transport Act 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Rifkind: I have provided £170,000 for these grants in 1986/87. The grant scheme will be used to assist in the establishment, continuance or improvement of any public passenger transport project for the benefit of persons residing in rural areas of Scotland. The particular conditions of the scheme, which has been established after consultation with local authorities and interested organisations, are set out in the explanatory note which accompanies application forms. I have placed copies in the Library of the House.

ENERGY

Coal Prices

Mr. Hannam asked the Secretary of State for Energy whether he is now in a position to make a statement on the agreement on coal prices reached between the Central Electricity Generating Board and the National Coal Board.

Mr. Peter Walker: The Government have encouraged British Coal and the CEGB in their efforts to reach a commercial agreement covering the supply of coal, which takes due account of the recent fall in the price of oil. I am pleased to be able to announce that agreement has been reached. The agreement is firm for the first two years, from 1 April 1986, and it is the clear intention of the industries to continue it for a further three years. In the first year it will result in a reduction of some £300 million in the cost of coal to the CEGB and there will be a similar decrease in the second year. The Government have endorsed the agreement during the first two years when it is firm.

Electricity prices will fall as a result of this agreement. The Electricity Council is today recommending to the area boards an immediate reduction. I understand that this will mean a reduction of some 3·5 per cent. on the unit rate, with consumers on Economy 7 benefiting even more. The average reduction for industrial consumers is likely to be 5 per cent. (7 per cent. to 8 per cent. for those on contracted load terms). Monthly-billed industrial and commercial consumers will begin to benefit at once as a result of the fuel price adjustment clause in their tariff. The area boards expect to announce shortly the reduction in their prices to quarterly-billed, including domestic, consumers.

Euratom Budget

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy how much of the current Euratom budget is allocated to *(a)* promoting nuclear energy and *(b)* safety.

Mr. Gooodlad: There is no seperate Euratom budget. Community research into nuclear fission is funded through the overall Community budget. Some 80 per cent. of the current nuclear fission programme of around £275 million is safety-related with sub-programmes on reactor safety, the management and storage of radioactive waste and the safeguarding of fissile materials. The remainder of the programme is devoted to research into nuclear fuels and decommissioning of nuclear installations. Euratom does not devote resources to promoting nuclear energy.

Electricity Industry (Investment Capital)

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy (1) if he will give the latest available information held by his Department on the comparative availability of investment capital for Electricité de France in France and the Central Electricity Generating Board's external financing limits;

(2) if he will set out his Department's latest information on the size and composition of Electricité de France's investment debt arising from the French nuclear energy programme's reactor construction schedule.

Mr. Goodlad: The CEGB conducts its capital investment in accordance with a programme for which it is required to obtain my right hon. Friend's approval. My right hon. Friend has agreed that the board may spend £640 million on its capital programme in 1986/87. I cannot comment on the comparative availability of investment capital for Electricité de France or on the size of its debts.

Nuclear Power

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will list those categories of questions on civil nuclear power and nuclear materials that are matters to be raised directly with the appropriate chairman of the Central Electricity Generating Board and the South of Scotland Electricity Board.

Mr. Goodlad: Questions which relate specifically to matters within the management competence of the Central Electricity Generating Board or the South of Scotland Electricity Board, or where the answer requires detailed information not available in my Department or in the Scottish Office, are normally referred to the chairman of the board concerned.

Mr. Corbyn asked the Secretary of State for Energy if he will give details of how he calculated the stated figure of a £1 billion advantage to French industry of its nuclear energy programme.

Mr. Goodlad: A reduction in the proportion of nuclear generation in the French electricity system from the present 65 per cent. to the 20 per cent. in Britain would add approximately 0.5p to the cost of a kilowatt hour of French electricity. This is broadly the difference between French and United Kingdom industrial electricity tariffs as detailed in the CBI report on "European industrial Energy Prices" published in February 1985. When multiplied by electricity consumption in French industrial and commercial concerns, this yields a saving close to £1 billion.

NATIONAL FINANCE

Review Board for Government Contracts

Mr. Soames asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will make a statement on the outcome of the report on the second annual review by the Review Board for Government Contracts.

Mr. Brooke: The review board in its report on the fouth general review proposed that the triennial reviews of the target profit rate should be supplemented by limited annual reviews so that changes in the rate of return elsewhere in the economy and in other economic circumstances can be reflected more quickly in the profit rate. The review board submitted the second of these interim reviews to the Treasury in January.

The board recommended that the target rate of profit should be 13 per cent. on capital employed in semi-CCA terms, with an assumed average CP/CE ratio of 2·40 to 1. The semi-CCA basis of the profit formula allows for historic cost figures to be adjusted by the inclusion of current cost based depreciation and fixed asset values; and the average cost of production to capital employed (CP/CE) ratio is used in determining the components of the profit formula applicable to risk and non-risk work (that is the rates of return allowed on capital employed and cost).

In its first annual review the board found that, although there were not sufficient data to support the view that Government profit formula work generally required less capital than contractors' other work, there were some significant divergences in individual cases arising almost entirely from a small number of large and exceptional projects, both defence and non-defence. The board recommended that these divergences should be addressed by negotiating more relevant units for the calculation of contractors' individual CP/CE ratios rather than by adjusting the target rate of return in the profit formula. To avoid distortion by the exceptional projects until more relevant units are established and start to affect negotiations on individual CP/CE ratios, the board has again recommended, in its second annual review, that a transitional adjustment should be made to the average CP/CE ratio. Specifically, the board recommended that the observed ratio of 2·32 to 1 should be increased to 2·40 to 1.

Progress has been made with the introduction of more relevant units, but it is not certain that this action alone will eliminate the exceptional problems reported by the board. The Government and industry have therefore asked the board to conduct a further study of capital employed as part of the fifth general review which will take place later this year. Meanwhile, it is essential that the overstatement of capital employed already identified by the board should be reflected in the profit formula. Accordingly, after careful consideration, and following representations from industry, the Government have decided to leave unchanged the formula introduced on 1 May 1985. The target rate of profit will therefore remain at 12 per cent. on capital employed on a semi-CCA basis, and the components of the profit formula applicable to risk and non-risk work will also be unchanged.

Copies of the review board report have been placed in the Library.

Sick Leave

Sir Brandon Rhys Williams asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what is his latest estimate of the cost of sick leave in the public sector; and what would be the public expenditure savings if public sector employees were restricted to statutory sick pay, instead of the present arrangements.

Mr. Brooke: The information sought by the hon. Member is not held centrally and I regret that this information cannot be provided without a disproportionate expenditure of time and resources.

Public Expenditure

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer if he will give details of total public expenditure, at current prices and real prices, using 1979 as 100, for each of the years 1978-79 to 1985-86.

Mr. MacGregor: The public expenditure planning total figures expressed in current prices and in real terms, using 1978-89 as 100, are as follows:

	Current prices	Real terms*
1978-79	100	100
1979-80	118	101
1980-81	141	102
1981-82	158	104
1982-83	172	106
1983-84	183	107
1984-85	197	111
1985-86	204	108

* Cash figures adjusted for general inflation as measured by the GDP deflator at market prices

Eastern Bloc Imports

Mr. Foulkes asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, pursuant to the reply, 22 May, *Official Report*, columns 306-7, what information he has about the nature of the cargoes imported from Europe and the Eastern bloc for each of the ports of entry in Scotland.

Mr. Brooke: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

National Insurance Contributions

Dr. McDonald asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what would be the additional cost in 1986-87 of income tax relief for class 4 National Insurance contributions if the upper annual limit were abolished.

Mr. Norman Lamont: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Data Protection

Mr. Cohen asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer how many registrations his Department has made under the Data Protection Act; how many people are involved with implementing the legislation in his Department as a significant part of their job description; and how much he estimates it will cost to conform with the eight data protection principles.

Mr. Brooke: The Treasury made three registrations under the Data Protection Act. There are four people involved with implementing the legislation within the Department. The majority of the data protection principles echo good practice and were adhered to by the Treasury prior to the introduction of the Act. The only principle likely to cause extra cost in future is principle 7, referring to subject access. The Treasury does not envisage any significant expenditure on this, as most of the subjects are members of staff who see the information held on them as a matter of course.

Government Departments (Staff)

Mr. Cash asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer what was the number of staff in post in central Government Departments at 1 April 1986.

Mr. MacGregor: At 1 April 1986 there were 594,365 staff in post — 498,223 non-industrials and 96,142 industrials. The number of Civil Servants has fallen by 137,910, or 18·8 per cent, since 1 April 1979.

TRANSPORT

Plutonium (Liverpool-Dounreay)

Mr. Alton asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he will make a statement on the flying of plutonium fuel from Liverpool to Dounreay.

Mr. Michael Spicer: These shipments are made in full compliance with the national and international safety regulations, which require the containers to be so designed as to prevent any harmful effect, due to radioactive contents, even in event of a serious accident.

STATS 19 System

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for Transport whether, in view of the current difficulties in extracting separate accident information from the national data base on minibuses, coaches and public service vehicles he will make the necessary arrangements to amend the STATS 19 system accordingly.

Mr. Peter Bottomley: The STATS 19 system is currently under review and this is one of the aspects under consideration.

Fishing Vessels

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport how many Spanish fishing vessels have been registered as United Kingdom vessels in each year since 1980; and how many are currently on the United Kingdom registry.

Mr. Moore: The numbers of fishing vessels previously registered in Spain, and subsequently registered in the United Kingdom following their transfer to United Kingdom registered companies in which there is a controlling Spanish interest, in each year since 1980, have been:

	Number
1980	4
1981	20
1982	24
1983	1
1984	—
1985	2

Eleven of these vessels were subsequently removed from the United Kingdom register, but seven were later re-registered. In this period, too, a further 17 United Kingdom registered fishing vessels, not previously registered in Spain, were acquired by United Kingdom registered companies in which the controlling shareholding is Spanish. Eight of these vessels have since been removed from the United Kingdom register. Thus a total of 56 fishing vessels that are owned by United Kingdom registered companies with controlling Spanish shareholdings are currently on the United Kingdom register.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Secretary of State for Transport if he has proposals for legislation to confine British registration to fishing vessels beneficially owned in the United Kingdom.

Mr. Moore: My Department is considering this difficult problem, in consultation with representatives of the fishing industry and the Departments that are directly

concerned with fisheries matters. I shall consider what legislation might be appropriate in the light of the recommendations that are put to me.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

Public Expenditure

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what proportion of gross domestic product has been spent on the education budget in each year since 1970.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The following table shows total public spending on education expressed as a percentage of the gross domestic product from 1970-71 to 1983-84.

United Kingdom—Financial Years

	Per cent
1970-71	5·2
1971-72	5·3
1972-73	5·5
1973-74	5·7
1974-75	6·2
1975-76	6·3
1976-77	6·0
1977-78	5·5
1978-79	5·3
1979-80	5·1
1980-81	5·4
1981-82	5·4
1982-83	5·3
1983-84	5·2

Local Authorities (Capital Expenditure)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what has been the level of local authority expenditure on education in each year since 1976 in cash and constant 1985-86 prices.

Mr. Kenneth Baker: The information requested is shown in the table.

Local authority capital expenditure on education

Financial year	*Cash terms*	*£ millions Constant† 1985-86 prices*
*England and Wales**		
1970-71	273·3	1,391·0
1971-72	327·6	1,526·1
1972-73	398·2	1,719·0
1973-74	473·5	1,907·3
1974-75	437·8	1,477·6
1975-76	477·5	1,282·1
England		
1976-77	433·8	1,029·3
1977-78	375·8	783·1
1978-79	349·7	658·7
1979-80	394·0	635·0
1980-81	495·2	671·9
1981-82	406·4	501·4
1982-83	446·8	515·2
1983-84	461·1	509·0
1984-85	465·1	493·0

* For the years prior to 1976-77 figures for England alone are not available.

† Calculated using the gross domestic product (market prices) deflators.

ENVIRONMENT

Trading Accounts

Mr. Richard Page asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will place a copy of the Peat Marwick report in April 1985, "Ordnance Survey: Review of the Format and Design of Trading Accounts" in the Library.

Mrs. Rumbold: On 23 April last year my hon. Friend the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State announced that an Executive summary of the Peat Marwick Mitchell report had been placed in the Library. The summary was prepared because the full report contained some information that is classified as commercial in confidence. The summary includes all recommendations of the full report.

Listed Buildings

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he has received any recent representations concerning a possible removal of ecclesiastical exemption for listed buildings; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Tracey: Discussions continue with church bodies and some other interested organisations. My right hon. Friend will make a statement when it becomes appropriate to do so.

Ordnance Survey

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Environment how he monitors the commercial activities of the Ordnance Survey; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Ordnance Survey management board monitors these activities against a financial target set by the Government. In addition, I also have regular meetings with the director general to discuss overall departmental performance.

Local Government Finance

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will increase the grant-related expenditure assessments and provide additional rate support grant to boroughs and districts in order to facilitate greater expenditure on litter prevention, street cleaning, refuse collection, disposal and amenity services.

Mr. Ridley: I believe that local authorities are receiving fully adequate support from the Government through the grant-related expenditure and block grant arrangements to allow them to undertake all their services for 1986-87, including litter prevention, street cleaning, refuse collection, disposal and amenity services.

Consultations with the local authority associations on the level of relevant expenditure for all local government services, including environmental services, for 1987-88 are currently in progress.

Mr. Clay asked the Secretary of State for the Environment if he will state the total amount to date which has been withheld from *(a)* all local authorities, *(b)* local authorities in the northern region and *(c)* the borough of Sunderland in the form of penalties which were imposed on councils for spending in excess of required amounts.

Mrs. Rumbold [*pursuant to her reply*, 3 June 1986]: The following are the amounts of grant holdback incurred by local authorities in England, in the northern region, and by the borough of Sunderland for the years 1981-82 to 1985-86; that is those years for which expenditure guidance and holdback of grant are applicable.

	England £ million	*Northern region £ million*	*Sunderland £ million*
1981-82	123·000	17·023	2·206
1982-83	232·000	28·246	3·303
1983-84	281·000	50·204	3·614
1984-85	276·020	26·257	2·938
1985-86	435·359	74·301	9·939

Figures for 1981-82 and 1982-83 are final entitlements; figures for 1983-84 onwards are latest estimates in the relevant supplementary rate support grant reports.
Northern region includes local authorities in the counties of Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

National Clean-up Scheme

Dr. Cunningham asked the Secretary of State for the Environment (1) what consultations have taken place or are proposed between his Department and the local authority associations and organisations representing the voluntary sector about the national clean-up scheme;

(2) if he will make a statement giving details of the national clean-up scheme;

(3) if he will list those organisations consulted before Mr. Richard Branson was invited to chair the national clean-up scheme; what resources are being made available to the campaign; and from what areas they have been transferred.

Mr. Ridley: I expect to make an announcement about the details of the scheme shortly.

Conservation Orders

Mr. Kenneth Carlisle asked the Secretary of State for the Environment what measures he proposes to take pursuant to recommendation 12 of the first report from the House of Commons Environment Committee, Session 1984-85.

Mrs. Rumbold: The Government's reply to that report (Cmnd. 9522) indicated that further consideration would be given to the introduction of legislation to enable national park authorities to apply for landscape conservation orders to be made as a power of last resort. We now propose, as an essential step in this process, to publish a consultation paper later this year to seek public views. The paper will include the details of a possible approach to an order-making scheme, and will set out the circumstances in which the Government believe that legislation for this purpose might be justified.

Housing

Mr. Knowles asked the Secretary of State for the Environment when he will be approving any further proposals submitted to his urban housing renewal unit; and if he will make a statement.

Sir George Young: I am pleased to announce my right hon. Friend's favourable response to proposals for a further five schemes submitted by the London boroughs of Haringey and Wandsworth, Nottingham city council and Newcastle city council. All these schemes, which have been worked up in close collaboration with the Department's urban housing renewal unit and regional offices, involve improved housing management from local estate-based offices.

The estates which will benefit from today's decisions and resources to be made available in 1986-87, which have been agreed in principle, are:

Borough	*Estate*	*Targetted UHRU HIP allocation £*	*Description of works*
Haringey	Broadwater Farm (1,063 dwellings)	505,000	Security and anti-vandal measures; refurbishment of community facilities; environmental improvements.
Haringey	Tiverton (938 dwellings)	515,000	Security measures; provision of neighbourhood office.
Wandsworth	Doddington (964 dwellings)	1,609,000	Physical restructuring; provision of 183 dwellings for sale; refurbishment and provision of community rooms; environmental and security improvements.
Nottingham	Radford and Clifton flats (525 dwellings)	238,000	Security and anti vandal measures.
Newcastle	McCutcheons Court (200 dwellings)	285,000	Security measures; provision of community facilities and estate office; environmental improvements.

These five schemes bring the total number of schemes so far approved in principle to 23 with UHRU targetted HIP resources of £12·137 million.

TRADE AND INDUSTRY

BSC (Industry) Ltd

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry how many jobs have been created in the northern region by BSC (Industry) Ltd. in each year since it was established; and how many are expected to be created in the current year.

Mr. Peter Morrison: The information is not available in the form requested. I shall write to my hon. Friend when I have the information.

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund

Mr. Trotter asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry to which corporation or companies payments have been made from the shipbuilding intervention fund in each of the last three years.

Mr. Peter Morrison: Companies to which payments were made from the shipbuilding intervention fund between:

(i) 1 April 1983—31 March 1984
Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd.
Austin & Pickersgill Ltd.
Clelands Shipbuilders Ltd.
Cochrane Shipbuilders Ltd.
Cubow Ltd.
Ferguson-Ailsa Ltd
Goole Shipbuilders Ltd.
Govan Shipbuilders Ltd.
Henry Robb Ltd.
McTay Marine Ltd.
Richard Dunston (Hessle) Ltd.
Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.
Scott Lithgow Ltd.
Smiths' Dock Ltd.
Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd.
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd.

(ii) 1 April 1984—31 March 1985
Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd.
Austin & Pickersgill Ltd.
Cleland Shipbuilders Ltd.
Cochrane Shipbuilders Ltd.
Ferguson-Ailsa Ltd.
Goole Shipbuilders Ltd.
Govan Shipbuilders Ltd.
McTay Marine Ltd.
Richard Dunston (Hessle) Ltd.
Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.
Smiths' Dock Ltd.
Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd.
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd.

(iii) 1 April 1985—31 March 1986
Appledore Shipbuilders Ltd.
Austin & Pickersgill Ltd.
Cochrane Shipbuilders Ltd.
Ferguson-Ailsa Ltd.
Govan Shipbuilders Ltd.
James W. Cook & Co. (Wivenhoe) Ltd.
McTay Marine Ltd.
Richard Dunston (Hessle) Ltd.
Richards (Shipbuilders) Ltd.
Smiths' Dock Ltd.
Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd.
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders Ltd.

Competition Policy

Mr. Hanley asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what plans he has to review competition policy; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Channon: The Government believe that in general existing competition law has operated effectively and served the economy well. However, mergers policy has attracted attention in recent months, particularly in the light of the present high level of merger activity. In addition, the restrictive trade practices legislation has now been in operation for 30 years, and it has been criticised on a number of grounds, such as its inflexibility and its limited effectiveness in controlling seriously anti-competitive agreements between firms. I therefore believe it would now be right to undertake a review of these areas. The review will investigate both the scope for changes in policy under existing legislation and the desirability of changes in the law.

I am anxious that the review should be open to wide public debate and should benefit from all the expert knowledge available, whether inside or outside Government. I therefore intend to invite a number of outside experts to act as consultants on particular issues. In addition, I invite all interested organisations and individuals to contribute their view in writing, in the first instance no later than the end of July.

I shall keep the House informed as conclusions are reached.

BSC and BS (Grants and Loans)

Mr. Fallon asked the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry what estimate he has of the total amount of aid in grants and loans provided to *(a)* the British Steel Corporation and *(b)* British Shipbuilders in respect of their operations in the northern region (i) since 1979 and (ii) since 1983.

Mr. Peter Morrison [*pursuant to his reply*, 3 June 1986, c. *406*]: The following is the information for British Shipbuilders in the northern region and the British Steel Corporation in the north-east. Information from British Steel Corporation in Cumbria is not readily available.

	1979-80 to 1984-85 £ *million*	*1983-84 to 1984-85* £ *million*
British Shipbuilders		
Regional Development Grants	9	2·5
Intervention Fund*	123	20
Public Dividend Capital‡	374	160
British Steel Corporation		
Regional Development Grants	25	11
Subscription of Capital‡	455	112

* To May 1986.

‡ Estimated: public dividend capital for British Shipbuilders (provided under section 16 of the Aircraft and Shipbuilding Regulations 1977) and capital subscribed for the British Steel Corporation (under section 18 of the Iron and Steel Acts 1975 and 1982) is general finance, for instance, for capital investment and operating losses in subsidiary companies. It is not, in the main, allocated for specific purposes or areas. The British Shipbuilders public dividend capital estimate does, however, include £58 million towards the construction of the submarine facilities project at Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd. at Barrow.

Other funding for working capital and to meet redundancy and closure costs has been provided by British Shipbuilders and British Steel Corporation in the northern region, but is not recorded on a regional basis.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Child Benefit

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if child benefit will be regarded as income for the purpose of calculating family credit under the terms of the Social Security Bill.

Mr. Newton: The intention is that child benefit will be taken into account in setting the level of the child credit rates, and it will therefore not be counted as income in the calculation of family credit in individual cases.

Oriel Lodge, Sudbury

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what information he has on the circumstances surrounding the closure of Oriel Lodge Sudbury; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: The Registered Homes Act 1984 places responsibility for registering and inspecting residential care homes on local social services authorities. I would suggest therefore that my hon. Friend pursues his inquiries about the situation at Oriel Lodge with the Suffolk county council.

Residential Homes

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will introduce a system of minimum and maximum charges for the provision of services by private residential care homes and nursing homes: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Whitney: No. Provided that services and facilities appropriate to the care the resident or patient needs are available, the type of accommodation that is occupied and the charges paid are a matter between those running the homes and the person, or his relatives meeting the charges. The charges could be expected to reflect the services and facilities available as determined by market forces.

Students (Benefits)

Mr. Radice asked the Secretary of State for Social Services when he will publish his Department's response to the Social Security Advisory Committee's report on the Social Security White Paper's proposals on student entitlement to social security and housing benefit.

Mr. Newton: I refer the hon. Member to my reply to the hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Mr. Bennett) on 3 June, at column 718.

National Insurance contributions

Dr. McDonald asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what would be the increased revenue from class 1, 2 and 4 national insurance contributions in a full year at the rates ruling in 1986-87 resulting from the abolition of the upper earnings limit for employee contributions and of the annual upper limit for class 4 contributions.

Mr. Major: I shall let the hon. Member have a reply as soon as possible.

Benefits (Foreign Nationals)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services under what conditions foreign nationals are entitled to supplementary benefit or unemployment benefit.

Mr. Major: Foreign nationals living in Great Britain who have paid the relevant contributions are entitled to unemployment benefit subject to the normal rules. Some foreign nationals are helped to qualify under the European social security regulations and the reciprocal arrangements on social security with certain other countries. Supplementary benefit has no residence, nationality or contribution test and the entitlement of foreign nationals is dependent upon their immigration status.

Benefits (Fraud)

Mr. Marlow asked the Secretary of State for Social Services what is his best estimate of the numbers drawing unemployment or supplementary benefit who are also working without disclosing their work.

Mr. Major: It is a criminal offence for any claimant to draw unemployment benefit or supplementary benefit without declaring that he is working. In 1981, in his report on payments of benefits to unemployed people, Sir Derek Rayner estimated that a minimum of around 8 per cent. of claimants are working while claiming benefit. The Department is making substantial efforts to reduce the level of fraud in this area and the Secretary of State has recently announced the allocation of 500 additional fraud staff to augment the Department's overall anti-fraud effort.

Alcohol Abuse

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if he will provide figures indicating the amount of Government grant given to agencies working to combat alcohol abuse for the years 1980-1985 inclusive.

Mr. Whitney [*pursuant to his reply*, 26 February 1986, c. *604*]: I regret that my reply to my hon. Friend understated the amounts of Government grant made available. The corrected information is as follows:

	£
1980-81	1,245,018
1981-82	927,821
1982-83	899,221
1983-84	908,908
1984-85	795,379
1985-86	*825,876

* Estimated figure.

NHS (General Services)

Mr. Ralph Howell asked the Secretary of State for Social Services if, in the manner of the answer to the hon. Member for Norfolk, North of 21 December 1984, at columns 412-14, he will provide figures for expenditure by the family practitioner services, the Dental Estimates Board, the Prescription Pricing Authority and other special health authorities providing National Health Service central services for 1983-84; and if he will also publish comparable figures, at current and at 1983-84 prices, and comparable percentages for 1960 and 1970, for the above categories and those in the original answer.

Mr. Hayhoe [*pursuant to his reply*, 15 May 1986, c. *533*]: The figures for 1983-84, and those for the earlier years at 1983-84 prices, were given in my predecessor's reply to my hon. Friend on 19 March 1985, at columns *452-58*. I assume that my hon. Friend requires the equivalent information for 1984-85. This is given in the tables.

The figures for 1960-61 and 1970-71 at 1984-85 prices are calculated from the base year's figures by adjusting for general inflation as measured by the gross domestic product deflator at market prices.

Comparisons over this long period cannot be entirely reliable because of changes in the structure of GDP and in the organisation of the National Health Service.

Table 1
Current expenditure by health authorities analysed subjectively (ie by type)

	1960-61			1970-71			1984-85	
	From annual accounts £ million	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*
PAY								
NHS Staff salaries and wages							6,697·9	73·32
Non-NHS staff (Agency etc.)	n.a.			n.a.			78·5	0·86
Chairmen's remuneration							2·0	0·02
Total	286·2	2,101·6	69·23	706·0	3,390·3	74·49	6,778·4	74·20
NON-PAY								
Drugs				27·4	131·6	2·89	278·8	3·05
Medical Gases	14·8	108·7	3·58				10·9	0·12
Dressings				6·2	29·8	0·65	50·0	0·55
Medical and surgical equipment—purchases and maintenance contracts							306·0	3·35
X-Ray equipment, film and materials—purchases and maintenance contracts							51·6	0·57
Patients' appliances	16·4	120·4	3·97	43·4	208·4	4·58		
Laboratory equipment, instruments and materials—purchases and maintenance contracts and services							63·0	0·69
							80·6	0·88
Provisions—purchases and contract catering	37·5	275·5	9·08	46·0	220·9	4·85	178·0	1·95
Staff uniforms and patients clothing	3·6	26·4	0·87	6·8	32·6	0·72	44·5	0·49
Fuel, light and power							301·7	3·30
Laundry-equipment, materials and contracts	29·4	215·9	7·11	42·1	202·2	4·44	12·7	0·14
Cleaning-equipment, materials and contracts							39·4	0·43
Engineering maintenance-equipment, materials and contracts							110·3	1·21
Building maintenance-equipment, materials and contracts	24·5	179·9	5·92	38·6	185·4	4·07	91·8	1·00
Grounds and Gardens maintenance-equipment materials and contracts							5·8	0·06
Computers—purchases, maintenance and licencing fees							21·9	0·24
Office equipment	5·9	43·3	1·43	15·0	72·0	1·58		
Printing, stationery and postage							31·1	0·34
Telephone-rental etc. and call charges							70·6	0·77
							70·2	0·77
Transport—fuel and oil, maintenance-equipment, materials and contracts etc.	2·0	14·7	0·48	4·7	22·6	0·50	53·7	0·59
Travelling, subsistence and removal expenses	1·4	10·3	0·34	2·8	13·1	0·29	152·8	1·67
Rates							137·0	1·50
Rent	6·2	45·5	1·50	14·1	67·7	1·49	22·0	0·24
Contractual arrangements for patient care	2·9	21·3	0·70	5·0	24·0	0·53	39·5	0·43
Other expenses	11·2	82·2	2·71	19·4	93·2	2·05	311·1	3·41
Total	155·8	1,144·1	37·69	271·5	1,303·8	28·64	2,535·0	27·75
Total Pay and Non-Pay	442·0	3,245·7	106·92	977·5	4,694·1	103·13	9,313·4	101·95
Less direct credits (Staff lodging charges, canteen and other sales etc.)	(28·6)	(210·0)	(6·92)	(29·7)	(142·6)	(3·13)	(178·5)	(1·95)
Total	413·4	3,035·7	100·00	947·8	4,551·5	100·00	9,134·9	100·00

Notes to table 1

1. The figures for 1960-61 and 1970-71 do not include expenditure on community health and ambulance services which prior to NHS re-organisation on 1 April 1974 were the responsibility of local government authorities.

2. The administrative expenses of executive councils which were responsible for the administration of family practitioner services are included in the table as such costs are reflected in the annual accounts of health authorities from 1974-75. For 1960-61 an apportionment of composite England and Wales figures was necessary to derive figures for England only.

3. For years prior to 1974-75 the analyses of expenditure by type provided by the annual accounts are less detailed than those for later years.

4. "Other expenses" for 1960-61 and 1970-71 includes the total non-pay expenditure on the blood transfusion and mass radiography services for which component details are not readily available—£1·0 million 1960-61 and £1·8 million 1970-71 (£7·3 million ad £8·6 million at 1984-85 prices).

5. Total capital expenditure by the authorities whose current expenditure is included in the table was £25·1 million in 1960-61, £119·2 million in 1970-71 (£184·3 million and £572·4 million at 1984-85 prices) and £795·4 million in 1984-85.

Table 2
Expenditure of family practitioner services

	1960-61			1970-71			1984-85	
	From annual accounts £ million	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total per cent.*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total per cent*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*Proportion of total per cent*
A. General medical services								
1. Payments to general mecial practitioners								
a. Basic practice allowance and additions				38·4	184·4	9·50	232·1	7·59
b. Standard capitation fees				66·0	316·9	16·34	334·2	10·94
c. Payments or our of hours responsibilities				11·5	55·2	2·85	75·1	2·46
d. Direct payment for practice accommodation and ancillary staff	79·4	583·1	38·94					
e. Other payments, fees and allowances				11·4	54·8	2·82	165·9	5·43
2. Superannuation contributions (authorities share)				14·5	69·6	3·59	137·0	4·48
3. Payments to contractors for disposable sterile syringes	4·9	36·0	2·40	7·1	34·1	1·76	38·6	1·26
	—	—	—	0·2	1·0	0·05	1·0	0·03
Total	84·3	619·1	41·34	149·1	716·0	36·91	983·9	32·19
B. Pharmaceutical services								
1. Supply and dispensing of drugs and appliances by pharmacists	75·3	552·9	36·93	167·8	805·8	41·54	1,434·4	46·93
Less charges to patients (retained by pharmacists)	(10·8)	(79·3)	(5·30)	(14·3)	(68·7)	(3·54)	(104·3)	(3·41)
2. Supply and dispensing of drugs and appliances by medical and dental practitioners	2·5	18·4	1·23	8·4	40·4	2·08	113·2	3·70
3. Basic practice allowance	—	—	—	—	—	—	20·4	0·67
4. Superannuation contributions (authorities' share)	0·1	0·7	0·05	0·3	1·4	0·07	1·0	0·03
5. Other expenditure	0·3	2·2	0·15	—	—	—	3·9	0·13
Total	67·4	494·9	33·06	162·2	778·9	40·15	1,468·6	48·05
C. General dental services								
1. Fees to dental practitioners	49·5	363·5	24·27	90·0	432·2	22·28	624·7	20·44
Less charges to patients (retained by dentists)	(9·0)	(66·1)	(4·41)	(16·2)	(77·8)	(4·01)	(173·5)	(5·68)
2. Salaries of dental practitioners practising at health centres, etc.	0·1	0·7	0·05	0·1	0·5	0·02	1·2	0·04
3. Superannuation contributions (authorities' share)	1·9	14·0	0·93	3·2	15·4	0·79	19·2	0·63
4. Other expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	—	1·1	0·04
Total	42·5	312·1	20·84	77·1	370·3	19·08	472·7	15·47
D. General opthalmic services								
1. Fees for sight testing	4·7	34·5	2·31	8·9	42·7	2·20	82·3	2·69
2. Supply and repair of glasses	10·2	74·9	5·00	16·9	81·2	4·18	92·7	3·04
Less charges to patients (retained by opticians)	(5·2)	(38·2)	(2·55)	(10·2)	(49·0)	(2·52)	(44·9)	(1·47)
3. Superannuation contributions (authorities' share)	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·3	0·01
4. Other expenditure	—	—	—	—	—	—	0·6	0·22
Total	9·7	71·2	4·76	15·6	74·9	3·86	131·0	4·29
Total expenditure on family practitioner services	203·9	1,497·3	100·00	404·0	1,940·1	100·00	3,056·2	100·00

Notes to Table 2

1. The table shows payments made to doctors, pharmacists, dentists, opticians and others contracted to the NHS to provide family practitioner services (FPS).
2. Annual accounts of health authorities (and their predecessor executive councils) provide one analysis only of such expenditure which assigns it functionally to service.
3. The table shows 1960-61 and 1970-71 FPS expenditure categorised as far as practicable in the same format as that of the annual white papers on the summarised accounts of health authorities since 1974-75. Thus, charges to patients retained by pharmacists, dentists and opticians are reflected in the table but other items of FPS income collected by health authorities (or executive councils) such as charges to patients for dental treatment at heath centres and receipts from the sale of prescription charge pre-payment certificates, are excluded.
4. For 1960-61 the accounts provide separate services totals for England and similar totals for Wales with detailed analyses of only the composite England and Wales totals. It has therefore been necessary to derive the detailed figures for England prorata.
5. All spending on FPS is regarded as current expenditure. Some relatively insignificant costs strictly of a capital nature (relating only to certain payments made to general medical practitioners for practice accommodation) are however included.

Table 3
Expenditure by the Dental Estimates Board, the Prescription Pricing Authority and other special health authorities providing NHS central services

	1960-61			1970-71			1984-85	
	From annual accounts £ million	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*At 1984-85 prices £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*	*From annual accounts £ million*	*Proportion of total Per cent.*
1. Expenditure by the Dental Estimates Board								
(a) Salaries and wages	0·7	5·1	87·50	1·9	9·1	73·08	10·7	90·68
(b) Non-pay	0·1	0·7	12·50	0·7	3·4	26·92	1·1	9·32
Total	0·8	5·8	100·00	2·6	12·5	100·00	11·8	100·00
2. Expenditure by the Prescription Pricing Authority								
(a) Salaries and wages	0·7	5·1	87·50	1·6	7·7	88·89	12·0	87·59
(b) Non-pay	0·1	0·7	12·50	0·2	1·0	11·11	1·7	12·41
Total	0·8	5·8	100·00	1·8	8·7	100·00	13·7	100·00

	1960-61			1970-71			1984-85	
	From annual accounts £ million	At 1984-85 prices £ million	Proportion of total Per cent.	From annual accounts £ million	At 1984-85 prices £ million	Proportion of total Per cent.	From annual accounts £ million	Proportion of total Per cent.
3. Expenditure by other special health authorities providing NHS central services								
(a) Salaries and wages	n/a	—	—	n/a	—	—	4·7	35·61
(b) Non-pay	n/a	—	—	n/a	—	—	8·5	64·39
Total	n/a	—	—	n/a	—	—	13·2	100·00

Notes to table 3

1. The table shows summaries of the detailed accounts of the Dental Estimates Board (DEB), the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA) and its predecessor Joint Pricing Committee for England (JPC); together with a composite summary of the accounts for 1984-85 only of other special health authorities providing NHS central services.

2. *(a)* Other special health authorities providing NHS central services comprise:
   (i) the Central Blood Laboratories Authority (CBLA)—established 1 December 1982.
   (ii) the Mental Health Act Commission—established 1 September 1983.
   (iii) the Rampton Hospital Review Board—established 11 June 1981.
   (iv) the Rural Dispensing Committee—established 1 April 1983.
   (v) the National Health Service Training Authority—established 1 October 1983.
   (b) The expenses of the Health Service Supply Council (established on 14 July 1980) which are met in full from charges made to regional health authorities are excluded.
   (c) The functions of all these special health authorities are either new or were devolved by the Department and comparable figures for 1960-61 and 1970-71 are consequently not available.

3. Capital expenditure by the DEB and the JPC was not separately identifiable and is included in the totals for 1960-61 and 1970-71. The amounts are known to be insignificant except that there was substantial capital expenditure by the DEB in 1970-71.

For 1984-85 the PPA and the CBLA recorded capital expenditure of £2·3 million and £16·6 million. These sums are excluded from the table.

Special Claims (Staff)

Dr. Godman asked the Secretary of State for Social Services how many of the 5,000 additional staff at the Department of Health and Social Security local offices will be posted to the special claims section; and if he will break this down by region.

Mr. Major [*pursuant to his reply*, 19 May 1986, c. *63*]: The 500 extra staff for fraud work are separate from the 5,000 additional local office staff for general work. None of the 5,000 will be used on fraud work. As regards the disposition of the 500, I refer the hon. Member to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Mr. Lilley) on 15 May, at column *533*.

EMPLOYMENT

Parental and Family Leave

Ms. Richardson asked the Paymaster General what response Her Majesty's Government will make at the European Commission of the Council of Ministers meeting in June on the European Economic Community parental and family leave directive; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lang: The draft directive is not on the agenda for discussion at the June meeting of the EC Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers. The Government's opposition in principle to the draft directive is well known and in the event of it being raised for discussion at the Council the Government's response would, of course, be based on this position.

Labour Statistics

Mr. Tom Cox asked the Paymaster General how many *(a)* men and *(b)* women over the age of 50 years have been unemployed for over one, two, three, four, five and more than five years, respectively.

Mr. Lang: The following information is in the Library. Figures are given showing the numbers of male and female claimants aged over 50 years in the United Kingdom who, on 10 April 1986, had been unemployed for the durations requested.

	Males	Females
Over one year	252,745	83,640
Over two years	180,579	58,364
Over three years	129,596	40,291
Over four years	89,822	25,489
Over five years*	58,214	14,881

* These figures are affected by industrial action in 1981 and consequent emergency computer procedures.

Tourism

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what is his Department's estimate of the relationship between the sterling exchange rate with the dollar and the number of United States visitors to the United Kingdom; and if he will publish in the *Official Report* a table showing the percentage change in the number of United States visitors to the United Kingdom since 1970.

Mr. Trippier: Movements in exchange rates are only one of a number of complex factors which affect the decisions of tourists, and no attempt to quantify the relationship has been made.

The number of visits by United States residents to the United Kingdom increased by 109 per cent. between 1970 and 1985 to 3,166,000 in 1985.

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Paymaster General what evidence he has as to the effectiveness of expenditure by the British Tourist Authority on promotion in the United States in increasing the number of visitors to the United Kingdom.

Mr. Trippier: It is not possible to quantify the effects of the British Tourist Authority's expenditure. A number of factors influence international tourism flows, but the level of growth in traffic from the United States to the United Kingdom over a number of years in comparison with other European destinations suggests that the British Tourist Authority's sustained efforts in promoting the United Kingdom have been to good effect. The BTA enjoys a high standing in the tourism industry and the substantial contribution which the industry makes to the cost of the BTA's activities abroad shows that its effectiveness is recognised.

Job Release Allowance

Mr. Straw asked the Paymaster General what was the job release allowance in 1980 and in each subsequent year up to the present date.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the weekly job release allowances for each year since 1980.

	Taxfree		*Taxable*	
	Higher £	*Lower* £	*Higher* £	*Lower* £
1980	45·50	36·00	53·00	43·00
1981	50·50	40·00	59·00	47·50
1982	55·00	43·50	64·00	52·00
1983	57·75	45·70	67·20	54·60
1984	60·65	48·00	70·55	57·35
1985	63·00	49·95	71·15	58·35
1986	65·50	51·95	74·00	60·65

Mr. Straw asked the Paymaster General what has been the percentage increase in the level of the job release allowance for each year since 1980; and what were the percentage increases in the retail prices index for the corresponding years.

Mr. Lang: The following table gives the information requested.

Percentage Increases

(April)	*Tax-free*		*Taxable*		*Retail price Index*
	Higher	*Lower*	*Higher*	*Lower*	
1980-81	11·0	11·0	11·3	10·5	12·0
1981-82	8·9	8·8	8·5	9·5	9·4
1982-83	5·0	5·0	5·0	5·0	4·0
1983-84	5·0	5·1	5·0	5·0	5·2
1984-85	3·9	4·1	0·9	1·7	6·9
1985-86	4·0	4·0	4·0	3·9	3·0

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH AFFAIRS

Mr. Raoul Wallenberg

Mr. Franks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will raise the case of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg at the United Nations General Assembly; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Renton: As I said in answer to a question from my hon. Friend on 12 February, we will continue to assist the Swedish Government in any way which may be appropriate in their efforts to establish the fate of Mr. Raoul Wallenberg.

South African Embassy

Mr. Tony Banks asked the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will seek the removal of the military attachés from the South African embassy.

Mr. Eggar: As my hon. Frind the Minister of State, the Member for Wallasey (Mrs. Chalker), told the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Mrs. Clwyd) on 5 March, we agreed with our European partners to withdraw our military attachés from Pretoria and not to grant accreditation to military attachés from South Africa. The continued presence of South African military attachés in Britain remains under review.

AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Southall Horse Market

Mr. Greenway asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what recent inspections have been made of Southall horse market; what their results have been; and if he will make a statement.

Mrs. Fenner: My veterinary staff have inspected this market several times this year, most recently on 14 May, when it was noted that 18 new partitioned stalls had been erected for the separation of shod horses. Efforts have been made by the auctioneers to improve handling and prevent unauthorised access to the sale ring. Veterinary staff will continue to attend the market regularly to monitor and encourage compliance with the voluntary code of practice on horse markets.

Fishing Vessels (Registration)

Mr. Austin Mitchell asked the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food what information he has about restrictions existing in France and Denmark on foreign fishing vessels registering as French or Danish; and what rights such vessels have to participate in French and Danish fishing quotas.

Mr. Jopling: I understand that for a fishing vessel to be registered in France it must be at least 50 per cent. owned by French nationals resident in a territory of the French Republic for a minimum of six months a year. Where the vessel is company-owned, 51 per cent. of the shares must be held by French nationals; and personnel, for example the president of the board of directors, the majority of directors and all the general managers, must also be French nationals. Once a vessel is registered it is entitled to fish against the French quota.

In the case of Denmark, I understand that the entitlement to register a fishing vessel is confined to owners who are Danish nationals or are foreign nationals resident in Denmark. Where the owner is a body corporate, two thirds of the shares must be held by such persons. In order to fish against the national quota, a fishing vessel owner must also be registered and as a prerequisite to such registration he must be a Danish national or have lived in Denmark for at least two years and his income in the previous year must have been wholly earned from fishing.

CHURCH COMMISSIONERS

Property Sales

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the hon. Member for Wokingham, as representing the Church Commissioners (1) whether diocesan officers consult the commissioners as to the choice of estate agents to handle the proposed sale of diocesan property;

(2) whether, in decisions as to whether to approve sales of property proposed by individual diocesan parsonage boards, the commissioners take account of the estate agent whom the board proposes to use for the disposal of the property; and if he will make a statement.

Sir William van Straubenzee: No.

PRIME MINISTER

Rochester-upon-Medway

Q86. **Mr. Rowe** asked the Prime Minister if she has any plans to visit the city of Rochester-upon-Medway.

The Prime Minister: I have at present no plans to do so.

Engagements

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

Mr. Pike asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

Mr. Sayeed asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Thursday 5 June.

The Prime Minister: This morning I presided at a meeting of the Cabinet and had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House I shall be having further meetings later today, including one with the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

HOUSE OF COMMONS

Private Bill Procedure

Sir Paul Bryan asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he has any plans to institute a review of private Bill procedure; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Biffen: Following consultations with the Chairman of Ways and Means, with my noble Friend the Lord President of the Council and the Lord Chairman of Committees, as well as discussions through the usual channels, I propose that there should be a general review of private Bill procedure to be carried out by a Joint Committee of both Houses. The Committee would examine the processes of enacting private legislation and consider whether:

(a) there are any matters of a kind at present dealt with by private Bill which could more appropriately be dealt with some other way, taking account of the interests both of promoters and other affected parties;

(b) any changes are desirable in private Bill procedure; and

(c) any amendments are desirable to the Private Legislation Procedure (Scotland) Act 1936 and the procedure thereunder.

It would also consider whether any amendments are desirable to the Statutory Orders (Special Procedure) Act 1945.

I shall be tabling the appropriate motion later today.

THE ARTS

Sadler's Wells Theatre

Mr. Greenway asked the Minister for the Arts what representations he has received on the funding of Sadler's Wells theatre: and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Luce: I have received numerous representations about Sadler's Wells during my time as Minister for the Arts, but I am confident that the plurality of funding being provided by the Arts Council, private sponsorship and other sources will enable Sadler's Wells to continue as a receiving theatre in London.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL

Mortgage Arrears (Possession Orders)

Mr. Frank Cook asked the Attorney-General, for each of the years for which figures are available since 1980 *(a)* how many possession orders have been sought and *(b)* how many possession orders have been granted, in respect of mortgage arrears in the county courts of Middlesbrough, Stockton and Hartlepool.

The Attorney-General: The information requested is available only for individual county courts for years since 1982. Figures for 1982 to 1985 are given in the table.

Applications entered and orders for possession granted in respect of mortgage arrears at Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and Stockton county courts, 1982 to 1985.*

	1982	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*
Hartlepool				
Applications entered	36	74	92	151
Orders granted	20	34	62	70
Middlesborough				
Applications entered	313	304	386	423
Orders granted	212	212	340	352
Stockton				
Applications entered	160	209	269	250
Orders granted	103	116	176	200

* Figures include both Local Authority and private mortgages

HOME DEPARTMENT

Prisoners

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department, of those prisoners who died from natural causes in each of the years 1981 to 1985, respectively, how many applied for early release on the grounds of such illness; how many such applications were granted and refused, respectively; and how many of such refusals were referred to him for futher consideration.

Mr. Mellor: Information about the number of cases in which the royal prerogative of mercy was exercised to allow a terminally-ill prisoner to be released early was given in answer to the hon. and learned Member's question of 12 March, at columns 466-67. The other information requested is not immediately available, but I will see what relevant information can be obtained and I shall write to the hon. and learned Member.

Mr. Janner asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) by what methods he is making sure that cases of terminally-ill prisoners needing urgent consideration are clearly identified;

(2) by whom case workers in the criminal department have been reminded of the need to give cases of prisoners who are terminally-ill urgent and sympathetic consideration; and whether he will place a copy of such reminder in the Library;

(3) when he proposes to give a reminder to prison department establishments of the need to give urgent and sympathetic consideration to cases involving the release of terminally-ill prisoners on similar lines to the reminder given to case workers in the criminal department.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. and learned Member to the answer given yesterday to his related questions on the subject of terminally-ill prisoners.

Mr. Bermingham asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what was the estimated population of untried prisoners in Prison Department establishments in England and Wales on 19 April, or the latest date for which figures are available, by length of time since initial reception into custody.

Mr. Mellor [*pursuant to his reply*, 28 April 1986, c. *304*]: The information is given in the table.

Estimated population of untried prisoners in Prison Department Establishments in England and Wales on 28 February 1986. Length of time since initial remand in custody.†*

	Estimated number‡
Up to 3 months	5,250
Over 3, up to 6 months	1,800
Over 6, up to 9 months	600
Over 9, up to 12 months	200
Over 12 months	60
Total	7,920

* Based on records held centrally which are approximate, detailed checking of individual cases would involve disproportionate cost.

† Including any time which may have been spent on bail after the initial remand in custody.

‡ Rounded estimates; the components do not add to the total because they have been rounded independently.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims have been dealt with by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest available date in England and Wales.

Mr. Mellor: The provisional figure for the number of applications in respect of injuries incurred in England and Wales resolved by the board from 1 August 1964 to 31 March 1986 is 262,907.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board are pending at the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: I would refer the hon. Member to the reply given to a question from my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St. Edmunds (Sir E. Griffiths) on 23 April 1986, at columns 149.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have been successful in England and Wales at the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: The provisional figure for the number of awards made by the board in respect of injuries incurred in England and Wales from 1 August 1964 to 31 March 1986 is 212,757.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the highest settlement made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in England and Wales to the latest available date.

Mr. Mellor: The highest award made to date amounted to £303,500, in the financial year 1984-85.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) how many claims have been made to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside at the latest date;

(2) what is the highest award made by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board in *(a)* Liverpool and *(b)* Merseyside to date;

(3) how many claims to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board have been *(a)* successful and *(b)* rejected in Liverpool and Merseyside to date.

Mr. Mellor: Stastistics are not available on the place of residence of applicants to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and could be provided only at disproportionate cost.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is the longest waiting time to date for a claim to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board.

Mr. Mellor: Of applications currently outstanding, the longest waiting time is for one submitted to the board in August 1970. Regular interim awards have been paid, including one in May 1986, but the applicant's medical condition has not yet stabilised sufficiently for a final award to be made.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the current waiting time for appeals to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date;

(2) how many appeals are outstanding to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board at the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: At 30 April 1986 about 5,000 applications were awaiting hearing by the board. The length of time between an applicant refusing a single member's adjudication and a hearing varies between six and 18 months.

Mr. Parry asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) what is the total cost to date of the running of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board;

(2) if he will list the cost of the running of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board on an annual basis to the latest date.

Mr. Mellor: Following is the information:

Costs of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme 1 August 1964 to 31 March 1986

Financial year	Administration	Compensation
	£	£
*1964-65	16,412	33,431
1965-66	59,537	402,718
1966-67	93,534	914,161
1967-68	122,279	1,293,772
1968-69	178,197	1,672,958
1969-70	207,686	1,996,584
1970-71	228,952	2,114,189
1971-72	298,228	3,282,172
1972-73	356,182	3,457,519
1973-74	441,014	4,077,125
1974-75	629,313	5,145,851
1975-76	911,165	6,476,680
1976-77	1,157,601	9,677,389
1977-78	1,266,789	10,106,513
1978-79	1,577,546	13,045,641
1979-80	1,915,560	15,737,363
1980-81	2,930,210	21,462,464
1981-82	3,242,726	21,976,696
1982-83	3,742,159	29,444,675
1983-84	3,776,424	32,820,772
1984-85	4,163,293	35,293,451
†1985-86	4,384,000	41,965,000
Total	31,698,807	262,397,124

* From 1 August.
† Provisional.

Northeye Prison

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many prisoners evacuated from Northeye prison are currently at Send; what changes have been made in security; and what plans he has for the dispersal of these prisoners.

Mr. Mellor: On 3 June 1986 there were 86 ex-Northeye prisoners at Her Majesty's prison Send. Security improvements at Send since 1 May consist of the provision of a UHF radio net, the fitting of grilles to the windows of the visits room and an increase of 12 in the authorised staffing level. The ex-Northeye population at Send will be gradually depleted by discharges and by transfers to other establishments. It is provisionally proposed that they will all have been discharged or removed by the end of August.

Detention Centre Regime

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what is his latest assessment of the detention centre regime introduced four years ago.

Mr. Mellor: Following the evaluation of the experimental tougher regime in selected detention centres between 1980 and 1984, a consistent detention centre regime was introduced in March 1985. We are satisfied that the regime, which is kept under routine review, is being positively developed along lines suitable for those young offenders on whom the courts impose short custodial sentences.

Public Order

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department (1) whether he has any plans to seek to amend the Public Order Bill *(a)* to make mass trespass on to farmland a criminal offence or *(b)* to make trepass on to residential premises a criminal offence; and if he will make a statement;

(2) if he will call for reports from the chief constables of Avon and Somerset, Dorset and Wiltshire on the recent incidents involving a hippy convoy in their areas, and as to the extra costs of policing which have arisen.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I would refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to a private notice question by my hon. Friend the Member for the New Forest (Mr. McNair Wilson) on 3 June, at columns 733-34. On the separate issue of trespass on residential premises, we have no plans to bring forward legislation to amend the criminal law.

I shall write to my hon. Friend about the cost of the police operations.

Police—Immigration Operations

Mr. Dubs asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what arrangements there are in the Metropolitan area for keeping records, both locally and centrally, of joint police-immigration operations.

Mr. Giles Shaw: I understand from the Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis that he holds central records of all joint operations. The immigration service holds local records of all joint operations; additionally, central records are maintained of all major joint operations.

Southall Horse Market

Mr. Greenway asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department how many successful prosecutions for breaches of animal protection laws there have been since 1979 of horse and pony vendors at Southall horse market; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Mellor: The information requested is not separately available from the information collected centrally.

Road Traffic Offences

Mr. Knox asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department what action he proposes to take during European Road Safety Year 1986 to increase vehicle users' perception of the risk of being detected for road traffic offences.

Mr. Giles Shaw: The enforcement of road traffic law is the responsibility of individual chief officers of police. The Government's rolling programme of publicity on road safety includes the theme of police enforcement.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Tourism

12. **Mr. Gregory** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the estimated number of non-United Kingdom visitors to Northern Ireland in 1985; and if he will make a statement.

Dr. Boyson: The Northern Ireland Tourist Board's estimate of non-United Kingdom visitors to Northern Ireland in 1985 is 444,000. This was a drop of 59,000 compared with the 1984 figure, largely arising from a drop of 81,000 in the number of visitors from the Republic. Visitors from the rest of the world increased by 22,000.

Northern Ireland Assembly

13. **Mr. Favell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on the outcome of his discussions with Northern Ireland political parties on the future of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Mr. Tom King: The leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party declined my invitation of 27 May to the parties participating in the Northern Ireland Assembly to discuss its future. I met the Leader of the Alliance party on Monday to hear his views. I also saw yesterday the Leader of the Social Democratic and Labour party with some of his colleagues and discussed among other matters the prospects for devolved government. I shall consider the position of the present Assembly.

Small Firms

14. **Mr. Neil Hamilton** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he plans any change in Government support for small firms in Northern Ireland, following the recent launch of a loan fund for small firms by Shell United Kingdom.

Dr. Boyson: I commend the initiative of Shell United Kingdom, in arranging for these funds to be made available. The provision of 18 per cent. of total fund to Northern Ireland — a total of £90,000 — is a vote of confidence in the Province and in the enterprise of its young people. I have no immediate plans for adding to the existing comprehensive range of support for small firms in the Province.

Labour Statistics

15. **Mr. Nellist** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many vacancies are currently on offer at careers offices in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: At 4 April 1986, there were 576 unfilled vacancies for young people aged under 18 at employment service jobmarkets in Northern Ireland. On the same date there were also 2,206 unfilled vacancies for adults.

Anglo-Irish Agreement

16. **Mr. Robert Atkins** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the effects on Northern Ireland industry arising from the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Dr. Boyson: We hope that the agreement, which was widely welcomed abroad, will lead to increased investment. Investment is, however, less likely to take place if there is further disruption such as that which took place on 3 March.

21. **Mr. Archer** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what have been the economic and social benefits for the people of Northern Ireland arising from the first six months of the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Mr. Tom King: Within the framework of the Intergovernmental conference the Irish Government have put forward views on matters of significant or special interest to the minority community in relation to economic and social policy, as well as in the fields of education, health and housing, as has been reported in the communiqués. We are now considering these further. The conference has also discussed possible ways of enhancing co-operation in the promotion of tourism.

Rothmans Factory, Carrickfergus

17. **Mr. Moynihan** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what steps the Government are taking to alleviate the effect on the work force in view of the announcement of redundancies at Rothmans factory in Carrickfergus.

Dr. Boyson: As I announced on 6 May I have asked a group of officials to examine the situation with a view to alleviating the effects of the redundancies at Carrickfergus. We have already provided on the spot information about job vacancies and offered job and new business development counselling to those who wish to avail themselves of it.

I have also decided to increase from 45 per cent. to 50 per cent. the rate of industrial development grant available in the Carrickfergus area.

Trade Missions

18. **Mrs. Virginia Bottomley** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the outcome of trade missions arranged by the Industrial Development Board in 1985-86.

Dr. Boyson: During 1985-86 the industrial development board arranged five trade missions to Europe and north America. Orders received by companies participating in these missions amounted to £1·5 million, and further orders with an anticipated value of around £8 million are expected.

Job Clubs

19. **Mr. Gerald Howarth** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what has been the outcome of the job clubs experiment in Northern Ireland.

Dr. Boyson: Job clubs have been operating in Belfast and Londonderry job markets since 6 January on a trial basis. To date 122 long-term unemployed persons have joined and of this number 63 have obtained jobs or places on training schemes.

Security

20. **Mr. Bell** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement on cross-border security.

Mr. Tom King: Recently there has been a number of serious terrorist incidents close to the Border in Northern Ireland. These emphasise the importance of the steady development of closer co-operation between the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Garda Siochana which has been set in hand under the Anglo-Irish agreement.

Financial Services

22. **Mr. Campbell-Savours** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland when he next intends to meet the Irish Justice Minister to discuss financial services between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Mr. Scott: It is not our normal practice to give advance notice of meetings with Irish Ministers.

Political Parties (Talks)

23. **Sir John Biggs-Davison** asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what discussions he has had recently with representatives of Northern Ireland political parties.

Mr. Tom King I refer my hon. Friend to the reply given to his question on 1 May. The leaders of the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party declined my invitation of 27 May to the parties participating in the Northern Ireland Assembly to discuss its future. I met the Leader of the Alliance Party on Monday to hear his views. I also saw yesterday the Leader of the Social Democratic and Labour Party with some of his colleagues and discussed among other matters the prospects for devolved government.

Prison Officers

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many prison officers have been *(a)* injured and *(b* murdered in each of the past 10 years; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Scott: Information on staff injuries is not readily available and could be obtained only at disproportionate cost. The number of staff murdered in each of the past 10 years is as follows:

	Number
1976	3
1977	3
1978	2
1979	9
1980	2
1981	0
1982	2
1983	1
1984	1
1985	1
1986*	0

*To date.

Protection of prison staff is a matter of high priority and much emphasis has been put on the provision of appropriate security arrangements, both at and way from the prison establishments.

DEFENCE

SA-80

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence if there will be any limits placed on the prime contractor for the SA-80 as to how much of the order may be subcontracted abroad.

Mr. Lee: Yes. While United Kingdom prime contractors will be permitted to include overseas sub-components with the exception of any deemed essential to the maintenance of a United Kingdom small arms manufacturing capability, potential tenderers have been informed that United Kingdom content will be an important factor in assessing the overall value for money which determines our procurement policies.

Small Arms and Ammunition

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence what percentage of his Department's small arms and ammunitions requirement he intends to open to competition in 1986-87, 1987-88, 1988-89 and 1989-90, respectively.

Mr. Lee: Our intention is that small arms requirements in the period in question will wherever practicable be open to competition, and this is expected to encompass the bulk of such purchases. With regard to small arms ammunition for 1986-87 I have nothing to add to my answer of 16 May 1986, at column 565. Future decisions will be taken and announced in due course.

Mrs. Dunwoody asked the Secretary of State for Defence on what basis he decided the specific percentages of small arms and ammunition requirements which would be open to competition in 1986 and 1987, respectively.

Mr. Lee: Such decisions are taken on the basis of the policy stated by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on 13 January, at column 517.

Challenger Tank

Mr. Best asked the Secretary of State for Defence if he will list the dates and numbers of orders placed for the Challenger main battle tank; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: Production orders for Challenger MBT have been as follows:

Date	
April 1982 November 1982	To equip four regiments
June 1984	To equip fifth regiment
July 1985	To equip sixth regiment

In addition to the operational requirements, these orders have included tanks to meet repair and training needs.

Multi-launch Rocket System

Mr. Pike asked the Secretary of State for Defence to what he attributes the delay in the placing of a contract by the pilot nation for the multi-launch rocket system phase 1 system; when he now expects this contract to be placed; what are the implications of the delay for the planned procurement of this system for the United Kingdom regiments; and if he will make a statement.

Mr. Lee: As reflected in the reply to the hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr. Wallace) on 30 January 1986, at column 630, the contract award was planned for May this year. As I announced last week, the contract was duly awarded by Germany, the pilot nation, on behalf of the European partners, to the Europaische Produktions Gesellschaft mbH (EPG) on Tuesday 27 May 1986.

INDEX TO THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

SIXTH SERIES — **VOLUME 98**

SESSION 1985–86

19th May 6th June 1986

SCOPE OF THE INDEX, ARRANGEMENT AND ABBREVIATIONS

This index is derived from the House of Commons Library's Parliamentary On-Line Information System (POLIS), and the subject terms used are based on those used in POLIS. There are often changes in column numbering, etc., between the daily part or weekly Hansard (which simply collects together the daily parts without revision) and the bound volume. The index for the bound volume is revised to take account of these changes.

Scope and arrangement of the Index

Oral and Written Parliamentary Questions are indexed under subject headings and the names of Members asking and Ministers replying to them. Questions are not listed under the names of Departments replying. Departmental listings can be arrived at indirectly by looking under the names of the Minister(s) of that Department. There are, however, the headings 'Northern Ireland', 'Scotland', and 'Wales' under which one can find not only most Questions answered by the Northern Ireland Office, Scottish Office, Welsh Office but also Questions about these areas of the United Kingdom which are answered by other Departments. Ministerial statements are indexed under subject headings, under 'Ministerial statements' and the names of Ministers making them and Members speaking on them. General debates are indexed under broad subject headings and under the names of all Members and Ministers taking part. Debates on legislation (Bills, Orders, Regulations etc.) are indexed under the name of the Bill, Statutory Instrument etc., under subject headings and under the names of those taking part.

Rulings and Statements by Mr. Speaker and his deputies are brought together under the heading Speakers rulings and statements.

Other contributions by Mr. Speaker and his deputies appear under the heading Speaker.

Opposition Day Debates, Estimates Day Debates and Standing Order No. 10 applications are listed under those respective headings and under subject headings too.

The date of each item except Parliamentary Questions is inserted immediately before the reference.

Members' names are given in the form by which they prefer to be known and are printed in bold italics. Under their names, entries are arranged under one of the two headings *Debates etc.* (to include interventions on statements, points of order and so on) or *Questions*.

Abbreviations

Bills 1R = first reading, 2R = second reading, Money res = money resolution, Com = Committee stage, Rep = Report stage, 3R = third reading, amendt/amendts = amendment/amendments, * = matter taken formally, without debate.

Column numbers followed by the letter W refer to Written Questions. These appear at the end of each daily part or volume with their own sequence of column numbers printed in italics.

Aberdeen
Government grants 574w

Abse, Mr Leo
Questions
Chemical weapons, South East Asia 92w

Access to buildings
Buckingham Palace 84-5w

Access to Parliament
Members (23.05.86) 649
Speakers rulings & statements (23.05.86) 649

Accident & emergency departments 63w, 349w, 380w, 548-50w
Health service staff 349w, 380w
Hospitals 548-50w
Wales 349w

Accomplice Evidence (Northern Ireland) Bill 1985/86
1R (03.06.86) 748-50

Accounting
Ordnance Survey 612w
Small businesses 247-8w

Acid rain
Research finance 199w

Acquittals
Crown courts 6w
Magistrates courts 17w, 337w

Action for Community Employment 1080
Dove House 1080-1
Foreign aid 1080
Government grants 1080
Northern Ireland 1081
Voluntary organisations 1080-1

Actors
Unemployment benefits 152w

Adams, Mr Allen
Questions
Scottish Development Agency, Expenditure 574-5w

Adjournment debates
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 155, (21.05.86) 507, (23.05.86) 686

Adley, Mr Robert
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 197
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1103, 1112, 1119, 1123, 1125, 1155, 1163, 1169, 1180-2
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1324-5
South Africa (19.05.86) 24
Questions
Building land, Dorset 83w
Channel tunnel 7-8
Councillors, Declarations of interest 81w
Foreign tourists 169
Hippies, Police powers 735
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 58-60w
Middle schools, Verwood 479w
News International, Public order policing 516-7
Railway industry, Procurement 6
School population, England 182w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 248-50w
State education, Dorset 277-8w
USA, Extradition 1069-70

Administrative costs
Social security benefits 431-3w

Administrative delays
Attendance allowance 165w
Commons Registration Act 1965 596w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 629w, 630w
Dept of Health & Social Security 169w
Driving tests 340-2w
Dwyfor District Council 40w
Entry clearances 17w
Hill livestock allowances 488w
Members correspondence 320w
Ministerial correspondence 307w
Mobility allowance 165w
Passports 178-9w
Written questions 316w

Adult training strategy 415-6w

Advanced gas-cooled reactors
Nuclear fuels 466w

Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations 33w

Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service
Codes of practice 144w

Advisory services
Agriculture 199-200w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 311w
Expenditure 311w
Holiday leave 50w
Radioactivity 137w
Unemployed 360w, 361w
Wages Inspectorate 50w

Africa
AIDS 527w
Bilateral aid 158-9w
Development aid 16, 17
Disaster relief 158-9w
Disease control 264-5w
International assistance (23.05.86) 671-82
International Fund for Agricultural Development 2-3w
Overseas aid 2w, (23.05.86) 671-82, 728, 732
Rural areas 17

Against Channel Tunnel Schemes
Channel tunnel 353w

Age
Death 374w

Age Concern 167w
Exhibitions 167w
Upper Waiting Hall 167w

Agents provocateurs
Convictions 11-2w

Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 551-2w
Cost effectiveness 551-2w
Manpower 551-2w

Agricultural land
Land use 485-6w

Agricultural production
Cereals 366w
Sugar beet 485w
Vegetable oils 487w

Agricultural productivity 71-2w

Agricultural research
Hill Farming Research Organisation 576w
Scotland 282w

Agricultural subsidies
Sheep premiums 486w

Agricultural surpluses
Cereals 69w

Agriculture
Advisory services 199-200w
Development aid 16
EC budget 88-9w
Nature conservation 221w
Training 483-4w

Agriculture Bill 1985/86 221w, 281w
Nature conservation 221w

AIDS 264-5w, 275w, 527w
Africa 527w
Departmental publications 275w
Disease control 264-5w
Health education 527w
Travel 527w

Ainsworth Avenue
Crimes against property 456w

Air conditioning
Palace of Westminster 301-2w

Air fares
Competition 27w
Europe 27w, 340w
Judgments 452w, 597-8w

Air force bases
Anti-aircraft missiles 391w
Defence 391w
Military aircraft 428w
Mount Pleasant Airport 175w

Air pollution
Coal fired power stations 194w, 344
Road & rail transport comparisons 2

Air routes
Netherlands 452w

Aircraft
Hijacking 25w

Airlines
Competition 24w

Airports
Immigration officers 126-7w

Airships
Nuisance 29w
Tourism 29w

Aitken, Mr Jonathan
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 846-52
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1158-64, 1179
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1238-44, 1266, 1268-9, 1270-1, 1274, 1282, 1288-90, 1292, 1303-4, 1316-8, 1320-1
Questions
Business statement 535

Alcoholism
Costs 66w
Crime 515
Government grants 618w
Medical treatments 66w

Aldenham
London Regional Transport 597w

Alexander, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Local authorities, Tenders (23.05.86) 703-4
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 494-5
South Africa (19.05.86) 23
Questions
Milk & milk products, New Zealand 365w

Algeria
Overseas trade 47w

Aliens
Libyan Arab Republic 333w

Allen, William
Prerogative of mercy 1075

Allergies
Drug side effects 320-1w

Alternative energy 177

Alton, Mr David
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 1074-5
Overseas aid, Expenditure 18
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 610w

Amber alerts 243w

Ambulance services
Bethlem Royal Hospital 315w
Greater London 385w, 538-9w
South West Thames Regional Health Authority 539w
Working hours 539w

Amendments & new clauses
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 30, (04.06.86) 1010, (05.06.86) 1198-9, 1201, 1203-4, 1205, 1206, 1318

Amery, Rt Hon Julian
Questions

South Africa, Armed conflict 176-7

Amess, Mr David
Debates etc
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 805-8
Questions
Defective housing, Basildon 195w
Freight transport, EC law 22w
Ministers domestic visits, Basildon 171
"Office of Fair Trading Annual Report, 1985" 558w

Ammunition
Defence contracts 636w

Ancram, Mr Michael, Parliamentary Under Secretary Scottish Office
Debates etc
Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 155, 156-60
Questions
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Scotland 579w
Battered wives, Scotland 346w
Chapelcross power station, Earthquakes 883-4
Coastal areas, Highlands of Scotland 1-2w
Council house sales, Scotland 576w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 892-3
Environment protection, Scotland 281w
General improvement areas, Kilmarnock 888-9
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, Scottish Development Department 280w
Housing, Scotland 234-5w
Housing starts, Scotland 235w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 576w
Local government finance, Scotland 279w, 892
Longannet power station, Smoke & chimney gases 579w
M80 235w
Nature conservation, Local authorities in Scotland 282w
New towns, Irvine 884
New towns development corporations, Scotland 882-3
North Sea, International conferences 281w, 282w
Operation Raleigh, Scotland 235w
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper", Scotland 577w
Pipelines, Tain 1w
Radioactivity, Fife 346w
Radioactivity, Lerwick 235-6w
Radioactivity, Scotland 225w, 226-7w, 227-8w, 346w, 398w, 576w
Rates & rating, Scotland 893
River pollution, Scotland 280-1w
Teachers, Scotland 576-7w
Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1973 396w
Waste disposal, Local authorities in Scotland 280w
Water pollution, Scotland 279w, 280w
Youth services, Scotland 283w
Youth services, Strathclyde Regional Council 283w

Anderson, Mr Donald
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 196
South Africa (19.05.86) 19-20
Questions
Hippies, Trespass 737-8
South Africa, Economic sanctions 302w

Anglian Water Authority
Radioactive waste disposal 78w, 512w, 513w

Anglo-Irish Agreement 177w, 561-2w, 633-4w, 1072-3, 1074, 1075-6, 1077
Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1077
Industry 633w
IRA 1072-3, 1073-4
Northern Ireland government 1073, 1078
Security 1075-6
Ulster Unionists 1077-8, 1078-9
USA 1079

Angola
Military aid 304w
USA 304w

Animal housing 487w
Beef & veal 487w

Animal products
Wastes 557w

Animal welfare
Beef & veal 487w
Horses 626w, 632w
Slaughterhouses 133w

Animals (Scientific Procedures) Bill (HL) 1985/86
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Annan bypass 577w
Government contracts 577w

Annual reports 204w
Commonwealth Development Corporation 204w

Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust 315w
Government grants 315w

Antiaircraft missiles
Air force bases 391w

Antidumping
Synthetic fibres 185w

Appeals
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 630w

Apples
Tree planting 70w

Apprentices
British Rail Engineering 881

Arab states
Libyan Arab Republic 304-5w

Archer, Rt Hon Peter
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Voluntary organisations 1081
Anglo-Irish Agreement 633-4w, 1074
USA, Extradition 1072

Architects
Civil service manpower 224-6w
Government departments 480w

Area manpower boards 145w, 362w
Public appointments 362w
Unemployed 145w

Areas of outstanding natural beauty
Scotland 579w

Argentina
USA 243w

Armagh
Leisure facilities 42w

Armed conflict (19.05.86) 19-28, 238w, 304-5w, 306w, 730, 731, 1086
Libyan Arab Republic 304-5w
Middle East 305w
South Africa 175-6, 176-7

Armed forces
Cyprus (22.05.86) 558-68
USA 132w

Armed forces deployment
Belize 19w
Binary chemical weapons 428-9w
Scotland 176w
US bases 306w
USA 243w
Wales 175-6w

Armed forces discharges
Courtney, Brian 428w
Official secrets 429w
Sheehan, Timothy 428w

Armed forces training
El Salvador 19w
Sri Lanka 303-4w

Arms control 306w
Finance 561w
Nuclear weapons tests 561w

Arms control treaties
Chemical weapons 414-5w
SALT Agreements 20w

Arms exports
Iran 304w
Iraq 304w

Arms trade
Debts 17w
Exhibitions 238w
Turkey 176w, 238w

Army
Defence equipment 176w
Exhibitions 238w

Army in Northern Ireland
Crimes against the person 43-4w, 301-2w
Rehousing 42-3w

Arnold, Mr Tom
Questions
Entry clearances 334w
Retirement Homes Association, Planning appeals 497-8w
Treasury, Higher civil servants 330-1w

Arrests
News International 12w, 126w
Salisbury plain 12w

Art exhibitions
British Council 302w
USSR 302w

Artificial sweeteners
Diabetes 545w
Health hazards 545w

Arts finance
Sadlers Wells Theatre 628w

Ashby, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1212, 1215, 1311
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 567
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 584, 597-603
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 226-7
Questions
Hospitals, Ashby de la Zouch 716
Sports Aid, Government assistance 15

Ashby de la Zouch
Hospitals 716

Ashdown, Mr Paddy
Questions
Berkeley power station, Nuclear safety 354-5w
Data Protection Registrar, Attorney-General 246w
Data Protection Registrar, Cabinet Office 331w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Education & Science 278w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Employment 265-6w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Energy 253w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Health & Social Security 316w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of the Environment 372w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
Data Protection Registrar, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 303w
Data Protection Registrar, Home Office 260w
Data Protection Registrar, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 366w
Data Protection Registrar, Ministry of Defence 264w
Data Protection Registrar, Northern Ireland Office 301w
Data Protection Registrar, Scottish Office 283w

Data Protection Registrar, Treasury 307w
Data Protection Registrar, Welsh Office 288w
Export controls, USA 47w, 48w
Fletcher, Simon, Supreme Court Act 1981 595w
Hippies, Trespass 734-5
Iron & steel industry, Wolverhampton 409w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear safety 157w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 251-2w
Nuclear accidents, Hinkley Point B 32w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 31w
Overseas trade, Morocco 47w
Plutonium, Nuclear weapons 31w

Ashfield
Rate support grants 355

Ashley, Rt Hon Jack
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 62-3, 116-7
Questions
Blind, Social security reform 555w
Board & lodging charges, Residential care 164w, 165w
Business statement 535-6
German measles 312w
German measles, Congenital abnormalities 313w
German measles, Screening 313w
German measles, Vaccination 312w, 313w
Handicapped workers, Unemployment 171-2
Mobility allowance, Social security allowance 171-2w
National Rubella Council, Government grants 312w
Photosensitivity, Drug side effects 223-4w, 320-1w
Photosensitivity, Medical Research Council 184w
Photosensitivity, Medical treatments 223w
Prisoners release, Employment opportunities 265w

Ashton, Mr Joseph
Questions
Business statement 537
Gynaecology, Bassetlaw Health Authority 63w
Hippies, Police powers 737

Ashwell Prison 8w

Aspinwall, Mr Jack
Questions
Civil defence, Nuclear accidents 256-7w

Assaults on police
Lost working days 259w

"Assessment of the Radiological Impact of the Windscale Reactor Fire" 290-1w

Assisted areas
Shipbuilding 409w

Assisted places scheme (04.06.86) 1053-60

Astronomy 275w

Atkins, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1272
Economic policy (03.06.86) 772
Questions
Industry, Northern Ireland 633w

Atkinson, Mr David
Questions
Foreign tourists, USA 151w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 317-8w
"Just Say No", Video recordings 183w, 262w, 316-7w
Local government services, Privatisation 356
M3-M27 link, Road construction 2-3
Radioactivity, Cap de la Hague 496-7w
Ratushinskaya, Irina, Political prisoners 304w
Residential care, Ernst & Whinney 552w
Schools, Drug abuse 278w
X rays, Cancer hazards 529w

Atkinson, Mr Norman
Questions
Air conditioning, Palace of Westminster 301-2w
Crime prevention, Lighting 255w

Atomic Energy Research Establishment 592-3w

Atomic Weapons Research Establishment
Emergency planning 391w

Attendance allowance
Administrative delays 165w
Northern Ireland 461w, 462w
Social security appeals 461w

Attorney-General
Data Protection Registrar 246w

Audit
Small businesses 247-8w

Availability for work
Unemployment benefits 54w

Average earnings
Employment opportunities 90w
Legal aid 13

Axle weights
Motor vehicles 23w

A13 452w

A38 (23.05.86) 697-702

A75 577w
Bypassess 577w

A483 11w
Road traffic offences 11w
Speed limits 11w

Badenoch Committee see Legionnaires Disease Inquiry

Badgers
Bovine tuberculosis 222w
Pest control 222w

Badgers & Bovine Tuberculosis (No 2) Review 222w

Bagier, Mr Gordon A T
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 444-5
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Redundancy 5

Bahai sect
Human rights 305w
Iran 305w

Baker, Rt Hon Kenneth, *Secretary of State for the Environment (From 21 May Secretary of State for Education & Science)*
Questions
Building land, Inner city areas 351-2
Building land, Local government land 352-3
Curriculum, "Better Schools White Paper" 601-2w
Education, Local government expenditure 611w
Education, Public expenditure 611w
Greater London Council, Local government reform 202w
Lighting, Palace of Westminster 86w
Local government revenue, Housing construction 353
London Residuary Body, Conditions of employment 84w
Rate support grants 342
Rate support grants, Gloucestershire County Council 342
Rate support grants, Northern region 342
Rate support grants, Per capita costs 341
Rates & rating 341
Rates & rating, Darlington 341-2

Baker, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 769-71
Questions
Hippies, Police powers 736
Local Government Boundary Commission for England 334w
Pedestrian crossings 11
Prison sentences, Offences against children 258w
Public footpaths, Subsidies 567w
Tax allowances, Charities 559-60w

Balance of payments 87-8w

Balance of trade
UK trade with EC 407w

Baldry, Mr Tony
Questions
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985-86 8-9
Nurses, Pay 310-2w

Balham
St James Hospital 724-5

Ballyhalbert
Housing construction 299w

Bangladesh
Illegal immigrants 524-5
Imports 405w
Multifibre arrangement 405w

Bank of England
Income 472w

Bank services
Building societies 187w

Banks
National Savings Certificates 330w

Banks, Mr Robert
Questions
Cereals, Land use 485-6w
Gas tariffs, Prices 593w
Hospital waiting lists, Surgery 542w
Sheep premiums, Agricultural subsidies 486w
Sheep premiums, Meat & Livestock Commission 486w
Sugar beet, Agricultural production 485w
Vegetable oils, Agricultural production 487w
Water charges, Price increases 566w

Banks, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1150
London Residuary Body (23.05.86) 638-44, 646, 647
Nuclear power stations, Safety (23.05.86) 661, 667
Paige, Victor, Ministerial statements (03.06.86) 794
South Africa (19.05.86) 26
Questions
Broadcast journalism, Wars 521w
Bus lanes, Greater London 10
Coinage, South Africa 434w
Duty solicitors, Metropolitan police 363w
Firearms, South Africa 558w
Greater London Council, Local government reform 202w
Handicapped, Newham 555w
Handicapped, Slough 555w
House of Commons catering, Frogs legs 484w
Import controls, Krugerrands 364w
Joint manpower watch, Local government staff 567-8w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Disclosure of information 569w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Planning permission 514w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Professional consultants 296-8w
London Residuary Body, pay 497w
Lorries, Road traffic control 24w
News International, Public order policing 126w, 517w

Parking offences, Dept of Energy 369w, 469w
Parking offences, Dept of the Environment 570w
Parking offences, Government departments 514w, 570-1w
Parking offences, Greek Street 405w, 571w
Parking offences, Home Office 449w
Parking offences, Scottish Office 369w
Prime Minister official engagements 245w
Rates & rating 341
Roads, Tower Hill 452w
Social security recipients, Newham 56w, 554w
Social security recipients, Slough 553-4w
South Africa, Military attaches 626w
Telephone charges, Dept of the Environment 568w
Unemployment 152w
Unemployment, Newham 53-5w
Unemployment, Slough 584w
Wars, Broadcasting 392-4w
Youth unemployment, Newham 55w

Barnett, Mr Guy
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 23
Questions
Public order policing, Demonstrations 259w
Unemployment 161

Barnsley College of Technology 121-2w, 123w
Educational finance 121-2w, 123w
Student numbers 121-2w, 123w

Barristers
Pay 6w

Barron, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 67, 74-5
Questions
Rate support grants 194w
Unemployment, Rotherham 170

Basildon
Defective housing 195w
Ministers domestic visits 171
Unemployment 171

Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 536w
Hospital waiting lists 536w

Bassetlaw Health Authority 63w
Gynaecology 63w

Batiste, Mr Spencer
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1223, 1226, 1228, 1230
Questions
Boundary Commissions, Information technology 332w
Council house sales, Private investment 350
Domestic rates, Leeds 369w
Hospital patients, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 530-2w
Immigration officers, Airports 126-7w
Leeds Eastern Health Authority, Expenditure 375-6w
Nuclear power stations, International cooperation 565-6w
Overseas investment 309w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 93-4w

Battered wives
Scotland 346w
Wales 35w, 214w

BBC
Broadcasting bias 126w
Community radio 335w

Beaches
EC law 213w
Sea pollution 130-1w
Wales 130-1w, 213w

Beaumont-Dark, Mr Anthony
Questions
Business statement 538
National Bus Company, Privatisation 3-4

Beckett, Mrs Margaret
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 196
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 30-105 (passim)
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 217, 223-4, 244, 252, 285-6
Questions
Maternity benefits, Costs 166-7w
Personal injury compensation, War casualties 60w
Social Security Act 1985, Orders & regulations 724
Statutory maternity pay, Tax yields 57w

Bed & breakfast accommodation
Homelessness 194w, 350
Public expenditure 730-1
Scotland 234-5w

Beef & veal
Animal housing 487w
Animal welfare 487w

Beekeeping
Government assistance to industry 69-70w, 223w
Import controls 69-70w
Imports 70w
Scotland 1w
Sugar 70w, 223w
Weather 1w, 69-70w, 223w

Beer
Food contamination 71w
West Germany 70-1w, 134w, 222w

Beith, Mr A J
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 24
University finance (20.05.86) 181
Questions
Angola, Military aid 304w
Army, Defence equipment 176w
Army, Exhibitions 238w
Crown Agents, Overseas Development Administration 410w
Fishing gear, EC action 491w
House of Commons Select Committees, Costs 481-4w
House of Commons staff, Training 325-8w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 16
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Fast reactors 467w
Whiting, Fishing gear 367w

Belfast
Civil dignitaries 1077

Belize
Armed forces deployment 19w

Bell, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 429
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1077
Border security in Ireland 634w

Bellingham, Mr Henry
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 548-9
Questions
Police relations with public, Brixton Disturbances Inquiry 256w

Bendall, Mr Vivian
Questions
Food aid from EC, USSR 20w

Benn, Rt Hon Tony
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 312-5

Bennett, Mr Andrew F
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 814-5, 819, 824-5, 828
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1055-8
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 795, 796, 797, 802-3, 808
Private Bills (03.06.86) 813
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1336
University finance (20.05.86) 187
Questions
Business statement 539-40
Crossbows, Import controls 522
Local education authorities, Capital investment 98-108w
Nuclear test ban 412w
Nuclear weapons tests, Arms control 561w
Nuclear weapons tests, Seismic monitoring 412-3w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Elections 348
Restart programme, Further education 583w
School leaving 93-4w
Students, Social security benefits rules 718-9
Students, Supplementary benefits 525w
University finance 479-480w

Benyon, Mr W
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 195
University finance (20.05.86) 183

Berkeley power station 354-5w
Nuclear safety 354-5w

Bermingham, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1209
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 327-8
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 601, 607-9, 616, 620
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Hospitals 548-50w
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Police records 13w
Crown courts, Acquittals 6w
Hospital doctors, Ethnic minorities 61-2w
Magistrates courts, Acquittals 17w
Magistrates courts, Convictions 17w, 337w
Mental patients, Prisoners 61w
Prison population, Remand in custody 629w
Prisoners, Fine defaulters 9w
Schizophrenia, Mental hospitals 60-1w

Best, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 142-3, 147
Questions
Air fares, Judgments 597-8w
Alcoholism, Government grants 618w
Challenger tanks, Defence procurement 636w
Channel tunnel, France 450w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 450-1w
Fraud, Prosecutions 515-6w
Free ports, EC countries 470w
Legitimacy, Law reform 596w
Naturalisation, South East Asia 334-5w
NHS, Gwynedd 286-7w
Police, North Wales 333-4w
Prosecutions, Crimes outside national territories 7w
Prosecutions, Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983 3w
Refugees, Hong Kong 337w
Secondary education, Gwynedd 287-8w
Snowdonia National Park, Land acquisition 213-4w
Sports Council, Chess 368w
Tidal power, Cardiff 286w
Welsh Chess Union, Government grants 286w

Bethlem Royal Hospital 168-9w
Ambulance services 315w

"Better Schools White Paper" 601-2w
Curriculum 601-2w

Bexley London Borough Council Bill 1985/86
2R order read (22.05.86) 513, (05.06.86) 1069

Bidwell, Mr Sydney
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1107
Questions
Business statement 1088-9
London Regional Transport, Aldenham 597w
Ministers visits abroad, Turkey 430w

Biffen, Rt Hon John, Lord Privy Seal and Leader of the House of Commons
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (05.06.86) 1098
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 835-8
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 293-6, 330
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 531-2
Paige, Victor, Ministerial statements (03.06.86) 794
Questions
Air conditioning, Palace of Westminster 301-2w
Business statement 533-41, 1087-96
House of Commons catering, Frogs legs 484w
House of Commons library 483w
House of Commons library, Books 204-5w
House of Commons library, Newspaper press 74w
House of Commons Select Committees, Select Committee reports 481w
House of Commons staff, Taxis 73-4w
House of Commons stationery 205w
Palace of Westminster, Cleaning services 161w
Palace of Westminster, Heating 161-2w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 627-8w
Privileges Select Committee, Disclosure of information 483w

Biggs-Davison, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1225
South Africa (19.05.86) 20
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1074
Falkland Islands, Shipping 215w
Falkland Islands, Total exclusion zone 176w
Human embryo experiments 1081-2
M25, Traffic noise 10-1
Political parties, Northern Ireland 635w
Quarrying, Navan Fort 462w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Overtime 301w
Terrorism, Treason 14

Bilateral aid
Africa 158-9w

Bilingual education
General Certificate of Secondary Education 599w

Binary chemical weapons 33w, 428-9w, 526, 527
Armed forces deployment 428-9w
NATO 33w
West Germany 428w

Birmingham City Council 354-5
Rate support grants 355-6

Birth rate
Northern Ireland 298-300w

Black, John
Homicide 143w

Black economy
Social security abuse 618w

Blackburn Borough Council
Housing improvement 140-1w
Urban housing renewal unit 140-1w

Blaker, Rt Hon Sir Peter
Questions
Nuclear weapons policy 527

Blind
Mobility allowance 716-7
Sheltered employment 172
Social security reform 555w

Blood tests 543w

Board & lodging charges 164w, 165w, 223w, 526w, 556w
Health service staff 546w
Hospital staff 546w, 556w
Nursing homes 223w, 526w
Registered homes 223w
Residential care 164w, 165w
Supplementary benefits 164w, 165w

Boarding schools
Cost per pupil 182w
Fees & charges 301w

Bombings
Dance halls 414w
F111 Aircraft 1086
West Germany 414w

Books
Expenditure 204-5w
House of Commons library 204-5w

Boot houses 134-6w

Border security in Ireland 634w
Royal Ulster Constabulary 301w

Bottomley, Mr Peter, Under-Secretary of State for Transport
Debates etc
A38, Bromsgrove (23.05.86) 699-702
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1250, 1251
Questions
Bus lanes, Greater London 9-10
Container terminals, Falmouth harbour 247w
Drinking & driving, Publicity 450-1w
Driving tests, Administrative delays 340-2w
Freight transport, EC law 22w
International Labour Organisation, Merchant seamen 247w
Laybys, Catering 27-8w
Lorries, Road traffic control 24w, 26w
Lorry drivers, Working hours 27w
Motor vehicles, Axle weights 23w
Motorcycles, Driving tests 24-5w
Motorways, Construction costs 26-7w
Motorways, death 24w
M3, Road works 30w
M3-M27 link, Road construction 2-3
M20, Motorway service areas 341w
M25, Road accidents 26w
M25, Road traffic 596-7w
M25, Traffic noise 10-1
M40, Road traffic 161w
National Bike Week 25w
Parking, Handicapped drivers 202w
Pedestrian crossings 11
Road accidents, Injuries 29w
Road accidents, Public transport 610w
Road construction, cost benefit analysis 22w
Road construction, Direct labour departments 28w
Road construction, Greater London 598w
Road construction, Northern region 451w
Road construction, Recycling 452w
Road signs, Catering 27w
Roads, Local government functions 22w
Roads, Mobile shops 453w
Roads, Tower Hill 452w
Safety belts, Children 26w
Shipping 246-7w
Speed limits, Trailers 453w
Stubbings bypass, Public inquiries 452w
Woolwich ferry 451w

Bottomley, Mrs Virginia
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 57, 60
Questions
Enterprise allowance scheme 162
Police training, Inner city areas 257w
Portman Clinic, Finance 524w
Self-employed 151w
Share ownership 306w
Spectacles, Ophthalmic services 548w
Trade missions, Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board 634w
Victim support schemes 515

Boundary Commissions
Computers 332w
Information technology 332w

Bovine tuberculosis
Badgers 222w

Bowden, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1198, 1201
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 43
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 243, 245, 269-70
Questions
Age Concern, Upper Waiting Hall 167w
Death, Age 374w
Milk, Radioactivity 219-20w
Radiation hazards, East Sussex 492w
Radioactivity, Cancer 493w
Radioisotopes, East Sussex 80w

Bowden, Mr Gerald
Questions
Curriculum, "Better Schools White Paper" 601-2w

Boyes, Mr Roland
Questions
Bus services, Passenger transport executives 21w
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86, Private Bills 8
Crime 514-5
New towns 293-4w
"Privatisation of the Water Authorities White Paper" 141-2w
Rates & Rating, Local government revenue 291w
Rates & rating, Parish councils 198w
Water authorities, Public appointments 358, 498-504w
Water meters 503w
Water meters, Costs 503
Youth training scheme, Manpower Services Commission 151w

Boyson, Dr Rhodes, Minister of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Dover House 1080-1
Action for Community Employment, Foreign aid 1080
Action for Community Employment, Government grants 1080
Action for Community Employment, Northern Ireland 1081
Action for Community Employment, Voluntary organisations 1081
Carreras Rothmans, Factory closures 634w
Data Protection Registrar, Northern Ireland Office 301w
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland district councils 40-1w
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 299w
Employment schemes, Carrickfergus 458w
Harland & Wolff, Government assistance to nationalised industries 44w
Harland & Wolff, PA Management Consultants 457-8w
Industry, Northern Ireland 633w
Jobclubs, Northern Ireland 634w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 633w
Tourism, Northern Ireland 632w
Trade missions, Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board 634w
Training, Northern Ireland 458-60w

Unemployment, Northern Ireland 454w, 455w
Vacancies, Northern Ireland 454w, 582-3w, 633w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 339w
Youth unemployment, Northern Ireland 454w, 455w

Bradford Health Authority 535-6w
Hospital waiting lists 535-6w

Braine, Rt Hon Sir Bernard
Debates etc
Harwick Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.05.86) 803-4
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 486-90
Questions
Licensing laws, Young people 7w

Brandon-Bravo, Mr Martin M
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 186

Branson, Richard 613w

Breast cancer
Screening 39w, 725-6
Wales 39w

Brent Health Authority 547w
Hospital closures 547w
Recruitment 547w

Brewing industry
EC internal trade 70-1w
Import controls 222w

Bright, Mr Graham
Questions
Loan guarantee scheme, Publicity 54w

British Airports Authority
Privatisation 597w
Share ownership 597w

British Caledonian Airways
Redundancy 161

British Chess Federation (23.05.86) 683-9

British Council
Art exhibitions 302w

British Fuel 157w

British Gas Corporation
Gas fuels 252w
Pensions 31w
Privatisation 31w
Wales 35-6w

British Home for Incurables Hospital
Supplementary benefits 526w

British Leyland
Privatisation 249-50w

British Rail
Factory closures (04.06.86) 1061-8
Railway travel 23w
Redundancy (20.05.86) 188-99, 201
Youth training scheme 131w

British Rail Engineering 5, 6, 20w, 21w, 161-2, (20.05.86) 188-99, 201, 450w, (04.06.86) 1061-8
Apprentices 881
Contracts 450w
Export promotion 20w
Factory closures 21w
Horwich 6
Ministerial statements (20.05.86) 188-99
Redundancy 5, 6-7, 161-2
Springburn 5-6, 881, (04.06.86) 1061-8
Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 201
Swindon 20w

British Railways (Stansted) Bill 1985/86
2R (03.06.86) 814-34
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (22.05.86) 513

British residents abroad
Sri Lanka 303-4w

British Shipbuilders
Day, Graham 47w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 46w, 186-7w, 406w, 616w
Government contracts 45w
Hares, Phillip 46w
Manpower 557-8w
Merchant ships 164w
Northern region 557-8w
Privatisation 408-9w
Redundancy 186-7w
Warships 46w

British Shipbuilders Enterprise (21.05.86) 412-56

British Steel Corporation
Government assistance to nationalised industries 406w, 616w
Manpower 409w
Northern region 409w

British Sugar Corporation 251w
Takeovers 251w

British Tourist Authority 421-2w, 625w
Expenditure 625w

Brittan, Rt Hon Leon
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 841-3
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1285-6

Brixton Disturbances Inquiry 256w
Police relations with public 256w

Brixton School, Plymouth 109w
Government grants 109w

Broadcast journalism
Wars 521w

Broadcasting
Emergency planning 392-4w
Wars 392-4w

Broadcasting bias
BBC 126w
Independent Broadcasting Authority 126w

Broadcasting controls
Wars 521w

Bromsgrove
Roads (23.05.86) 697-702

Brooke, Mr Peter, Minister of State at the Treasury
Questions
Capital allowances, Ships 331w
Cars, Free ports 90w
Cars, Import duties 310w
Data Protection Registrar, Treasury 307w, 609w
Drug seizures 308-9w
Drug seizures, Heathrow 89w
EC budget 173w, 308w
EC budget, Agriculture 88-9w
EC budget, Expenditure 172-3w
EC budget, Own resources 89w
EC budget, UK contributions 88w, 173-4w, 188-90w
European Assembly, Political parties 308w
European Assembly budget 308w, 561w
Free ports, EC countries 470w
HMSO, Publishing 187w
Imports, Eastern Europe 609w
Ports, Scotland 306-7w
Profit sharing 172w
Public expenditure, Sick leave 608w
Review Board for Government Contracts 607-8w
Treasury, Higher civil servants 330-1w
VAT, Credit 471w
VAT, EC law 86-7w
VAT, Northern region 471w

Brown, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 448-50
Questions
British Shipbuilders, Day, Graham 47w
British Shipbuilders, Government assistance to nationalised industries 46w
British Shipbuilders, Government contracts 45w
British Shipbuilders, Hares, Phillip 46w
British Shipbuilders, Merchant ships 164w
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital, Construction 889-90
Radioactivity, Fife 346w
Royal fleet auxiliary, Defence procurement 92w
Shipbreaking, Defence contracts 391-2w
Shipbreaking, Defence expenditure 392w
Shipbuilding, EC countries 163-4w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 162w, 163w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 55w

Brown, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 212-4
Questions
New towns development corporations, Scotland 883

Brown, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1197-8, 1201, 1205, 1211, 1214, 1222, 1224, 1229, 1240-1, 1244-54, 1297, 1300-3, 1309-11
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money res (05.06.86) 1328-9
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 457-8, 460, 467, 493-4
Questions
Barristers, Pay 6w
Solicitors, Pay 6w

Brown, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 415-6
Questions
Housing investment programmes, Local government finance 192w
Legal aid 12
Prime Minister official engagements 245w
Shipping 25-6w

Brown, Mr Robert C
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 416

Browne, Mr John
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 148
South Africa (19.05.86) 25
Questions
Business statement 1093
M3-M27 link, Road construction 3
New businesses 166

Bruce, Mr Malcolm
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 609
Questions
Aberdeen, Government grants 574w
Nuclear power 177
OPEC, Oil prices 251-2w
Rates & rating, Scotland 893

Bruinvels, Mr Peter
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 554
Business questions intervention (22.05.86) 538
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1213, 1215, 1319
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 301
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 908
University finance (20.05.86) 187
Questions
Business statement 540, 1095
Church Commissioners, Estate agents 177w

Church Commissioners, Property transfer 627w
Commercial surrogacy, Diaries 172w
Council house sales, Leicester 347-8
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 722
Detention centres 631w
Driving licences, Fees & charges 23w
Education, School closures 95-6w
Further Education Unit, Costs 95w
House of Commons library, Books 204-5w
House of Commons library, Newspaper press 74w
House of Commons staff, Taxis 73-4w
Kidnapping, Children 521
Leicester Prison, Ministers domestic visits 253w
Members allowances, Car allowances 471w
Northern Ireland Assembly 462w
Northeye Prison, Prisoners transfers 631w
Nuclear free zones, Local authorities 139w, 562w
Nursing homes, Fees & charges 617w
Nursing homes, Registered homes 547-8w
Ordnance survey, Finance 612w
Oriel Lodge, Registered homes 617w
Pay review bodies 239-44w
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 337w
Prime Minister official engagements 128w, 245w, 449w, 627w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Israel 447w
Prison Officers Association, Security 1079
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 635w
Registered homes 524w
Road construction, Government grants 2
School leaving certificates, Leicestershire 276-7w
Teachers, Pay settlements 269-70w
Trespass, Public Order Bill 1985/86 631-2w
Unemployment, East Midlands 146w

Bryan, Sir Paul
Questions
Hong Kong, Housing 143w
Private Bills, House of Commons procedure 627-8w

BSC (Industry) Ltd 613-4w
Employment opportunities 613-4w
Northern region 613-4w

Buchanan-Smith, Rt Hon Alick, *Minister of State for Energy*
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Gas fuels 252w
Gas tariffs, Prices 593w
North Sea oil, Export controls 594w
North Sea oil, Investment 468w

Buck, Sir Antony
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 562
Questions
F111 aircraft, Libyan Arab Republic 731

Buckingham Palace
Access to buildings 84-5w

Budgen, Mr Nicholas
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, USA 1079
Illegal immigrants, India 524-5

"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 542-56
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 542-56

Building industry
Industrial injuries 152w
Northern region 417w
Unemployment 417w
Wales 132w

Building land
Dorset 83w
Inner city areas 351-2
Local government land 352-3

Building repairs
Defective housing 292w
Hampton Court 356
Housing Defects Act 1984 292w
Public expenditure 350

Building Research Establishment 201-2w
Steel framed houses 201-2w

Building societies
Bank services 187w

Building Societies Bill 1985/86
Money res* (04.06.86) 914
Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 915-1052

Bulmer, Mr Esmond
Questions
Crime, Habitual offenders 253-4w

Bureaucracy
Police 231-3w

Burglary
Detection rates 261-2w
Scotland 603-4w
Wales 261-2w

Burnley
Hospital closures 542w
Social security recipients 542-4w
Supplementary benefits 542w
Unemployment 542-4w, 583w
Vacancies 583w
Youth unemployment 421w

Bus crews
Crimes of violence 30w

Bus fares
Bus services 21w

Bus lanes
Greater London 9-10

Bus services
Bus fares 21w
Competition 3-4, 21w
Local authorities 21w
Passenger transport executives 21w
Ryedale 4
Taxis 22w
Transport Act 1985 21-2w
Transport & Road Research Laboratory 202w

Buses
London Regional Transport 597w

Business (22.05.86) 542-56

Business education
Postgraduate education 599-600w

Business statement 533-41, 1087-96

Butcher, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Trade and Industry*
Debates etc
Regional aid, South West region (21.05.86) 508-12
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1337-40
Questions
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 407w
Consumer protection, Telecommunications Act 1984 363-4w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
Export controls, USA 47w, 48w
Firearms, South Africa 558w
Import controls, Firearms 407w
Import controls, Krugerrands 364w
Imports, Television 249w
Industry, EC internal trade 162w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 162w
Multifibre arrangement, Bangladesh 405w
Overseas trade, Morocco 47w
Postal workers, Manpower 185w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 162w
Synthetic fibres, EC action 185-6w
Synthetic fibres, Imports 186w
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 45-6w
Uranium, Imports 164w

Butler, Rt Hon Sir Adam
Questions
USA, Extradition 1070-1

Butterfill, Mr John
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 550-1
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1214, 1218-9
Questions
Foreign tourists, USA 164
Trident, Defence procurement 178

Buy outs
National Bus Company 3

Bypasses
A75 577w
Road construction 213w
Winchester 3

Cabinet Office
Data Protection Registrar 331w
Pollution control 179w

Caesium
Pollution monitoring 75w
Radioactivity 75w

Calcutt Inquiry see Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry

Calder Hall 179w, 466w
Ministerial responsibility 179w
Nuclear power stations 466w

Calderdale Borough Council 376w

Callaghan, Rt Hon James
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 425-7

Callaghan, Mr Jim
Questions
Crimes of violence 513-4

Calling of Members
Speakers rulings & statements (20.05.86) 187, (03.06.86) 815, (04.06.86) 897, (05.06.86) 1200, 1204-6

Cambridge University 178w
Institute of Criminology 178w

Camden
Social security benefits disqualification 68-9w
Voluntary unemployment 68-9w

Campbell, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 465

Campbell-Savours, Mr D N
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 551
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 302, 305, 329-30
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 532
Paige, Victor, Ministerial statements (03.06.86) 794
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 481
Select Committee evidence, Parliamentary privilege (03.06.86) 747
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, IRA 1073-4
Business statement 1093
Civil defence, West Cumberland 523
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution 344
Cyprus, Official secrets 429w
Diego Garcia, Contracts 413-4w, 430w
Financial services, Republic of Ireland 634w
Kidnapping, Insurance 255-6w
Livestock, Radioactivity 488w, 552w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 4
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 353w
Paige, Victor, Resignations 900-1
Pollution, Nuclear accidents 192w
Youth training scheme, Costs 166-7

Canavan, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Oral questions, Calling of Members (04.06.86) 897

Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 153
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1072-3
Economic policy, Unemployment 1083
London marathon, Government grants 196w
Scottish Assembly, Royal High School 893
Scottish Football Association, World Cup 577w
USA, Foreign policy 412w

Cancer
Death 529w
EC action 321w
Hospital closures 545w
Medical research 224w, 321w
Medical treatments 224w, 383-4w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 383-4w
Nuclear accidents 493w
Radioactivity 493w
Westminster Hospital 383w

Cancer hazards
Scotland 227w
X rays 529w

Cap de la Hague 496-7w
Nuclear accidents 345
Nuclear power stations 496-7w
Radioactivity 496-7w

Capital allowances
Ships 331w

Capital gains tax
Tax yields 91w

Capital investment
Central Electricity Generating Board 606-7w
Council housing 36w
Electricite de France 606-7w
Further education 109-10w, 110-122w
Local education authorities 98-108w, 109-10w, 110-122w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority 592-3w

Capital punishment
Terrorism 14

Car allowances
Members allowances 471w

Car industry
Foreign companies in UK 405w
Import quotas 45w, 405w

Cardiff
Childrens hospitals 128w
HMSO 187w
Hospital closures 285w
Medical equipment 284-5w
St Davids Hospital 40w
Tidal power 286w
Youth training scheme 289-90w

Cardiff Childrens Ear Nose & Throat Hospital
Finance 128w

Carlile, Mr Alex
Questions
Firearms, Retail trade 523
Perinatal mortality, Death registration 530w
Police, Manpower 516
Remand in custody 258-9w
Test tube babies, Wales 288-9w

Carlisle, Mr John
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 481
Questions
South Africa, Armed conflict 176

Carlisle, Mr Kenneth
Questions
National parks, Conservation 614w
Radioactivity, Nuclear safety 344
Self-employed, Employment level 172
"World Conservation Strategy" 568-9w

Carreras Rothmans 634w
Factory closures 634w
Unemployment 458w

Carrickfergus
Employment schemes 458w

Cars
Free ports 90w, 310w
Import duties 310w

Carter-Jones, Mr Lewis
Questions
X rays, Radiation hazards 314w

Cartwright, Mr John
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 308-9
Questions
Firearms 517w
Housing estates, Council house sales 347
Import controls, Firearms 407w
Level crossings, Cherry Hinton 29w
Paramilitary forces, Combat Shotgun Society 517w
Paramilitary forces, Training 517w
Public libraries, News International 480w
Roads, Local government functions 22w
Water authorities, Privatisation 191w

Cash, Mr William
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 552
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 1022
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1206, 1210, 1214, 1235, 1236, 1239, 1242, 1244-5, 1247-8, 1249, 1260, 1262, 1263-4, 1269, 1280, 1283, 1290-8, 1299, 1302, 1313-5
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money res (05.06.86) 1332
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 906
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 224
Questions
Civil service manpower, Government departments 609w
Local enterprise agencies 150w
Small businesses, Accounting 247-8w
Stafford Hospital, Legionnaires disease 555w

Cash limits
Dept of Employment 422-3w

Casualty units 380w
Hospitals 380w

Catering
Departmental circulars 27-8w
Laybys 27-8w
Road signs 27w

Cathays Park 130w
Museums & galleries 130w
Visual arts 130w

Central banks
European monetary system 174w
West Germany 472w

Central Council of Physical Recreation 196w

Central Electricity Generating Board
Capital investment 606-7w
Coal prices 606w
Nuclear safeguards 467w
Plutonium 467w
Security 468w
South Killingholme 468w

Central Intelligence Agency
Northern Ireland 1076

Central-local government relations
Dwyfor District Council 286w

Central Scotland
Unemployment 149-50w

Cereals
Agricultural production 366w
Agricultural surpluses 69w
Common farm prices 69w
EC budget 366w
Land use 485-6w

Cerezo, President 19w

Certification
Death 10w, 11w

Cervical cancer
Death 459-60w
Medical treatments 349w, 460-1w
Northern Ireland 459-60w, 460-1w
Screening 206-7w, 209-10w, 380w
Wales 206-7w, 207-8w, 209-10w, 349w

Chalker, Mrs Lynda, Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs
Questions
Debts, Developing countries 17w
European Assembly, Political parties 18w
Food aid from EC, USSR 20w

Challenger tanks 636w
Defence procurement 636w

Change of use 195w, 396w
Farm buildings 195w

Channel tunnel 7-8, (05.06.86) 1195-1327
Against Channel Tunnel Schemes 353w
France 450w
Rabies 366w
Railway network 203w
Road traffic 8

Channel Tunnel Bill, 1985/86 7-9, 25w
House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 835-71
2R (05.06.86) 1101-94
Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1195-1327
Money res (05.06.86) 1328-32
Employment 9
Private Bills 8

Channon, Rt Hon Paul, Secretary of State for Trade & Industry
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 412-8
Questions
Competition 615-6w
Import substitution 250-1w
"Office of Fair Trading Annual Report, 1985" 558w

Chapelcross power station 179w, 466w, 883-4
Earthquakes 883-4
Ministerial responsibility 179w
Power station closures 883-4

Chapman, Mr Sydney
Questions
Africa, Development aid 16
Areas of outstanding natural beauty, Scotland 579w
Foreign tourists, USA 163-4
Lorries, Road traffic control 26w
National parks, Land use 567-8w
Personal taxation 560w
Road construction, Greater London 598w

Charing Cross Hospital
Hammersmith & Fulham 718

Charities
Finance Bill 1985/86 559-60w
Tax allowances 559-60w

Chelmsley Wood 518-9w
Police 518-9w

Cheltenham Borough Council
Rate support grants 138w

Chemical Defence Establishment 92w

Chemical weapons 527-8
Arms control treaties 414-5w
Defence 527
NATO 175w, 429w
Public order policing 15-6w
South East Asia 92w
Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 200
USA (20.05.86) 200, 428-9w
USSR 527

Chemical weapons deployment 526, 527

Cherry Hinton 29w
Level crossings 29w

Chess (23.05.86) 683-9
Sports Council 368w

Child Benefit 310w, 472-4w
Education of children at home 541-2w
Social security reform 616w
Students 379w

Child care
Criminal records 516-7w

Child relief 318w

Children
Diabetes 543w
Health physics 225-6w
Kidnapping 233w, 520, 521
Radiation hazards 315w
Safety belts 26w

Childrens hospitals
Cardiff 128w

Chile
Human rights 19-20w

China
Televisions 249w

Chope, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1333-5
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 73-4
Questions
Boarding schools, Cost per pupil 182w
Consumer protection, EC action 47-8w
M3, Road works 30w
Passports, Administrative delays 178-9w
Re-establishment centres 317-9w
Road transport workers, Crimes of violence 30w

Christchurch
Holmfield School 264w, 430w

Christmas
Drinking & driving 338-9w

Church Commissioners
Estate agents 177w, 627w
Property transfer 627w

Church property
Property transfer 177w

Cincinnati slaughter pens 133w

City action teams 558w
Newcastle-Gateshead 558w

Civic dignitaries
Belfast 1077

Civil defence
Information 259w
Nuclear accidents 254w, 256-7w, 523
Pollution monitoring 254-5w
West Cumberland 523

Civil liability
Road accidents 3w, 5w, 44w

Civil proceedings
Road accidents 4w

Civil rights
El Salvador 19w

Civil servants
Dwyfor District Council 128w
Harvey, Peter 126w, 520w

Civil servants secondment
Immigration officers 14-5w

Civil service
Pay settlements 244w
Youth training scheme 151w

Civil service manpower
Architects 224-6w
Computer privacy 609w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 63w, 623w, 721-2, 722-3
Government departments 609w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate 55w
Pollution control 179w
Radioactive waste disposal 80w
Social security reform 726
Specialist claims control units 63w, 623w
Town & country planning 224-6w
Wages Bill 1985-86 50w
Wales 37w

Civil service recruitment
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 721-2, 723

Clark, Dr David
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 460-4, 496-7
Questions
Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 252w
Hippies, Trespass 736
Okehampton bypass, Land pollution 371w
Okehampton bypass, River pollution 371-2w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 345

Clark, Dr Michael
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 489
Questions
Southend Hospital, Hospital closures 316w

Clark, Peter 123-4w, 428w
Courts martial 428w
Criminal proceedings 123-4w
Director of Public Prosecutions 123-4w

Clark, Sir William
Questions
Paige, Victor, Resignations 899-900

Clarke, Rt Hon Kenneth, Paymaster General
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper", Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 542-56
Economic policy (03.06.86) 771, 781-5
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL) 2R (22.05.86) 569-73, 574-82, 585, 588
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Codes of practice 144w
Area manpower boards, Public appointments 362w
Cash limits, Dept of Employment 422-3w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Employment 265-6w
Enterprise allowance scheme 162
Foreign tourists, USA 356w
Ministers domestic visits, Basildon 171
Redundancy 163
Redundancy, Shipbuilding 218w
Regional aid, Employment opportunities 172-3
Self-employed 173
Self-employed, Employment level 172
Small businesses 173
Trade competitiveness 162
Unemployed, Employment schemes 144-5w
Unemployment, 161-2, 174
Unemployment, European Communities 423-4w
Unemployment, Industrial training 162-3
Unemployment, Statistics 162
Wages councils, Disclosure of information 359w
Wages Inspectorate, Homeworking 359-60w
Wages Inspectorate, Underpayments 359-60w
Youth training scheme 167-8
Youth training scheme, Costs 166-7
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits rules 168
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 357-8w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 167

Clarke, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 124-6
South Africa (19.05.86) 22
Questions
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Contracts 15-6
Mental health community care, Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985-86 728

Clay, Mr Bob
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 418, 430
Questions
British Shipbuilders, Manpower 557-8w
British Steel Corporation, Manpower 409w
Employment, Northern region 420w
Housing improvement, Northern region 510w
Housing investment programmes, Northern region 505-9w
Intervention stocks, Costs 221w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 419w
National Coal Board, North East region 465w
Rate limitation, Northern region 612-3w
Rate support grant penalties, Sunderland 495w
Redundancy, Northern region 418-9w
Regional aid, Northern region 409w
Regional development grants, Northern region 409w, 558w
Skillcentres, Northern region 420w
Social security recipients, Northern region 526w
Unemployment, Building industry 417w
Unemployment, Costs 471-2w
Unemployment, Northern region 418w
Unemployment, Sunderland 420-1w
Vacancies, Northern region 419w
Vocational guidance, Northern region 419w

Cleaning services
Palace of Westminster 161w

Clelland, Mr David
Questions
Bus services, Local authorities 21w
Crime 513-4
Rate support grants 368w
Rate support grants, Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 194w
Unemployed, Employment schemes 145w

Clerk of the House 325-8w

Cleveland
Employers contributions 553-4w
Hospitals 165-6w

Clinical trials 39w
Family doctors 39w
Rhondda 39w

Closed circuit television
Electronic surveillance 7w

Closure of debate
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 826, 828

Clwyd, Mrs Ann
Debates etc
Chemical weapons, Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 200
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 909
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Swindon 20w
Business statement 535
Prime Minister official engagements 245w
SALT Agreements, Arms control treaties 20w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 92w
Water authorities, Privatisation 191w

Clwyd County Council 213w
Pulford bypass 213w

Coal fired power stations
Air pollution 194w, 344
Electricity generation 887
Sulphur dioxide 158w

Coal mining
Dismissal 174
Industrial disputes 174, 529-30, 737
Industrial tribunals 529-30
Nuclear power 885-6
Nuclear power stations 886-7
Torness power station 880
Unemployment benefits 48w, 363w
Youth employment 31w

Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 252w

Coal prices
Central Electricity Generating Board 606w
Electricity tariffs 593w
National Coal Board 606w

Coastal areas
Conservation 1-2w
Highlands of Scotland 1-2w
Sewage 80-1w

Coastal protection 220-1w

"Coastal Sewage Pollution Government Response" 130-1w

Cockeram, Mr Eric
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 195
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 919, 929, 930, 948

Cocks, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 320-1

Codes of practice
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service 144w
Immigration controls 14w

Cohen, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 75, 126
Questions
Data Protection Registrar, Treasury 609w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 193w
Nuclear accidents, Sellafield 252w

Coinage
Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference 434w
South Africa 434w

Colvin, Mr Michael
Questions
Aircraft, Hijacking 25w
Land drainage 220-1w
Natural radioactivity 492w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 370w
Radiation hazards, Radioactivity 370w
Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 9w
Waste disposal, Polychlorinated biphenyl 370w
Workfare, Employment schemes 150w

Combat Shotgun Society 517w
Paramilitary forces 517w

Commercial surrogacy 172w
Diaries 172w

Commissioner of Police of the Metropolis 517w

Committee on Safety of Medicines
Photosensitivity 223-4w

Common agricultural policy
Dollar 70w
EC budget 365-6w
European monetary system 219w
Expenditure 70w

Common farm prices 71-2w
Cereals 69w
European monetary system 219w
West Germany 72w

Commons Commissioners 596w

Commons Registration Act 1965 596w
Administrative delays 596w

Commonwealth
Overseas aid 15
South Africa 175-6, 176-7, 245w

Commonwealth Development Corporation
Annual reports 204w
Company accounts 204w

Commonwealth Games
Edinburgh 605w
Finance 605w

Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference
Coinage 434w

Community care
Mentally handicapped (21.05.86) 503-4
Speech therapists 541w

Community councils
Rates & rating 198w

Community health councils
Recruitment 528w

Community industry scheme 49w
Costs 49-50w
Local authorities 210w
Wales 210w

Community nurses
Psychiatric nurses 389w

Community programme
East London 215-6w, 216-7w
Northern region 415-6w
Research 356-7w

Community radio
BBC 335w
Competition 260w

Companies
Shipbuilding intervention fund 615w

Company accounts
Commonwealth Development Corporation 204w

Company finance
Westland helicopters 244w

Company investigations
United Kingdom Provident 183-5w

Company registration
VAT 471w

Compensation
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 630w
Iron & steel industry 409w
Marine pilots 341-2w
Museums & galleries 332w
Nuclear accidents 32w
Pilotage 341-2w
Prisoners of war 386w
Radioactive waste disposal 190-1w, 494w
Road accidents (04.06.86) 912-4
Terrorism 456-7w

Compensation (Defence) Act 1939 409w

Competition 615-6w
Air fares 27w
Airlines 24w
Bus services 3-4, 21w
Community radio 260w

Complaints
Immigration controls 13w, 14w

Complaints against police (22.05.86) 568
Greenock 896
Law officers 895-6
Port Glasgow 896
Scotland 895-6

Compulsorily detained mental patients
Police records 13w

Computer privacy
Civil service manpower 609w
Government departments 246w, 250w, 253w, 260w, 264w, 265-6w, 278w, 283w, 288w, 303w, 307w, 316w, 331w, 366w, 372w
Northern Ireland Office 301w

Computers
Boundary Commissions 332w

Computers in National Health Service
Family practitioner services 544w
Hospital waiting lists 376w

Concrete
Radioactive waste disposal 291-2w

Conditions of employment
London Residuary Body 84w

Confederation of British Industry
Pay settlements 470w

Conferences
Wilton Park 214-5w

Congenital abnormalities
German measles 313w

Conlan, Mr Bernard
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 860, 864

Conservation 568-9w
Coastal areas 1-2w
Expenditure 199-200w
Historic buildings 372w
International conferences 79-80w
National parks 614w
Overseas Development Administration Development Divisions 79-80w

Conservation areas
Scotland 579w

Conservative Party conference
Police 336w
Public order policing 368-9w

Construction
Diego Garcia 413-4w
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital 889-90
Hospitals 538w
Oil rigs 879-80
Pipelines 33w
Railway sidings 30w
Victoria School, Ballyhalbert 456w

Construction costs
Motorways 26-7w
Wheelchair housing 505w

Construction materials
Road construction 452w

Consultants
Radioactive waste disposal 77w

Consultation papers 577w

Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 194w
Rate support grants 194w

Consumer goods
Information 47-8w

Consumer protection
EC action 47-8w
Telecommunications Act 1984 363-4w

Consumers
Personal pensions 723

Container terminals
Falmouth harbour 247w

Contracts
British Rail Engineering 450w
Diego Garcia 413-4w, 430w
International Fund for Agricultural Development 15-6
Pharmacists 529w

Contracts for services
Local authorities (23.05.86) 703-8

Convalescence
Diabetes 544w

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities 892

Convictions
Agents provocateurs 11-2w
Magistrates courts 17w, 337w
Northern Ireland (03.06.86) 748-50
Social security abuse 262w, 604w

Venison 228-9w
Wales 11-2w

Conway, Mr Derek
Questions
Business statement 1089-90
Laybys, Catering 27-8w
Road construction, Direct labour departments 28w
Road signs, Catering 27w
Roads, Mobile shops 453w

Cook, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 475, 482, 484-6
Questions
Business statement 1095
Crime victims, Households 255w
Debts, Mortgages 628w
Employers contributions, Northern region 553-4w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive wastes 205-6w
Radiation hazards, Human organs 53-4w
Radiation hazards, Students 547w
Radioactivity, Nuclear safety 344
Supplementary benefits, Social security benefits rules 525-6w
Uranium, Imports 164w

Cook, Mr Robin
Questions
Driving offences, Edinburgh 228w

Coombs, Mr Simon
Questions
Consumer protection, Telecommunications Act 1984 363-4w
"Guide to Healthy Eating", Health Education Council 530w
Housing Defects Act 1984, Building repairs 292w
Parliamentary constituencies, Electorate 527w
Railway industry, Employment opportunities 5
Road construction, Cost benefit analysis 22w

Coopers Lane
Housing 425-6w

Co-ownership
Flats (20.05.86) 204-5

Co-ownership of Flats Bill 1985/86
1R (20.05.86) 204-5

Copyright
Departmental circulars 367-8w
Plastic arts 409-10w

Copyright Act 1956 409-10w

Coras Iompair Eireann 456-7w

Corbett, Mr Robin
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Erdington 722
Rate support grants, Local government finance 354-5

Corbyn, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 907-8, 911
Nuclear power stations, Safety (23.05.86) 659-65, 668
Paige, Victor, Ministerial statements (03.06.86) 793-4
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 466, 490-2
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 134, 143-4
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 285
Questions
Arrests, Salisbury plain 12w
Business statement 1092
Central Electricity Generating Board, Capital investment 606-7w
Coal fired power stations, Sulphur dioxide 158w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 607w
Euratom, Nuclear power 606w
Fast reactors, France 468w
Food, Radioactivity 221w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Electricity generation 158w
House of Commons library 483w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 468w
Nuclear fuels, Nuclear reactors 467w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 206w
Nuclear power stations, Electricity generation 158w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 157-8w
Nuclear power stations, Research 157-8w
Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 467w
Nuclear weapons tests, Nevada 429w
Plutonium, Exports 467-8w
Public order policing, Salisbury plain 12w
Radioactive fallout, Nuclear power stations 492w
Radioactivity, Radioisotopes 75w
Radioactivity, USA 493w
Strontium, Pollution 75w
Young workers scheme, Take-up of employment 144w

Cormack, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 182
Questions
Business statement 1091-2
Criminal records, Child care 516-7w
Ulster Unionists, Members attendance 1078

Cornwall
Government grants 741-2
Tin (23.05.86) 650-8, 740-1, 741-2, 743-4

Coroners
"Deaths in the Community" 11w
Foster care 10w
Perinatal mortality 11w

Corrie, Mr John
Questions
NHS administration, Scotland 156w

Cost benefit analysis
Road construction 22w

Cost effectiveness 221w, 551-2w
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service 551-2w
NHS administration 900

Cost per pupil
Boarding schools 182w
Secondary education 93-4w

Co-Star Ltd 884
Irvine Development Corporation 884

Couchman, Mr James
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 552-3
Questions
Business statement 539
Motorcycles, Driving tests 24-5w
"Radiochemical Inspectorate Annual Report" 569w

Council for National Academic Awards 271w

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education 123w, 271w
Teacher training 123w

Council house sales
Housing estates 345, 346-7
Leicester 347-8
Local authorities 211-2w
Local government revenue 347-8w
Private investment 350
Scotland 576w
Wales 211-2w, 347-8w

Council house waiting lists 193w

Council housing 503-4w
Capital investment 36w
Domestic violence 214w
Empty housing 81-2w
Homelessness 194w
Housing problems 82w
Local government expenditure 494-6w
Scotland 235w
Wales 36w, 129w

Council housing finance
Dwyfor District Council 129-30w
House purchase 129w

Council of Europe
Drug crimes 335w

Council of Ministers 571-4w

Councillors
Declarations of interest 81w

Countryside Commission for Scotland 281w

County courts
Merthyr Tydfil 3w, 246w
Registrars 3w

Courtney, Brian 428w
Armed forces discharges 428w

Courts martial
Clark, Peter 428w

Covenants 308w

Coventry
Slums 347
Social security recipients 525w

Cox, Mr Tom
Questions
Hypothermia, Elderly 55-6w
Racial attacks 254w
Training grants 143-4w
Unemployment, Men 624w

Craigen, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 941-2
Questions
Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations 33w
Information technology centres, Scotland 43-4w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 55w
Resettlement units, Glasgow 56w
Youth services, Scotland 283w
Youth services, Strathclyde Regional Council 283w

Cranborne, Viscount
Questions
Licensed premises, Dorset 518w
USSR, Art exhibitions 302w

Credit
VAT 471w

Crest Homes 83w
Ferndown 83w

Crime 513-4, 514-5
Alcoholism 515
Detection rates 513-5
Greater Manchester 256w
Habitual offenders 253-4w
Prison sentences 7w
Scotland 233w, 234w

Crime prevention
Lighting 255w
Security equipment 258w

Crime victims
Households 255w
Rape 259w
Scotland 234w
Sexual offences 235w

Crimes against property
Ainsworth Avenue 456w
Northern Ireland 456w

Crimes against the person
Army in Northern Ireland 43-4w, 301-2w
Northern Ireland 340w, 455w

Royal Ulster Constabulary 43-4w, 301-2w, 455w

Crimes of violence 513-4
Bus crews 30w
Crossbows 521
Domestic violence 255w
Firearms 521
Life imprisonment 8w
Prison staff 1079
Road transport workers 30w
Scotland 234w

Crimes outside national territories
Prosecutions 7w

Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 629w, 630w
Administrative delays 629w, 630w
Appeals 630w
Compensation 630w
Costs 630-1w

Criminal investigation
Kidnapping 233w

Criminal Justice Act 1982 894-5
Evidence 894-5

Criminal proceedings
Clark, Peter 123-4w
Suicide 521w

Criminal records
Child care 516-7w
Disclosure of information 516-7w

Criminal statistics
Social problems 253w

Criminology
Research finance 178w

Cross border cooperation in Ireland
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1077

Crossbows 336w
Crimes of violence 521
Import controls 522
Retail trade 523
Scotland 233-4w

Crouch, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 839, 845, 848, 856-8, 861
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86), 1111-2, 1114, 1117-8, 1119, 1120, 1121, 1123, 1125, 1127, 1130, 1157, 1165-8, 1169, 1171, 1172

Crown Agents
Overseas Development Administration 410w
Redundancy 410w

Crown courts
Acquittals 6w
Trials 246w

Crown Prosecution Service
Magistrates 6w
Magistrates courts 6w

Crown Suppliers 510-11w
Procurement 510w
Remploy 511w

Crowther, Mr Stan
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 464
Questions
Employment policy, Rotherham 170-1

Cruise missiles
Military exercises 12w
RAF Greenham Common 429-30w

Cumbria
Food contamination 488w, 552w
Pollution monitoring 75w

Cunningham, Dr John
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 499
Questions
Building land, Local government land 352-3
Lighting, Palace of Westminster 86w
Litter, Employment schemes 613w
Local government finance, Street cleaning 612w
London Residuary Body, Conditions of employment 84w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 354
Voluntary organisations, Local government expenditure 343

Curriculum
"Better Schools White Paper" 601-2w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 286w
Local education authorities 601-2w

Currie, Mrs Edwina
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 193
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1232-7
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1111, 1149
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 69-71
Questions
General Practice Finance Corporation, Finance 552w
NHS administration, Health service staff 720-1
Paige, Victor, Resignations 901

Custodial treatment
Fine defaulters 562-3w
Firearms 522

Customs Duties (ECSC) (No 2) (Amendment No 3) Order 1986 (22.05.86) 627

Customs Duties (ECSC) (Quota & Other Reliefs) (Amendment) Order 1986 (22.05.86) 626-7

Cutlery & Stainless Steel Flatware Industry (Scientific Research Levy) (Abolition) Order 1986 (21.05.86) 503

Cyprus (20.05.86) 334-40
Armed forces (22.05.86) 558-68
Espionage 431w
9 Signals Regiment 431w
Official secrets 124w, 428w, 429w, 431w
Security 428w

Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 558-68
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 558-68

Dacca University 328w
Educational qualifications 328w

Dairy farming
Government assistance to industry 72-3w
Production quotas 72-3w

Dalyell, Mr Tam
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 549
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 562
Parliamentary privilege (21.05.86) 359
Prime Minister, Private Members motions (03.06.86) 746
South Africa (19.05.86) 28
University finance (20.05.86) 183
Questions
Agricultural research, Scotland 282w
Business statement 540-1, 1090
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 8
Clark, Peter, Courts martial 428w
Clark, Peter, Criminal proceedings 123-4w
Courtney, Brian, Armed forces discharges 428w
Covenants 308w
Cyprus, Official secrets 431w
Cyprus, Security 428w
Falkland Islands, De Cuellar, Perez 245w
F111 aircraft, Libyan Arab Republic 731
International Atomic Energy Agency, Scientists 142w
Medical Research Council, Government grants 523w
Military exercises, USA 243w
9 Signal Regiment, Trials 124w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 193w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 33w, 137w, 354
Nuclear power, International cooperation 142w, 143w
Paige, Victor, Resignations 902
Railway sidings, Government grants 160w
Rainbow Warrior, Terrorism 245w
Rifle ranges, Holmfield School 264w, 430w
School buildings, Scotland 887
Sheehan, Timothy, Armed forces discharges 428w
West Germany, Bombings 414w
Westland helicopters, Company finance 244w

Damages
Passengers 5w
Road accidents 4-5w
Royal Commissions 5w

Dance halls
Bombings 414w

Darlington
Local government expenditure 341-2
Rates & rating 341-2

Data Protection Act 1984 246w, 250w, 253w, 260w, 264w, 265-6w, 278w, 283w, 288w, 301w, 303w, 307w, 316w, 331w, 366w, 372w, 609w

Data Protection Registrar 246w, 250w, 253w, 260w, 264w, 265-6w, 278w, 283w, 288w, 301w, 303w, 307w, 316w, 331w, 366w, 372w, 609w
Attorney-General 246w
Cabinet Office 331w
Dept of Education & Science 278w
Dept of Employment 265-6w
Dept of Energy 253w
Dept of Health & Social Security 316w
Dept of the Environment 372w
Dept of Trade & Industry 250w
Foreign & Commonwealth Office 303w
Home Office 260w
Information 260w
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 366w
Ministry of Defence 264w
Northern Ireland Office 301w
Scottish Office 283w
Treasury 307w, 609w
Welsh language 260w
Welsh Office 288w

Davies, Mr Ron
Questions
Council house waiting lists 193w
Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committees, Public participation in planning 890
Motorways, Death 24w
National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, Polytechnics 269w
Part-time education, Student grants 600-1w
Youth training scheme, Training grants 584-5w
Youth training scheme, Wales 599w

Davis, Mr Terry
Questions
Profit sharing, Finance Act 1978 190w
Share option scheme, Profit sharing 187-8w
Water supply, Norman Shaw building 86w

Day, Graham 47w
British Shipbuilders 47w
Pay 47w

Day care of children 184w

De Cuellar, Perez 245w
Falkland Islands 245w

Deakins, Mr Eric
Questions
Africa, Development aid 17

Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 165w
Chemical weapons, NATO 175w
Civil service, Pay settlements 244w
Conservation, International conferences 79-80w
Educational standards, Educational finance 109w
Employment level 146w
European monetary system, Central banks 174w
European monetary system, EC internal trade 86w
Health service staff, Pay 374w
Income, Taxation 469w
Industry, EC internal trade 162w
International Development Association, World Bank 3w
Mortgage relief 470w
National income 470w
Pay settlements, Private sector 470w
VAT, EC law 86-7w

Death
Age 374w
Cancer 529w
Certification 10w, 11w
Cervical cancer 459-60w
Hypothermia 55-6w
Motorways 24w
M25 26w
Road accidents 29w
Road traffic offences 228w
Terrorism 455-6w

Death registration
Perinatal mortality 530w

"Deaths in the Community" 11w
Coroners 11w

Debt collection
Licensing 408w
Office of Fair Trading 408w

Debts
Arms trade 17w
Developing countries 17w
Mortgages 628w

Declarations of interest 81w
Councillors 81w
Town & country planning 81w

Deer
Poaching 228-9w
Scotland 228-9w

Deer (Scotland) Act 1959 228-9w

Defective housing 83-4w, 134-6w, 136-7w, 195w, 292w
Basildon 195w
Building repairs 292w
Leicester City Council 134-6w
National House Building Council 136w
PRC Homes 136w
Repairs & maintenance 136-7w
Smith houses 83-4w, 136w

Defence
Air force bases 391w
Chemical weapons 527

Defence contracts
Ammunition 636w
Defence research 426w, 430w
Firearms 636w
Royal Fleet Auxiliary 426-7w
SA 80 gun 635-6w
Shipbreaking 391-2w
Shipbuilding 426-7w

Defence equipment
Army 176w
Exhibitions 176w

Defence expenditure
Oil prices 389-90w
Shipbreaking 392w

Defence land
Wales 236w

Defence procurement
Challenger tanks 636w
Firearms 236w
Guided weapons 636w
NH90 helicopters 264w
Royal fleet auxiliary 92w
Trebor Corporation 236w
Trident 178

Defence research
Defence contracts 426w, 430w

Delos Santos, Cenos
Life imprisonment 413w

Demolition
High rise flats 565w

Demonstrations
Electronic surveillance 7w, 8-9w
Northern Ireland 337-8w, 1074-5
Oxford Street 259w
Public order policing 259w

Denmark
Fishing vessels 626w

Dennison Point 141w

Dental Estimates Board 618-24w

Dept of Education & Science
Data Protection Registrar 278w
Departmental progress 475-8w
Educational finance 328w

Dept of Employment
Cash limits 422-3w
Data Protection Registrar 265-6w
Departmental leaflets 168

Dept of Energy
Data Protection Registrar 253w
Parking offences 369w, 469w

Dept of Health & Social Security
Administrative delays 169w
Data Protection Registrar 316w
Departmental circulars 527-8w
Members correspondence 169w, 320w
Social security reform 726

Dept of Health & Social Security local offices
Advisory services 311w
Civil service manpower 63w, 623w, 721-2, 722-3
Civil service recruitment 721-2, 723
Erdington 722
North West region (22.05.86) 628-35
Social security reform 722, 723

Dept of the Environment
Data Protection Registrar 372w
Housing improvement 202w
Parking offences 570w
Procurement 510w
Radioactive waste disposal 77w
Telephone charges 568w

Dept of Trade & Industry
Data Protection Registrar 250w

Departmental circulars
Catering 27-8w
Copyright 367-8w
Dept of Health & Social Security 527-8w
Fees & charges 527-8w
Special education 277w
Unemployment benefit offices 48w
Unemployment benefits 363w

Departmental coordination
Student grants 720

Departmental correspondence 80w
Radioactive waste disposal 80w

Departmental leaflets
Dept of Employment 168
Industrial training 168
Mortgage relief 169
Primary health care 167w

Departmental progress 475-8w
Dept of Education & Science 475-8w

Departmental publications
AIDS 275w
Unemployment 169

Departmental records 427w, 447w

Deportation
Military attaches 626w

Derelict land grants 295-6w
Government grants 295-6w
Hypermarkets 295-6w

"DES Circular 1/83" 277w

"DES Circular 8/83" 601-2w

Design
Hospitals 229w

Detection rates
Burglary 261-2w
Crime 513-5
Scotland 234w
Tower Hamlets 13w

Detention centres 631w
Prisoners 256w

Developing countries
Debts 17w
International Monetary Fund 174w
Africa 16, 17
Agriculture 16
Government grants to voluntary organisations 17-8

Dewar, Mr Donald
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering, Springburn (04.06.86) 1065, 1066
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 368, 371-8, 388
Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 155, 156
Questions
City action teams, Newcastle-Gateshead 558w
Economy, Scotland 882
Electricity generation, Scotland 886-7
Exceptional needs payments, Pensioners 314w
Fines enforcement officers, Scotland 578w
Parole, Prison rules 519w
Police, Scotland 396-7w, 578w
Rate rebates, Scotland 577-8w
Scottish Grand Committee, Scottish Assembly 894
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 314-5w

Diabetes
Artificial sweeteners 545w
Children 543w
Convalescence 544w
Diagnosis 543-4w
Disposable syringes 543w
Testing 543w

Diagnosis
Diabetes 543-4w

Diaries
Commercial surrogacy 172w

Dickens, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 321
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 144-5
Questions
Local enterprise agency grant scheme 173-4
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 1079

Diego Garcia
Construction 413-4w
Contracts 413-4w, 430w
John Mowlem 413w, 414w
USA 430w

Dietary allowances 553-4w, 555w

Diplomatic service education allowances
Costs 17-8w
School fees 414w

Direct labour departments
Liverpool City Council 495-6w
Road construction 28w

Director of Public Prosecutions
Clark, Peter 123-4w

Dir80/778/EEC 279w, 280w

Disability Alliance 66-7w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 66-7w

Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985/86 727
Mental health community care 727-8

Disaster relief
Africa 158-9w
Ethiopia 159w
VAT 179-80w

Disciplinary proceedings 18w, 528w
Costs 528w
NHS 528w
Trade union membership 18w

Disclosure of information
Criminal records 516-7w
Environment Select Committee 483w
Fletcher, Simon 595w
Hinkley Point B 32w
House of Commons Select Committees (20.05.86) 293-332
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 76w
London Docklands Development Corporation 514w, 569w
Magistrates 246w
Nuclear accidents 32w, 193w, 251-2w, 299-301w
Planning permission 569w
Pollution monitoring 192w, 201w
Privileges Select Committee 483w
"Programmes Analysis Review on Tourism" 584w
Radioactive waste disposal 197w
Radioactivity 353
Radiochemical Inspectorate 299-301w
Safety (21.05.86) 361-4
Tourism 584w
Wages councils 359w

Discretionary student grants
Expenditure 478-9w

Disease control 264-5w
Africa 264-5w
AIDS 264-5w

Diseases
Prescription charges exemptions 540w
Wales 350w

Dismissal
Coal mining 174

Disposable income
Domestic rates 38w, 83w

Disposable syringes 543w
Diabetes 543w

Distance learning 144w

District health authorities
Hospital waiting lists 534-6w
Hospitals 539-40w
Land acquisition 384w
NHS finance 62w

Dixon, Mr Don
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 817
Questions
Bus services, Transport Act 1985 21-2w
Offences against children 257w
Redundancy, Northern region 728
Unemployed, Employment schemes 144-5w

Dobson, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 904-5
Paige, Victor, Ministerial statements (03.06.86) 793
Questions
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 722
Dungeness B power station, Electricity generation 355-6w
Fleming Memorial Hospital, Newcastle Upon Tyne 57-8w
Hospitals, District health authorities 539-40w
NHS finance, Greater London 385-6w
NHS finance, Leicestershire 716
Nuclear power stations, Population 354w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 354w
Paige, Victor, Resignations 898-9
Potassium iodate 541w
Potassium iodate, Ionizing radiation 541w
Potassium iodate, Nuclear accidents 385w
Potassium iodate, Radiation hazards 541w
Primary health care 385w
SALT Agreements, USA 730
Social security benefits disqualification, Camden 68-9w
Surgical dressings, Limited list prescribing 541w

Dockyards
Gibraltar 204w
Privatisation 204w

Doctors list of patients 379-80w

Documents
Waldheim, Kurt 34w, 427w

"DOE Circular 15/84" 569w

Dog licences
Fees & charges 84w

"Dog Licensing Consultation Paper" 84w

Dollar
Common agricultural policy 70w

Domestic rates 565-6w
Disposable income 38w, 83w
Leeds 369w
Sheffield 369w
Wales 38w

Domestic violence
Council housing 214w
Crimes of violence 255w
Local authorities in Scotland 346w
Scotland 346w
Temporary accommodation 214w

Doncaster
Exceptional needs payments 376-8w
Social security benefits 377-8w

Dormand, Mr Jack
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 765-9
Questions
National Bike Week 25w

Dorrell, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 599, 602
University finance (20.05.86) 181
Questions
Youth training scheme 167-8

Dorset
Building land 83w
Licensed premises 518w
School population 182w
State education 277-8w

Douglas, Mr Dick
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 368
Questions
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital, Construction 889
Longannet power station, Smoke & chimney gases 579w

Douglas-Hamilton, Lord James
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 182

Dove House
Action for Community Employment 1080-1

Dover, Mr Den
Questions
Housing estates, Private investment 345-6

Drift nets 491-2w

Drigg
Radioactive waste disposal 76w, 512-3w

Drinking & driving
Christmas 338-9w
Northern Ireland 338-9w
Publicity 450-1w
Road accidents 339w

Driving licences
Fees & charges 23w

Driving offences
Edinburgh 228w

Driving tests
Administrative delays 340-2w
Fees & charges 10
Lorries 10
Motorcycles 24-5w, 340-2w

Drug abuse
Health education 278w
"Just Say No" 183w, 262w, 316-7w
Schools 278w

Drug crimes
Council of Europe 335w

Drug seizures 89w, 308-9w
Heathrow 89w

Drug side effects
Allergies 320-1w
Photosensitivity 223-4w, 320-1w
Wales 350w

Drugs
EC countries 169w
Expenditure 169w
Parallel imports 727w

Drunkenness
Habitual offenders 338w
Northern Ireland 338w
Police cautions 338w

du Cann, Rt Hon Sir Edward
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 421-5

Dual jobholding 215-6w

Dual key control 236w

Dubs, Mr Alfred
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1122, 1124, 1138-42, 1143
Health service staff, Housing (23.05.86) 690-3
Police manpower, Written answers (20.05.86) 202-3
Speakers rulings & statements, Written questions (20.05.86) 203
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Government grants 1080
Bus lanes, Greater London 9-10
Housing starts, Public sector housing 349
Illegal immigrants, Ports of entry 525
Indian subcontinent, Immigration controls 17w
Legal aid 12-3
Metropolitan police, Immigration controls 632w
News International, Public order policing 516
St James Hospital, Balham 724-5

Dumping
International Rayon & Synthetic Fibres Committee 185-6w
Synthetic fibres 186w

Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital 889
Construction 889-90
Hospital waiting lists 889-90

Dungeness B power station 355-6w
Electricity generation 355-6w

Dunn, Mr Bob, Under-Secretary of State for Education and Science
Debates etc
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1053-5, 1060

St Michaels School, Norwich (23.05.86) 711-4
Questions
AIDS, Departmental publications 275w
Boarding schools, Cost per pupil 182w
Brixton School, Plymouth, Government grants 109w
Education, School closures 95-6w
Educational standards, Educational finance 109w
"Just Say No", Video recordings 183w
Local education authorities, Capital investment 98-108w
Middle schools, Verwwood 479w
Part-time education, Student grants 600-1w
Pre-school education 184w
Private education, Educational finance 95-6w
Private education, Pupils 95w
School closures, Primary education 475w
School leaving 93-4w
School leaving certificates, Leicestershire 276-7w
School population, England 182w
Schools, Drug abuse 278w
Secondary education, Cost per pupil 93-4w
Special education, Departmental circulars 277w
Teachers, Resignations 96w

Dunwoody, Mrs Gwyneth
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 194
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 909
South Africa (19.05.86) 25
Questions
Africa, Bilateral aid 158-9w
Africa, Overseas aid 2w
British Rail Engineering 6
Firearms, Defence contracts 636w
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 741
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Africa 2-3w
International Monetary Fund, Developing countries 174w
Locomotives, Procurement 24w
Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children, Upper Waiting Hall 526w
SA 80 gun, Defence contracts 635-6w

Duty solicitors 363w
Metropolitan police 363w

Dwyfor District Council 40w, 211w, 286w, 350w
Administrative delays 40w
Central-local government relations 286w
Civil servants 128w
Council housing finance 129-30w
EC grants & loans 129-30w
House renovation grants 40w
Local government functions 211w
Local government maladministration 350w
Planning appeals 128-9w

Dykes, Mr Hugh
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 23-4

Eadie, Mr Alexander
Questions
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 529-30
Economy, Scotland 880
Government assistance to industry 732

Ealing
Greenbelt 191w
Housing 139w
Labour Party 139w
Restart programme 49w

Ear nose & throat 59w, 128w, 349w, 381w, 536w

Early warning systems
RAF Flyingdales 263-4w

Earnings limits 170-1w
National insurance contributions 170-1w

Earnings rules
Student grants 181-3w

Earthquakes
Chapelcross power station 883-4

East London 216w
Community programme 215-6w, 216-7w
Unemployed 215-6w, 216-7w

East Midlands
Unemployment 146w

East Sussex
Emergency planning 492w
Radiation hazards 492w
Radioisotopes 80w

Eastern Europe
Imports 306-7w, 581w, 609w
International cooperation 143w

Eastham, Mr Ken
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 550
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Contracts 450w
Rate support grants, Northern region 342
Unemployed, Employment schemes 145w

EC action
Cancer 321w
Consumer protection 47-8w
Fishing gear 367w, 491w
Parental leave 623w
Synthetic fibres 185-6w
Whiting 491w

EC Agricultural Council 487-8w
Monetary compensatory amounts 487-8w

EC budget 173w, 308w
Agriculture 88-9w
Cereals 366w
Common agricultural policy 365-6w
European Agricultural Guarantee & Guidance Fund 365-6w
Expenditure 172-3w
Own resources 89w
UK contributions 88w, 173-4w, 188-90w
UK repayments 189-90w

EC countries
Drugs 169w
Free ports 470w
Shipbuilding 162w, 163-4w

EC Draft 11118/83 623w

EC Draft 4676/86 (22.05.86) 568

EC external relations
South Africa 302w

EC grants & loans
Dwyfor District Council 129-30w
Greater Manchester 368w
Northern Ireland district councils 40-1w

EC Internal Market Council 571-4w

EC internal trade
Brewing industry 70-1w
European monetary system 86w
Industry 162w

EC law
Beaches 213w
Family credit 381-2w
Freight transport 22w
Product liability 44w
VAT 86-7w
Water pollution 279w

EC Research Council 571-4w

Economic growth
Scotland 880
Scottish Trades Union Congress 879

Economic models
Local government finance 74-5w

Economic policy
Families 1083-4
Opposition days (03.06.86) 751-92
Unemployment 1083

Economic sanctions
Krugerrands 364w
South Africa 302w

Economic situation
Scotland 578w
Scottish Trades Union Congress 577w

Economy
Scotland 879, 880-1, 882

Edinburgh
Commonwealth Games 605w
Driving offences 228w

Education
Local government expenditure 278w, 611w
Public expenditure 611w
School closures 95-6w
Vocational education 271w
Voluntary organisations 274w

Education & industry 272w, 275w

Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986
2R order read (04.06.86) 1053-60

Education (No. 2) Bill 1985/86
Ref to 2R Com (03.06.86) 747

Education of children at home
Child benefit 541-2w

Education Support Grants (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (21.05.86) 360

Educational finance
Barnsley College of Technology 121-2w, 123w
Dept of Education & Science 328w
Educational standards 109w
Further education 328w
Local education authorities 98-108w
Northern Ireland 453-4w
Private education 95-6w
Teacher training 271w
Technical & vocational education initiative 266-70w

Educational qualifications
Dacca University 328w
Teacher training 329w
Teachers 328w

Educational standards
Educational finance 109w
Teacher training 329w

Edwards, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Wales*
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Wales 35-6w
Civil service manpower, Wales 37w
Community industry scheme, Wales 210w
Data Protection Registrar, Welsh Office 288w
Domestic rates, Wales 38w
Dwyfor District Council, Central-local government relations 286w
Dwyfor District Council, Civil servants 128w
Dwyfor District Council, EC grants & loans 129-30w
Dwyfor District Council, Local government functions 211w
Dwyfor District Council, Local government maladministration 350w
Employment, Wales 37w
Enterprise Express, Wales 129-30w
Gas supply industry, Wales 35w
Industrial production, Wales 132w
Local government staff, Wales 37w
National parks, Wales 39-40w
Orion Electric, Manpower 131w
Private sector employment, Wales 37w
Public expenditure, Wales 38w
Radioactivity, Wales 39w
Salmon, Wales 213w
Shell UK Oil, Small businesses 213w
Tidal power, Cardiff 286w
Unemployment, Pwllheli 285-6w
Unemployment, Wales 212w
Welsh Office, Legislation 211w
Ynys Mon, Oil terminals 411w
Youth training scheme, Cardiff 289-90w

Eggar, Mr Tim, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
Cyprus (20.05.86) 337-40
Questions
Angola, Military aid 304w
Arms control 306w
Belize, Armed forces deployment 19w
Black, John, Homicide 143w
Chile, Human rights 19-20w
Council of Ministers 571-4w
Data Protection Registrar, Foreign & Commonwealth Office 303w
Delos Santos, Canos, Life imprisonment 413w
Diego Garcia, Contracts 413-4w, 430w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Costs 17-8w
Diplomatic service education allowances, School fees 414w
El Salvador, Armed forces training 19w
El Salvador, Civil rights 19w
European Assembly, Land acquisition 214w
European Assembly, Political parties 303w
Falkland Islands, Shipping 215w
Guatemala, Foreign policy 19w
Hong Kong, Housing 143w
Indian subcontinent, Immigration controls 17w
Iran, Arms exports 304w
Iran, Bahai sect 305w
Israel, Palestine Liberation Organisation 305w
Israel, Syrian Arab Republic 305w
Libyan Arab Republic, Armed conflict 304-5w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 302-3w
Morocco, Human rights 302w
Nicaragua, Military aid 305w
Ratushinskaya, Irina, Political prisoners 304w
Sharpeville Six, South Africa 571w
South Africa, Economic sanctions 302w
South Africa, Military attaches 626w
Sri Lanka, Armed forces training 303-4w
Syrian Arab Republic, Visas 327-8w
Terrorism, International cooperation 411-2w
US bases, Armed forces deployment 306w
USA, Foreign policy 412w
USSR, Art exhibitions 302w
West Germany, Bombings 414w
Western European Union 414w
Wilton Park, Conferences 214-5w

El Salvador
Armed forces training 19w
Civil rights 19w
Freedom of expression 19w

Elderly
Hypothermia 55-6w

Elections
Peak Park Joint Planning Board 348

Electorate
Parliamentary constituencies 527w

Electrical control equipment
Thames flood barrier 73w

Electricite de France 606-7w
Capital investment 606-7w

Electricity
Scotland 884-5

Electricity distribution
Rathlin Island 299w

Electricity generation 355w
Coal fired power stations 887
Dungeness B power station 355-6w
Fossil fuelled power stations 158w
Nuclear power 206w, 607w
Nuclear power stations 158w, 355-6w, 884-5, 887
Oil fired power stations 891
Scotland 885-6, 886-7, 891
Torness power station 892

Electricity tariffs
Coal prices 593w
Industrial energy prices 463-4w
Nuclear power 886

Electronic surveillance
Closed circuit television 7w
Demonstrations 7w, 8-9w
News International 8-9w

Emergency planning 31-2w, 252-3w, 254w, 256-7w, 290w, 375w, 391w, 392-4w, 426w, 467w, 492w
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment 391w
Broadcasting 392-4w
East Sussex 492w
Lines of Communication Agreement 426w
Magnox reactors 467w
National Radiological Protection Board 375w
Nuclear accidents 31-2w, 39w, 252-3w, 254w, 256-7w, 375w, 468w
Nuclear power stations 290w
Radioactivity 353-4
Royal ordnance factories 391w
Torness power station 891-2
West Cumberland 523

Emergency services 63w

Emery, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 300
Questions
Hippies, Trespass 1084

Employers contributions
Cleveland 553-4w
Northern region 553-4w

Employers statutory sick pay scheme
Costs 532w
Disability Alliance 66-7w
Public sector employment 608w

Employment
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 9
Glasgow 395w
Northern region 420w
Printing industry 406w
School leaving 230-2w
Sunderland 420w
Wales 37w, 212w

Employment discrimination (22.05.86) 569-626
Northern Ireland 1071

Employment level 146w
Printing industry 417w
Rotherham 169-70
Self-employed 172

Employment opportunities
Average earnings 90w
BSC (Industry) Ltd 613-4w
Litter 892-3
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 593w
New towns 882-3
Prisoners release 265w
Railway industry 5
Regional aid 172-3
Scotland 892-3
Suffolk 151w
Tourist industry 165

Employment policy 170
Handicapped workers 172
Rotherham 170-1

Employment schemes
Carrickfergus 458w
Costs 363w
Litter 613w
Unemployed 144-5w, 148w, 150w
USA 415w
Workfare 150w, 415w, 1083

Empty housing
Council housing 81-2w
Homelessness 349
Housing construction 350-1
Leicester 566-7w
Local authorities 81-2w

Energy costs 156-7w

Energy efficiency 156-7w

England
School population 182w

English language
Naturalisation 334-5w

Enterprise agencies 173-4

Enterprise allowance scheme 162
Northern region 415-6w

Enterprise Express 129-30w
Industry 129-30w
Wales 129-30w

Enterprise zones 193w
Glanford 369w
Government grants 369w

Entry clearances 334w
Administrative delays 17w

Environment protection
North Sea 281w, 282w
Rain forests 18
Scotland 281w

Environment Select Committee (20.05.86) 293-332
Disclosure of information 483w

"Environment Select Committee on Radioactive Waste" 77w, (20.05.86) 293-332

Environmental impact assessment 462w, 565-6w

Environmentally sensitive areas 281w
Scotland 281w

Epilepsy
Medical Research Council 479w
Research finance 479w

Equipment
Railway fares 450w

Erdington
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 722

Ernst & Whinney 552w
Residential care 552w

Espionage
Cyprus 431w

Estate agents
Church Commissioners 177w, 627w
Office of Fair Trading 410w

Estate Agents Act 1979 410w

Ethiopia
Disaster relief 159w

Ethnic minorities
Government grants to local authorities 260w
Hospital doctors 61-2w
Maternal mortality 375w
Police 519
Recruitment 519
Restart programme 360w, 361-2w

Euratom
Nuclear power 606w
Nuclear safety 606w
Sellafield 594-5w

Europe
Air fares 27w, 340w

European Agricultural Guarantee & Guidance Fund
EC budget 365-6w

European Assembly
Land acquisition 214w
Offices 214w
Political parties 18w, 303w, 308w, 561w

European Assembly budget 308w, 561w

European Communities
Unemployment 423-4w

European Court of Justice
Judgments 18w, 303w, 597-8w
Social security appeals 63-4w

European Economic Community
Food surpluses 551w
Overseas trade 162w
Vegetable oils 487w

European monetary system
Central banks 174w
Common agricultural policy 219w
Common farm prices 219w
EC internal trade 86w

European Regional Development Fund (21.05.86) 505-12
North West region 368w

European Road Safety Year 632w
Road traffic offences 632w

European Security Conference
Republic of Ireland 561w

Evans, Mr John
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 555-6
Economic policy (03.06.86) 782
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 300
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 573-4, 576, 578, 587, 592, 609-16, 622
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Hospitals 548-50w
Redundancy 163
Social security claims, Costs 172w
Unemployment, Mortgage relief 169
Unemployment, Social security abuse 51-2w
Unemployment benefits 65w
Unemployment benefits, Social security abuse 51w
Unemployment benefits, Underpayments 52w

Evans, Richard (20.05.86) 293-332

Evennett, Mr David
Questions
Lorries, Driving tests 10
NHS administration, Manpower 720
Prison Officers Association 258w
Rabies, Channel tunnel 366w

Evidence
Criminal Justice Act 1982 894-5
False imprisonment 178
Forensic science 11w, 178
Road accidents 5w
Scotland 894-5

Ewing, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 388, 402-4
Questions
Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh 605w

Ex gratia payments 559w
Termination of employment 559w

Exceptional circumstances additions
Handicapped 531w

Exceptional needs payments
Doncaster 376-8w
Pensioners 314w
Scotland 314w
Wath-on-Dearne 376-8w

Exchange rates
Foreign tourists 624w

Exhibitions
Age Concern 167w
Arms trade 238w
Army 238w
Defence equipment 176w

Explosions
Tipping of waste 497w

Export controls
North Sea oil 594w
USA 47w, 48w

Export promotion
British Rail Engineering 20w

Exports
Plutonium 467-8w

Extradition
USA 1069-72

Factory closures
British Rail (04.06.86) 1061-8
British Rail Engineering 21w
Carreras Rothmans 634w

Fairbairn, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 296, 300
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 797-805, 807
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 367, 369, 370, 378-82, 389, 392, 394, 400, 401
South Africa (19.05.86) 27-8
Questions
Complaints against police, Scotland 895-6
Electricity generation, Torness power station 892

Falkland Islands
De Cuellar, Perez 245w
Shipping 176w, 215w
Sovereignty 245w
Total exclusion zone 176w

Fallon, Mr Michael
Questions
British Steel Corporation, Government assistance to nationalised industries 406w, 616w
BSC (Industry) Ltd, Employment opportunities 613-4w
Community programme, Northern region 415-6w
Hospital patients, Northern Regional Health Authority 528-9w
Hospitals, Construction 538w
Job creation schemes, Northern region 416w
National Coal Board, Northern region 465w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Employment opportunities 593w
Non-domestic rates, Northern region 192w
Rates & rating, Darlington 341-2
Regional aid, Northern region 406w
Road construction, Northern region 451w
Small businesses, Northern region 415-6w
Take-up of employment, Northern region 415w
Urban programme, Northern region 496w
VAT, Northern region 471w

Falmouth harbour 247w
Container terminals 247w

False imprisonment
Evidence 178

Families
Economic policy 1083-4
Homelessness 194w
Social policy 352w

Family credit (20.05.86) 206-92, 522-3w, 616w
EC law 381-2w
Social security reform 522-3w

Family doctors
Clinical trials 39w
Manpower 379-80w
Pay 379w

"Family Law: Illegitimacy" 596w

Family planning
Government grants 311-2w

Family practitioner committees
Pharmacies 530w

Family practitioner services
Computers in National Health Service 544w
Expenditure 618-24w

Farm buildings
Change of use 195w

Farm incomes 133-4w

Farmers
West Germany 72w

Farms
Temporary employment 168-9

Farr, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1102, 1118
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1200, 1220-9, 1260, 1261, 1266, 1267-8, 1273, 1292-3
Questions
Firearms certificates 522-3
Police, Manpower 516
Road construction, Leicestershire 160-1w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 67-8w

Fast reactors
France 468w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 467w
Nuclear fuels 466w

Fatchett, Mr Derek
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 184
Questions
Further education, Capital investment 109-10w, 110-122w

Faulds, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1108, 1115, 1163, 1168-71, 1178, 1179, 1180
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1206, 1208, 1209, 1216, 1217, 1218, 1221-2, 1223-4, 1226-7
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 307, 315
Oral question time intervention (22.05.86) 530
South Africa (19.05.86) 26
Questions
Astronomy 275w
Railway fares, London Underground 27w
Royal Greenwich Observatory, Science & technology research 276w
Royal Greenwich Observatory, Science Research Council 275-6w
Underground railways, Railway fares 450w

Favell, Mr Tony
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 817, 823
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 971-2, 975
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 227, 243
Questions
Average earnings, Employment opportunities 90w
Business statement 1095
Hospital consultants 523w
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 168w
Political parties, Northern Ireland Assembly 633w
Prison hospitals, Hospital bed occupancy rates 520w
Prison hospitals, Surgery 520w
Prison staff, Prisoners 16w
Prison staff, Scotland 2w
Prisoners, Scotland 2w
Private education, Educational finance 95-6w
Private education, Pupils 95w
Rate support grants, Per capita costs 341
Student grants, Departmental co-ordination 720
Student grants, Social security benefits rules 96w

Featherstone Prison 179-80w
Prison discipline 179-80w

Fees & charges
Boarding schools 301w
Departmental circulars 527-8w
Dog licences 84w
Driving licences 23w
Driving tests 10
Further education 583w
Nursing homes 617w
Residential care 617w

Fenner, Mrs Peggy, *Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food*
Questions
Agriculture, Training 484w
Agriculture Bill 1985/86, Nature conservation 221w
Beef & veal, Animal housing 487w
Beekeeping, Government assistance to industry 69-70w, 223w
Beekeeping, Import controls 69-70w
Beekeeping, Sugar 70w, 223w
Beer, West Germany 70-1w, 134w, 222w
Cincinnati slaughter pens 133w
Farm incomes 133-4w
Fisheries, Training 483-4w
Food, Radioactivity 221w
Food inspection, Trichinella spiralis 72w
Horses, Markets 626w
Land drainage 220-1w
Livestock, Radioactivity 488w, 552w
Milk, Radioactivity 133w, 219-20w, 372w
Orchard replanting grants 70w
Pest infestation research laboratory, Slough 73w
Pesticides, Horticulture 221w
Rabies, Channel tunnel 366w
Slaughterhouses 133w
Thames flood barrier, Electrical control equipment 73w

Ferndown
Crest Homes 83w

Field, Mr Frank
Questions
Crown Suppliers 510-11w
Crown Suppliers, Procurement 510w
Crown Suppliers, Remploy 511w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 543w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 169-70w
Multifibre arrangement, Bangladesh 405w
Rent rebates 513-4w
Supplementary benefits, Social security benefits rates 540w
Unemployment, Housing benefits 373-4w

Fields, Mr Terry
Debates etc
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, North West region (22.05.86) 628-32, 633

Fife
Radioactivity 346w

Filibuster
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86) 1195

Finance Act 1978 190w
Profit sharing 190w

Finance Act 1980 187-8w
Share option scheme 187-8w

Finance Act 1984 188w

Finance Bill 1985/86
Charities 559-60w

Financial services 634w
Northern Ireland 634w
Republic of Ireland 634w

Fine defaulters
Custodial treatment 562-3w
Prisoners 9w

Fines
Government departments 570-1w
Parking offences 369w

Fines enforcement officers 578w
Scotland 578w

Finsberg, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 50-1

Fire services
Greater London 16w, 516w
Performance indicators 332w
Statistics 333w
West Yorkshire 332-3w

Firearms 517w
Crimes of violence 521
Custodial treatment 522
Defence contracts 636w
Defence procurement 236w
Import controls 407w
Retail trade 523
Scotland 233-4w
South Africa 558w

Firearms Act 1968 517w

Firearms Act 1982 517w

Firearms Certificates 517w, 522-3
Sentencing 522

Fires
Hampton Court 356
Multiple occupation 283w
Statistics 333w
West Yorkshire 332-3w
Windscale 290-1w

Fisheries
Training 483-4w

Fishing gear
EC action 367w, 491w
Whiting 367w

Fishing vessels
Denmark 626w
France 626w
Legislation 610-1w
Nylon monofilament gill nets 605w
Scotland 605w
Spain 610w

Flannery, Mr Martin
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 472-3
South Africa (19.05.86) 27
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1077-8
Road & rail transport comparisons, Air pollution 2
Unemployment 161-2

Flats
Co-ownership (20.05.86) 204-5

Fleming Memorial Hospital 57-8w
Hospital closures 57-8w
Newcastle upon Tyne 57-8w

Fletcher, Mr Alex
Debates etc
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 801
Questions
Electricity generation, Scotland 885

Fletcher, Simon
Disclosure of information 595w
Supreme Court Act 1981 595w

Fontainebleau Summit 88-9w
UK contributions to EC budget 88-9w

Food
Radioactivity 221w

Food aid from EC
USSR 20w

Food contamination
Beer 71w
Cumbria 488w, 552w
Radioactivity 200w
Strontium 75w

Food from Britain 365w

Food imports
Radioactivity 221w

Food inspection
Trichinella spiralis 72w
Veterinary service 72w

Food standards
Government laboratories 73w

Food subsidies
Milk 488-91w
School milk 71w, 488-91w

Food surpluses
European Economic Community 551w

Foot, Rt Hon Michael
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (05.06.86) 1097-8
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 301-4
Questions
Business statement 1092-3

Football
Hooliganism 564-5w
Action for Community Employment 1080
IRA 1069-70
USA 1080

Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Data Protection Registrar 303w

Foreign companies in UK
Car industry 405w

Foreign policy
Guatemala 19w
USA 412w

Foreign tourists 169
Exchange rates 624w
Immigration controls 524, 525, 564w
USA 151w, 163-4, 165, 356w, 421-2w, 624w, 625w

Forensic science
Evidence 11w, 178

Forestry Commission
Scotland 890-1

Forestry Commission regional advisory committees 890
Public participation in planning 890

Forman, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 186
Questions
Business statement 1092
Development aid, Government grants to voluntary organisations 17-8
Police relations with public 519
Unemployment, Industrial training 162-3

Forsyth, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Pilkington Insulation, Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 202
Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 152-4, 155
University finance (20.05.86) 185
Questions
Child benefit, Education of children at home 541-2w
Electricity tariffs, Nuclear power 886
Lothian Regional Council, Road construction 881
Royal Scottish National Hospital, Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland 282-3w
Scottish Assembly, Property transfer 894
Unemployment, Central Scotland 149-50w

Forth, Mr Eric
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 553
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1198-1325 (Passim)
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 569, 578, 584, 586
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 72-3

South Africa (19.05.86) 22
Questions
Animal products, Wastes 557w
Business statement 540, 1095-6
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 722
New towns development corporations, Scotland 882-3

Fossil fuelled power stations
Electricity generation 158w
Research 157-8w

Foster care
Coroners 10w

Foulkes, Mr George
Debates etc
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 795, 797, 798, 800, 801, 802
Oral questions, Calling of Members (04.06.86) 897
Questions
Belize, Armed forces deployment 19w
Business statement 1089
Chapelcross power station, Earthquakes 883-4
Chile, Human rights 19-20w
Complaints against police, Scotland 895
El Salvador, Armed forces training 19w
El Salvador, Civil rights 19w
Guatemala, Foreign policy 19w
Health hazards, Radioactivity 373w
Imports, Eastern Europe 609w
Milk, Radioactivity 133w, 372w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 353-4w
Pollution monitoring, Cumbria 75w
Pollution monitoring, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 76w
Pollution monitoring, Radioactivity 75w
Ports, Scotland 306-7w, 581w
Radiation hazards, Scotland 225-6w
Radioactivity, Scotland 225w, 226-7w, 227-8w
Windscale, Fires 290-1w

Fowler, Rt Hon Norman, *Secretary of State for Social Services*
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 88-90, 147-50
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 263-6
Questions
Charing Cross Hospital, Hammersmith & Fulham 718
Dept of Health & Social Security, Members correspondence 169w
Members correspondence, Dept of Health & Social Security 320w
NHS, Housing 717-8
NHS, Managers 319-20w
NHS finance, National income 726-7
Paige, Victor, Resignations 898-9, 899-900, 900-1, 902
Personal pensions 725
Persnal pensions, Hippies 725

France
Channel tunnel 450w
Fast reactors 468w
Fishing vessels 626w
Nuclear accidents 31-2w, 252-3w
Nuclear power 607w
Pharmacies 530w
Pressurised water reactors 253w

Frankland Prison (03.06.86) 872-8

Franks, Mr Cecil
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1195, 1201, 1267, 1270, 1277
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1336
Questions
National parks, Lake District 348-9
Wallenberg, Raoul, Political prisoners 625-6w

Fraser, Mr John
Questions
British Home for Incurables Hospital, Supplementary benefits 526w
High rise flats, Rochester upon Medway District Council 565w
Housing estates, Council house sales 346-7
Northeye Prison, Prison visitors 519-20w

Fraser, Mr Peter, *Solicitor-General for Scotland*
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 390, 405-8
Questions
Complaints against police, Greenock 896
Complaints against police, Scotland 895-6
Evidence, Scotland 894-5
Official secrets, Scotland 581w
Procurators fiscal, Kilmarnock 896
Scottish Assembly, Property transfer 894
Scottish Assembly, Royal High School 893-4
Scottish Grand Committee, Scottish Assembly 894

Fraud
Prosecutions 515-6w

Free ports
Cars 90w, 310w
EC countries 470w
Tax allowances 470w

Free school meals
Costs 434w
Expenditure 434w

Freedom of expression
El Salvador 19w

Freeman, Mr Roger, *Under-Secretary of State for the Armed Forces (From 21 May)*
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 36-7, 78, 80-2
Questions
Clark, Peter, Courts martial 428w
Courtney, Brian, Armed forces discharges 428w
Cyprus, Official secrets 429w
Defence research, Defence contracts 426w, 430w
Ministers visits abroad, Turkey 430w
Nuclear weapons tests, Nevada 429w
Profit sharing 172w
Rifle ranges, Holmfield School 264w, 430w
Sheehan, Timothy, Armed forces discharges 428w
Waldheim, Kurt, Documents 427w
Waldheim, Kurt, War crimes 427w
Water charges, Water meters 357-8

Freeson, Rt Hon Reg
Questions
Building repairs, Public expenditure 350
Zahoor, Karman, Immigration controls 564w

Freight transport
EC law 22w

Freud, Mr Clement
Debates etc
Chess (23.05.86) 685
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1057, 1058-60
Questions
AIDS, Departmental publications 275w
Education, Voluntary organisations 274w
Higher education, Student numbers 272-4w
Overseas aid 3w
Schools, Industry 272w
Special education, Departmental circulars 277w
Students, Social security benefits 525w
Teacher training, Educational finance 271w
Teacher training, Inner city areas 271-2w
Teacher training, Mature students 271w
Technical & vocational education initiative 218w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 266-70w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Special educational needs 217w
Technical & vocational educational initiative, Women 217-8w
Vocational education, Higher education admission 272w
Vocational training, Professional qualifications 271w

Frogs legs 484w
House of Commons catering 484w

Fuel aid
Supplementary benefits 376w

Fuels
UK trade with EC 45-6w

Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 263w

Furniture
Hazardous materials 363w

Further education
Capital investment 109-10w, 110-22w
Educational finance 328w
Fees & charges 583w
Manpower Services Commission 266w
Rate support grants 266w
Restart programme 583w
Staff-student ratios 454w
Youth training scheme 339-40w

Further education colleges 41-2w, 339-40w
Northern Ireland 41-2w

Further education teachers
Northern Ireland 42w, 453-4w
Pay 41-2w

Further Education Unit 95w
Costs 95w

F111 aircraft 730, 731, 1086
Bombings 1086
Libyan Arab Republic 730, 731

Gale, Mr Roger
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 553
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 855-6
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1120, 1133, 1134-8
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1196, 1219, 1264-5, 1279, 1299-1300, 1322
Questions
Business statement 538
Police, Manpower 515

Galley, Mr Roy
Debates etc
Mulcahy, Keith, Tranquillisers (03.06.86) 872-4
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 47-8, 68-9, 120-2
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 272-4
Questions
Fire services, Performance indicators 332w
Fire services, Statistics 333w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 332-3w
Heating allowances, Expenditure 376w
NHS finance, Training 545w
Pay beds, Costs 545-6w

Garages
Prisons 9-10w, 127w, 128w

Gardner, Sir Edward
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 328-9

Garrett, Mr Ted
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 446-7
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders, Standing Order No 10 applications (03.06.86) 745
Questions
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 177-8

Gas accidents
Glasgow 266w

Gas fuels
British Gas Corporation 252w

Gas showrooms 35w

Gas supply industry
Manpower 35-6w
Privatisation 35w
Wales 35w

Gas-cooled reactors
Nuclear fuels reprocessing 206w
Radioactive waste disposal 206w

Gas tariffs
Prices 593w

Geevor tin mine (23.05.86) 650-8, 740
Government assistance to industry 740-1, 742, 743-4

General Certificate of Secondary Education 475w
Bilingual education 599w
Curriculum 286w
Wales 599w
Welsh language 286w

General Electric Company (20.05.86) 333, (23.05.86) 637
Public petitions (23.05.86) 637

General improvement areas
Kilmarnock 888-9

General Motors 249-50w

General Practice Finance Corporation
Finance 552w

Geology
Radioactive waste disposal 511-2w

George, Mr Bruce
Questions
Terrorism 522w

Geriatrics
Health services finance 230w
Hospital waiting lists 534w
Inner city areas 544w
Leicestershire 534w, 715
Scotland 230w

German measles 312w, 313w
Congenital abnormalities 313w
Screening 313w
Vaccination 312w, 313w

Gibraltar
Dockyards 204w

Gilmour, Rt Hon Sir Ian
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 299-301
Questions
Private investment 89-90w
Private investment, Private sector housing 90w
UK trade with EC, Manufactured goods 45-6w

Glanford
Enterprise zones 369w
Regional aid 364w

Glasgow
Employment 395w
Gas accidents 266w
Resettlement units 56w
Unemployment 395w

Gloucestershire County Council
Rate support grants 138w, 342

Glyn, Dr Alan
Questions
Parking, Handicapped drivers 202w
Stubbings bypass, Public inquiries 452w
Water authorities, Privatisation 84w

Godman, Dr Norman A
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 565
Economic policy (03.06.86) 766-7, 769, 776-7
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 802
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 416
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 119, 126-7
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 274-6
Questions
Agriculture, Training 484w
Battered wives, Scotland 346w
British Shipbuilders, Redundancy 186-7w
Burglary, Scotland 603-4w
Child benefit, Social security reform 616w
Complaints against police, Greenock 896
Crime, Scotland 233w
Crimes of violence, Scotland 234w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 63w, 623w
Detection rates, Scotland 234w
Firearms, Scotland 233-4w
Fisheries, Training 483-4w
Geriatrics, Scotland 230w
Haemophilia, Scottish health boards 604w
Hospital beds, Strathclyde 342w
Hospitals, Scotland 229w
Housing, Scotland 234-5w
Housing starts, Scotland 235w
Immersion suits, Merchant ships 203w
Income support scheme, Social security reform 382-3w
Kidnapping, Children 233w, 520
Land acquisition, Scottish health boards 603w
Personal social services, Scotland 604-5w
Police, Scotland 231-3w
Radioactivity, Scotland 346w, 398w
Rape, Scotland 235w
Redundancy, Shipbuilding 218w
Residential care, Scotland 603w
School leaving, Scotland 230-2w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 65w, 168w
Social security abuse, Scotland 604w
Unemployment, Greenock 395-6w

Goodhart, Sir Philip
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 324-5

Goodlad, Mr Alastair, Under-Secretary of State for Energy
Debates etc
Nuclear power stations, Safety (23.05.86) 665-70
Questions
Advisory Committee on the Safety of Nuclear Installations 33w
Berkeley power station, Nuclear safety 354-5w
Central Electricity Generating Board, Capital investment 606-7w
Coal fired power stations, Sulphur dioxide 158w
Dungeness B power station, Electricity generation 355-6w
Electricity generation, Nuclear power 607w
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 463-4w
Euratom, Nuclear power 606w
Fast reactors, France 468w
Fossil fuelled power stations, Electricity generation 158w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Expenditure 464w
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 464-5w
Magnox reactors 157w
Magnox reactors, Emergency planning 467w
Magnox reactors, Nuclear safety 157w
Magnox reactors, Power station closures 157w
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 251-2w
Nuclear accidents, France 31-2w, 252-3w
Nuclear accidents, Hinkley Point B 32w
Nuclear accidents, Sellafield 252w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 468w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Fast reactors 467w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Gas-cooled reactors 206w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 466w, 595w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Windscale 465-6w
Nuclear fuels, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 466w
Nuclear fuels, Nuclear reactors 467w
Nuclear fuels, Nuclear safeguards 466w
Nuclear power, Electricity generation 206w
"Nuclear Power in Western Europe" 469w
Nuclear power stations, Calder Hall 466w
Nuclear power stations, Electricity generation 158w
Nuclear power stations, Population 354w
Nuclear power stations, Power station closures 157-8w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive wastes 205-6w
Nuclear power stations, Research 157-8w
Nuclear power stations, South Killingholme 513w
Nuclear reactors, Nuclear safety 31w, 353-4w
Nuclear safeguards, Sellafield 467w
Plutonium, Central Electricity Generating Board 467w
Plutonium, Exports 467-8w
Plutonium, Nuclear safeguards 466-7w
Plutonium, Nuclear weapons 31w
Pressurised water reactors, France 253w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Capital investment 592-3w

Gorst, Mr John
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 298, 308

Gould, Mr Bryan
Questions
Crime, Detection rates 513-5
EC budget, UK contributions 173-4w, 189-90w
News International, Police 336w

Government achievements 509-10w
Heritage 509-10w

Government actuary 183-5w

Government assistance
Housing finance 431-2w
Railway industry 7
Sport Aid 15

Government assistance to industry 732
Beekeeping 69-70w, 223w
Dairy farming 72-3w
Geevor tin mine 740-1, 742, 743-4
Rio Tinto Zinc 742
Shipbuilding 177-8, 728
Tin 742
Tourist industry 422w

Government assistance to nationalised industries
British Shipbuilders 46w, 186-7w, 406w, 616w
British Steel Corporation 406w, 616w
Harland & Wolff 44w
National Coal Board 465w

Government Communications Headquarters
Trade union membership 18w

Government contracts
Annan bypass 577w
British Shipbuilders 45w

Government departments
Architects 480w
Civil service manpower 609w
Computer privacy 246w, 250w, 253w, 260w, 264w, 265-6w, 278w, 283w, 288w, 303w, 307w, 316w, 331w, 366w, 372w
Fines 570-1w
Parking offences 514w, 570-1w
Telex 568w

Town & country planning 480w

Government grants
Aberdeen 574w
Action for Community Employment 1080
Alcoholism 618w
Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust 315w
Brixton School, Plymouth 109w
Cornwall 741-2
Derelict land grants 295-6w
Enterprise zones 369w
Family planning 311-2w
Haemophilia 288w, 604w
Kirkby Town Football Club 80w
Lionise 80w
London marathon 196w
Medical Research Council 523w
National Rubella Council 312w
Railway sidings 160w
Rathlin Island 299-301w
Road construction 2
Shell UK Oil 411w
Urban housing renewal unit 614w
Welsh Chess Union 286w

Government grants to local authorities
Ethnic minorities 260w
Housing benefits 168w
Housing investment programmes 134-6w

Government grants to voluntary organisations
Development aid 17-8
Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 397-406w

Government laboratories
Food standards 73w

Gow, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1207, 1208, 1210, 1212, 1213, 1215, 1321, 1322
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland government 1073
Building land, Local government land 352
Hippies, Police powers 736-7
National Bus Company, Privatisation 4

"Grange Hill" 183w, 262w, 816-7w

Grant, Sir Anthony
Questions
Western European Union 414w

Great Yarmouth Outer Harbour Bill 1985/86
3R* (22.05.86) 513

Greater London
Ambulance services 385w, 538-9w
Bus lanes 9-10
Fire services 16w, 516w
Greenbelt 191w
NHS finance 385-6w
Railway travel 9
Road construction 598w
Teaching hospitals 66w, 374w
Underground railways 22w
Youth employment 144w

Greater London Council
Local government reform 202w, (23.05.86) 638-48
London Residuary Body 202w
Road traffic control 24w
Voluntary organisations 342-3

Greater Manchester
Crime 256w
EC grants & loans 368w
Social security recipients 57-8w

Greek Street 571w
Parking offences 405w, 571w

Green Lane estate 140-1w

Greenbelt
Ealing 191w
Greater London 191w
Land use 567-8w
Planning permission 195w

Greenock
Complaints against police 896
Unemployment 395-6w

Greenpeace
Radioactive waste disposal 493w

Greenway, Mr Harry
Debates etc
Educational finance, Ministerial statements (21.05.86) 360
South Africa (19.05.86) 26
University finance (20.05.86) 183
Questions
Business statement 537-8
Greenbelt, Greater London 191w
Horses, Markets 626w, 632w
Immigration controls, Racial discrimination 1082
Kidnapping, Insurance 255w
Knight, Derry Mainwaring, Prosecutions 12
Local government staff, Pay 370w
Market research, Privacy 178w
Mental health community care, Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985/86 727
Paedophilia, Research 127w
Prime Minister official engagements 128w, 245w, 449w
Research finance, Criminology 178w
Sadlers Wells Theatre, Arts finance 628w
Sex education, Primary education 480w

Gregory, Mr Conal
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 192-3
Economic policy (03.06.86) 772
Questions
Tourism, Northern Ireland 632w

Griffiths, Sir Eldon
Questions
Hippies, Police powers 738

Griffiths, Mr Peter
Debates etc
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1058

Grosvenor Square 7w

Grylls, Mr Michael
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 546
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 306

Guaranteed prices 364-5w
Wool 364-5w

Guatemala
Foreign policy 19w

"Guide to Healthy Eating" 530w
Health Education Council 530w

Guided weapons
Defence procurement 636w

Guillotine (19.05.86) 29
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 74

Gull Island Protection Bill (HL) 1985/86
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Gummer, Rt Hon John Selwyn, Minister of State for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food
Questions
Cereals, Agricultural production 366w
Cereals, Common farm prices 69w
Cereals, Land use 485-6w
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 365-6w
Common farm prices 71-2w
Common farm prices, European monetary system 219w
Common farm prices, West Germany 72w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 72-3w
Fisheries, Training 483w
Fishing gear, EC action 491w
Food subsidies, School milk 71w, 488-91w
Food surpluses, European Economic Community 551w
Hill livestock allowances 72w
Hill livestock allowances, Administrative delays 488w
Milk, Production quotas 71w
Milk & milk products, New Zealand 365w
North East coast drift fishery, Manpower 491-2w
Sheep premiums, Agricultural subsidies 486w
Sheep premiums, Meat & Livestock Commission 486w
Sugar beet, Agricultural production 485w
Vegetable oils, Agricultural production 487w
Whiting, Fishing gear 367w

Gut room contracts 557w

Gwynedd
Health services 286-7w
NHS 286-7w
Nuclear power stations 39w, 290w
Secondary education 287-8w

Gynaecology
Bassetlaw Health Authority 63w

Habitual offenders
Crime 253-4w
Drunkenness 338w

Haemophilia
Government grants 288w, 604w
Scottish health boards 604w
Wales 288w

Hamilton, Mr James
Questions
Economy, Scotland 879
Unemployment, Scotland 528

Hamilton, Mr Neil
Questions
Housing estates, Council house sales 346
National Bus Company, Privatisation 203-4w
Small businesses, Northern Ireland 633w

Hamilton, Mr Willie W
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 389-93, 398
Questions
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 25w
Crimes of violence, Domestic violence 255w
Foreign tourists, USA 164
NHS, Housing 717
Pollution, Nuclear accidents 192-3w
Radioactivity, Scotland 576w
Torness power station, Emergency planning 891-2
Tourist industry, Manpower 145w

Hammersmith & Fulham
Charing Cross Hospital 718

Hampshire
Hippies 739

Hampson, Dr Keith
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 566
Questions
Wilton Park, Conferences 214-5w

Hampton Court 356
Building repairs 356
Fires 356

Hancock, Mr Michael
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 184
Questions
Teacher training, Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education 123w

Handicapped
Exceptional circumstances additions 531w
Newham 555w
Rate rebates 577-8w
Slough 555w

Handicapped drivers
Parking 202w

Handicapped workers
Employment policy 172
Sheltered employment 172
Unemployment 171-2

Hanley, Mr Jeremy
Debates etc
Chess (23.05.86) 683-5
Questions
Competition 615-6w
Council of Ministers 571-4w
South Africa, Krugerrands 327w
Syrian Arab Republic, Visas 327-8w

Hannam, Mr John
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 63-5, 114-6
Questions
Board & lodging charges, Residential care 164w
Coal prices, Central Electricity Generating Board 606w
Mobility allowance, Blind 717
Registered homes, Board & lodging charges 223w

Hardy, Mr Peter
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Gas fuels 252w
Employment level, Rotherham 169-70
National Coal Board, Youth employment 31w
Small businesses 173

Hares, Phillip 46w
British Shipbuilders 46w
Public appointments 46w

Hargreaves, Mr Ken
Questions
Family planning, Government grants 311-2w
Urban housing renewal unit, Blackburn Borough Council 140-1w
Urban housing renewal unit, Hyndburn 367-8w

Harland & Wolff 44w, 457-8w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 44w
PA Management Consultants 457-8w

Harman, Ms Harriet
Questions
Ambulance services, Bethlem Royal Hospital 315w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 56w

Harris, Mr David
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1229-32, 1309
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money res (05.06.86) 1331-2
Environment Select Committee Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 319-20
Tin, Cornwall (23.05.86) 650-2, 655
Questions
Food from Britain 365w
Foreign tourists, USA 165
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 740

Harrison, Rt Hon Walter
Questions
Palace of Westminster, Cleaning services 161w
Palace of Westminster, Sanitation 198w

Harrogate Health Authority 542w

Hart, Rt Hon Dame Judith
Questions
Tanzania, Overseas aid 2w

Harvard University 92w

Harvey, Peter 126w, 520w
Civil servants 126w, 520w
Home Office 126w, 520w

Harvey, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 284-5

Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill 1985/86
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (22.05.86) 513
2R (03.06.86) 795-813

Hattersley, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 751-6, 760
Questions
SALT Agreements, USA 729

Havers, Rt Hon Sir Michael, Attorney-General
Questions
Barristers, Pay 6w
Clark, Peter, Criminal proceedings 123-4w
County courts, Merthyr Tydfil 246w
Crown courts, Acquittals 6w
Crown courts, Trials 246w
Cyprus, Official secrets 431w
Data Protection Registrar, Attorney-General 246w
Debts, Mortgages 628w
Duty solicitors, Metropolitan police 363w
Fletcher, Simon, Supreme Court Act 1981 595w
Terrorism, Capital punishment 14
Terrorism, Treason 14-5
Knight, Derry Mainwaring, Prosecutions 12
Legal aid 12
Legitimacy, Law reform 596w
Magistrates 6w
Magistrates, Disclosure of information 246w
Magistrates, Swindon 431w
Magistrates courts, Acquittals 17w
9 Signal Regiment, Trials 124w
Oaths 6-7w
Prosecutions, Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983 3w
Road accidents, Civil liability 3w
Road accidents, Civil proceedings 4w
Road accidents, Damages 4-5w
Road accidents, Evidence 5w
Road accidents, Negligence 4w, 5w
Solicitors, Pay 6w

Hawkins, Mr Christopher
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 937, 940, 941, 950, 969, 972-4, 976-8, 981

Hayes, Mr Jerry
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1077
Business statement 537, 1096
Police, Labour Party 520

Hayhoe, Rt Hon Barney, Minister of State for Health
Debates etc
Health service staff, Housing (23.05.86) 693-6
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry, Ministerial statements (04.06.86) 903-11
Questions
AIDS, Health education 527w
Ambulance services, Bethlem Royal Hospital 315w
Ambulance services, Greater London 385w
Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust, Government grants 315w
Breast cancer, Screening 725-6
Cancer, Hospital closures 545w
Cancer, Medical research 224w, 321w
Cancer, Medical treatments 383-4w
Cervical cancer, Screening 380w
Commercial surrogacy, Diaries 172w
Community nurses, Psychiatric nurses 389w
Computers in National Health Service, Family practitioner services 544w
Death, Age 374w
Diabetes, Disposable syringes 543w
Drugs, Parallel imports 727
Family doctors, Manpower 379-80w
Family doctors, Pay 379w
Family planning, Government grants 311-2w
Fleming Memorial Hospital, Newcastle Upon Tyne 57-8w
General Practice Finance Corporation, Finance 552w
German measles 312w
German measles, Congenital abnormalities 313w
German measles, Screening 313w
German measles, Vaccination 312w, 313w
Health hazards, Natural radioactivity 322-4w, 373w
Health hazards, Radioactivity 373w
Health service staff, Board & lodging charges 546w
Health service staff, Pay 374w
Health service staff, Vacancies 381w
Health services, Expenditure 618-24w
Hospital closures, Brent Health Authority 547w
Hospital closures, Burnley 542w
Hospital closures, North West Thames Regional Health Authority 382w
Hospital consultants 523w
Hospital doctors, Ethnic minorities 61-2w
Hospital doctors, Performance indicators 62w
Hospital staff, Board & lodging charges 556w
Hospital waiting lists, Computers in National Health Service 376w
Hospitals, Ashby de la Zouch 716
Hospitals, Casualty units 380w
Hospitals, Cleveland 165-6w
Immigrant doctors 380w
"Just Say No", Video recordings 316-7w
Leeds Eastern Health Authority, Expenditure 375-6w
Limited list prescribing 313w
Limited list prescribing, Costs 313-4w
Liverpool Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 224w
Maternal mortality, Ethnic minorities 375w
Maternal mortality, Immigrants 375w
Mental health community care, West Lambeth Health Authority 384-5w
Mersey Regional Health Authority, Hospital Waiting lists 224w, 322w
National Radiological Protection Board, Emergency planning 375w
National Rubella Council, Government grants 312w
NHS, Disciplinary proceedings 528w
NHS finance, Greater London 385-6w
NHS finance, Leicestershire 715-6
NHS finance, Teaching hospitals 374w
Nurses, Pay 310-2w, 546w
Pay beds, Costs 545-6w
Pharmacies 529w, 530w
Pharmacies, Costs 529w
Pharmacies, Family practitioner committees 530w
Pharmacies, France 530w
Pharmacists, Contracts 529w
Photosensitivity, Drug side effects 223-4w, 320-1w
Potassium iodate, Nuclear accidents 385w
Potassium iodate, Radiation hazards 541w
Prescription charges exemptions, Diseases 540w
Prescriptions, Rural areas 529w
Primary health care 385w
Primary health care, Departmental leaflets 167w
Primary health care, NHS finance 544w
"Primary Health Care Consultation Paper" 167w, 524w
Radiation hazards, Children 315w
Radioactivity, Cancer 493w
Regional health authorities, Property transfer 384w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 64w
Resource Allocation Working Party, NHS finance 537-8w
Scunthorpe Health Authority, Health services staff 535-7w

Scunthorpe Hospital, NHS finance 537w
South Killingholme, Population 224w
South London Hospital for Women, Property transfer 384w
Southend Hospital, Hospital closures 316w
Spectacles, Ophthalmic services 548w
Stafford Hospital, Legionnaires disease 555w
Surgical dressings, Limited list prescribing 541w
Trent Regional Health Authority, Expenditure 67-8w
Westminster Hospital, Hospital closures 383w
Westminster Hospital, Ministers correspondence 556w
Westminster Hospital, Riverside Health Authority 66w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 224w, 321-2w
Written questions, Administrative delays 316w
X rays, Radiation hazards 314w

Haynes, Mr Frank
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 911
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 226
Questions
National Bike Week 25w
Paige, Victor, Resignations 900
Rate support grants, Ashfield 355

Hayward, Mr Rob
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1211

Hazardous materials
Furniture 363w

Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 280w
Scottish Development Department 280w

Healey, Rt Hon Denis
Debates etc
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 531
Questions
Business statement 533-4
Chemical weapons deployment 526

Health & Safety at Work Etc Act 1974 584w

Health education
AIDS 527w
Drug abuse 278w

Health Education Council
"Guide to Healthy Eating" 530w
Whooping cough 62w

Health hazards
Artificial sweeteners 545w
Natural radioactivity 322-4w, 373w
Radioactive wastes 196-7w
Radioactivity 373w, 492-3w

Health inspectors 524w

Health physics
Children 225-6w

Health service staff
Accident & emergency departments 349w, 380w
Board & lodging charges 546w
Housing (23.05.86) 690-6
NHS administration 720-1
Pay 319-20w, 374w
Screening 207-8w
Vacancies 381w

Health services
Expenditure 618-24w
Gwynedd 286-7w

Health services finance
Geriatrics 230w

Health services staff
Scunthorpe Health Authority 535-7w

Health warnings
Tobacco products (04.06.86) 911

Heath, Michael 493w
Radioactive waste disposal 493w

Heathcoat-Amory, Mr David
Questions
Air pollution, Coal fired power stations 194w
Drugs, Parallel imports 727
Hippies, Public order policing 1082-3
Motor vehicle registration 23w

Heathrow
Drug seizures 89w
Immigration controls 13-4w, 525

Heating
Palace of Westminster 161-2w

Heating allowances
Expenditure 376w
Supplementary benefits 376w

Heddle, Mr John
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 919, 938-40, 946-7
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 907
Questions
Business statement 1090-1
Empty housing, Homelessness 349
Hospital waiting lists, Computers in National Health Service 376w
Road construction, Recycling 452w

Helicopters
Police equipment 7w

Henderson, Mr Barry
Questions
Complaints against police, Scotland 896
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital, Construction 890
Economic growth, Scotland 880
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 887
Rural transport innovation grant scheme, Scotland 605-6w

Heritage
Government achievements 509-10w

Heritage coast 567-8w

Hickmet, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1200, 1210, 1213
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1056, 1059
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 459-60, 463, 466, 467, 496
Questions
Enterprise zones, Glanford 369w
Hospital waiting lists, District health authorities 534-6w
Humber bridge, Road tolls 11-2
Legal aid, Average earnings 13
Regional aid, Employment opportunities 172-3
Regional aid, Glanford 364w
Resource Allocation Working Party, NHS finance 537-8w
Scunthorpe Health Authority, Health services staff 535-7w
Scunthorpe Hospital, Hospital beds 537w
Scunthorpe Hospital, NHS finance 537w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 362w

Hicks, Mr Robert
Questions
Food subsidies, School milk 71w, 488-91w

Higgins, Mr Terence
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 190-1
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 309-12
Questions
Balance of payments 87-8w
Bus lanes, Greater London 10
Business statement 1088
Public expenditure, Overseas aid 728

High Court
Trials 246w

High rise flats
Demolition 565w
Rochester upon Medway District Council 565w

High technology 121-3w

Higher civil servants
Treasury 330-1w

Higher education
Education & industry 275w
Student numbers 272-4w

Higher education admission
Vocational education 272w

Highlands of Scotland
Coastal areas 1-2w

Highways Act 1980 28w
Rights of way 28w

Hijacking
Aircraft 25w

Hill, Mr James
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 554
Questions
Business statement 536
Trade competitiveness 162

Hill Farming Research Organisation 576w
Agricultural research 576w

Hill livestock allowances 72w
Administrative delays 488w
Scotland 346-7w
Sheep 411w

Hind, Mr Kenneth
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1246, 1315-6
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money res (05.06.86) 1329-30
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 567
Questions
Plastic bullets, Public order policing 15-6w

Hinkley Point B 32w, 353-4w
Disclosure of information 32w
Nuclear accidents 32w

Hip replacements 65w, 532-4w
Costs 65w
Hospital waiting lists 532-4w
Surgery 65w

Hippies 738-9
Hampshire 739
Personal pensions 725
Police powers 733-9
Public order policing 1082-3
Road traffic control 735
Social security benefits 730
Trespass 729, 730, 733-8, 1084
Wiltshire 737

Hirst, Mr Michael
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 194
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 385-9
Questions
Assaults on police, Lost working days 259w
Inflation 525-6
Multiple occupation, Scotland 283w
Non-domestic rates, Rates & rating 192w
Youth training scheme, Local authorities in Scotland 155w

Historic buildings
Conservation 372w
Modbury 372w

HMS Speedy 391w

HMS Tiger 391-2w
Shipbreaking 391-2w

HMSO
Cardiff 187w
Publishing 187w

Hogg, Mr Douglas
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1196-1298 (passim)
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, North West region (22.05.86) 628
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 315-6
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 98, 458-9, 461, 468, 492-3

Hogg, Mr Norman
Questions
M80 235w
New towns development corporations, Scotland 882

Holiday leave
Advisory services 50w

Holland, Mr Stuart
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 852-5
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1104, 1140, 1146-52, 1177, 1187
Oral question time intervention (03.06.86) 731
Questions
Ambulance services, Greater London 385w
Development aid, Government grants to voluntary organisations 17
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 159w
Mental health community care, West Lambeth Health Authority 384-5w
Regional health authorities, Property transfer 384w
South London Hospital for Women, Property transfer 384w

Holmfield School 264w
Christchurch 264w, 430w
Rifle ranges 264w, 430w

Holt, Mr Richard
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 551
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 445-6
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 570, 579, 586, 591-4, 595
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Foreign aid 1080
BBC, Broadcasting bias 126w
Business statement 1093
Hospitals, Cleveland 165-6w
Labour mobility 49w, 138w
Self-employed, Unemployment benefits 152w
Sportsgrounds, Rates & rating 139w
Unemployment, Langbaurgh 48-9w

Holy Loch 237w
Military ceremonies 237w
Naval bases 237w

Home Affairs Select Committee
Refugees 263w

Home Office
Data Protection Registrar 260w
Harvey, Peter 126w, 520w
Parking offences 449w

"Home Office Circular 14/1985" 338w

Home Robertson, Mr John
Questions
Electricity, Scotland 884-5

Homelessness
Bed & breakfast accommodation 194w, 350
Council housing 194w
Empty housing 349
Families 194w
Wandsworth 349-50

Homeworking
Underpayments 359-60w
Wages Inspectorate 359-60w

Homicide
Black, John 143w
Prison staff 635w
Spain 143w

Hong Kong
Housing 143w
Refugees 337w
UN High Commissioner for Refugees 337w

Hooliganism
Football 564-5w

Horses
Animal welfare 626w, 632w
Markets 626w, 632w

Horticultural Development Council Order 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Horticulture
Pesticides 221w
Weedkillers 221w

Horwich
British Rail Engineering 6

Hospital admissions
Road accidents 395w, 410-1w
Schizophrenia 60-1w
Teaching hospitals 66w

Hospital bed occupancy rates 342w, 520w
Prison hospitals 520w

Hospital beds
Scotland 342w, 396w
Scunthorpe Hospital 537w
Strathclyde 342w
Wales 131-2w

Hospital closures
Brent Health Authority 547w
Burnley 542w
Cancer 545w
Cardiff 285w
Fleming Memorial Hospital 57-8w
North West Thames Regional Health Authority 382w
Southend Hospital 316w
Westminster Hospital 383w, 556w

Hospital consultants 523w
Surgery 523w

Hospital discharges 289w, 384-5w, 544w

Hospital doctors
Ethnic minorities 61-2w
Performance indicators 62w
Vacancies 349w
Wales 349w

Hospital patients
Hospital waiting lists 528w
Leeds Eastern Health Authority 530-2w
Northern Regional Health Authority 528-9w
Road accidents 59w
Scunthorpe Hospital 535-7w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 321-2w

Hospital staff
Board & lodging charges 546w, 556w

Hospital waiting lists
Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 536w
Bradford Health Authority 535-6w
Computers in National Health Service 376w
District health authorities 534-6w
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital 889-90
Geriatrics 534w
Hip replacements 532-4w
Hospital patients 528w
Leeds Eastern Health Authority 530-2w
Leicestershire 716
Liverpool Health Authority 224w, 322w
Mersey Regional Health Authority 224w, 322w
NHS 528w
North East Thames Regional Health Authority 536w
Orthopaedics 66w
Out-patient clinics 59w
Regional health authorities 58-60w
Scunthorpe Hospital 534-6w
Southend Health Authority 59w
Surgery 542w
West Midlands Regional Health Authority 376w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 321w, 322w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 542w

Hospitals
Accident & emergency departments 548-50w
Ashby de la Zouch 716
Casualty units 380w
Cleveland 165-6w
Construction 538w
Design 229w
District health authorities 539-40w
Intensive care units 548-50w
NHS administration 899-900
Northern Regional Health Authority 538w
Road accidents 60w
Scotland 229w
Wales 132w

House of Commons catering
Frogs legs 484w
Turtle products 484w

House of Commons division of time
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 746, (05.06.86) 1196

House of Commons divisions
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 810-1

House of Commons library
Books 204-5w
Magazine press 74w
Newspaper press 74w

House of Commons motions
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86) 1198-9

House of Commons procedure
Private Bills 627-8w
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86) 1336

House of Commons Select Committees 434-46w
Costs 447w, 481-4w
Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 293-332
Select Committee reports 481w

House of Commons staff
In-service training 325-8w
Taxation 73-4w
Taxis 73-4w
Training 325-8w

House of Commons stationery 205w

House of Lords reporting
Speakers rulings and statements (21.05.86) 391

House prices
Prison staff 262-3w

House purchase
Council housing finance 129w
Housing associations 504w
Wheelchair housing 503-4w, 504-5w

House renovation grants
Dwyfor District Council 40w
Public expenditure 730-1

Households
Crime victims 255w
Private rented housing 196w

Houses
Security equipment 258w

Housing
Coopers Lane 425-6w
Ealing 139w
Health service staff (23.05.86) 690-6

Hong Kong 143w
Land use 569w
Ministry of Defence 425-6w
NHS 556w, (23.05.86) 690-6, 717-8
Public expenditure 370-1w
Scotland 234-5w
Supplementary benefits 431-2w

Housing Act 1980 211-2w

Housing associations
House purchase 504w

Housing benefits
Government grants to local authorities 168w
Social security benefits rules 169-70w, 317-8w
Social security recipients 556w
Social security reform 386-90w, 556w
Students 719
Unemployment 373-4w

Housing completions 128w
Wheelchair housing 505w

Housing construction
Ballyhalbert 299w
Empty housing 350-1
Local government revenue 353
Rate support grants 347
Road construction 28w

Housing Defects Act 1984 134-6w, 136-7w, 292w
Building repairs 292w

Housing estates
Council house sales 345, 346-7
Leeds 351
Private investment 345-6, 346-7
Tenants 345

Housing finance
Government assistance 431-2w
Private investment 370-1w

Housing improvement 292w
Blackburn Borough Council 140-1w
Costs 292-3w, 293-4w
Dept of the Environment 202w
Local authorities 614w
Mansfield District Council 139-40w
Newham 141w
Northern region 510w

Housing investment programmes
Government grants to local authorities 134-6w
Leicester 566-7w
Liverpool City Council 191w
Local government finance 192w
Northern region 505-9w
Urban housing renewal unit 291w

Housing management 81w
Training 81w

Housing problems
Council housing 82w

Housing standards 294w

Housing starts 292w
Public sector housing 349-50
Scotland 235w

Howard, Mr Michael, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Trade & Industry*
Questions
Animal products, Wastes 557w
British Sugar Corporation, Takeovers 251w
Consumer protection, EC action 47-8w
Estate agents, Office of Fair Trading 410w
Furniture, Hazardous materials 363w
Iron & steel industry, Wolverhampton 409w
Office of Fair Trading, Debt collection 408w
Road accidents, Civil liability 44w
Small businesses, Accounting 247-8w
Takeovers 408w
United Kingdom Provident, Insurance companies 183-5w
Wedgewood, Takeovers 407-8w

Howarth, Mr Alan
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 184-5

Howarth, Mr Gerald
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (05.06.86) 1098
Questions
Business statement 1094
Jobclubs, Northern Ireland 634w

Howe, Rt Hon Sir Geoffrey, *Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs*
Debates etc
South Africa, Ministerial statements (19.05.86) 19-28
Questions
South Africa, Krugerrands 327w

Howell, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 545
Questions
Higher education, Education & industry 275w

Howell, Mr Ralph
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 755, 764-5
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 214-5, 276-7
Questions
Dual jobholding 215-6w
Health services, Expenditure 618-24w
Income tax, Tax yields 174-5w
Motor vehicle registration 160w
Postal workers, Manpower 185w
Public expenditure 91w, 608-9w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 54w
Workfare, Employment schemes 1083

Hoyle, Mr Doug
Questions
British Leyland, Privatisation 249-50w
Magistrates 6w, 55w
Magistrates, Swindon 431w
Magistrates, Wigan 424-6w
Police relations with public 518-9
Prison staff, House prices 262-3w
Tin, Cornwall 742

Hughes, Mr Robert
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 189-90
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 844, 857, 864-6
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1103, 1109-15, 1163-4, 1185
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1200
Questions
Bus services, Transport & Road Research Laboratory 202w
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86, Employment 9
National Bus Company, Privatisation 4

Hughes, Mr Roy
Questions
Housing estates, Council house sales 345
Social security benefits rules, Students 311w
Toll bridges, Transport Select Committee 11
Unemployment, Statistics 152w

Hughes, Mr Sean
Questions
Hospital patients, Hospital waiting lists 528w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS 528w
School closures, Primary education 475w
Youth unemployment 146w

Hughes, Mr Simon
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 837, 843-6, 855, 856
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1212, 1220, 1266, 1267, 1269, 1272, 1273, 1278-85, 1293-4, 1298, 1312, 1313, 1322-3, 1326
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 465, 469, 477-80
Questions
Bethlem Royal Hospital 168-9w
Business statement 536-7
Mental health services, Young people 168w
Radioactivity, Disclosure of information 353
Urban programme, Southwark 343

Hull Prison 10w
Prison accommodation 9w, 10w
Prison staff 10w

Human embryo experiments 1081-2

Human organs 53-4w
Radiation hazards 53-4w

Human rights
Bahai sect 305w
Chile 19-20w
Morocco 302w

Humber bridge
Road tolls 11-2

Humberside
Initial teacher training 329w

Hume, Mr John
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Dove House 1080-1
Attendance allowance, Northern Ireland 461w, 462w
Cervical cancer, Northern Ireland 459-60w, 460-1w
Drinking & driving, Northern Ireland 338-9w
Drinking & driving, Road accidents 339w
Drunkenness, Habitual offenders 338w
Drunkenness, Police cautions 338w
Electricity distribution, Rathlin Island 299w
Employment schemes, Carrickfergus 458w
Further education, Staff-student ratios 454w
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 41-2w
Further education teachers, Northern Ireland 453-4w
Government grants, Rathlin Island 299-301w
Mobility allowance, Northern Ireland 461-2w
Pupils, Rathlin Island 301w
Training, Northern Ireland 458-60w
Youth training scheme, Further education 339-40w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 339w

Hunt, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for Energy*
Questions
Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review 252w
Energy efficiency 156-7w
Manoil process, Refuse 593w
National Coal Board, North East region 465w
National Coal Board, Northern region 465w
National Coal Board, Recruitment 594w
National Coal Board, Subsidiary companies 157w
National Coal Board, Youth employment 31w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd, Employment opportunities 593w
Severn barrage 252w

Hunt, Mr John
Questions
Licensing laws 16-7w

Hunter, Mr Andrew
Questions

Commonwealth Development Corporation, Company accounts 204w
Housing, Coopers Lane 425-6w
Police training 257w
Safety belts, Children 26w

Hunton bridge 596-7w

***Hurd, Rt Hon Douglas,** Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Crime 513-4, 514-5
Crime, detection rates 513-5
Crimes of violence 513-4
Football, Hooliganism 564-5w
Forensic science, Evidence 11w
Harvey, Peter, Home Office 126w, 520w
Hippies 738-9
Hippies, Hampshire 739
Hippies, Police powers 735, 736-7, 738
Hippies, Trespass 733-4, 734-5, 736, 737-8
Hippies, Wiltshire 737
Immigration officers, Civil servants secondment 14-5w
Kidnapping, Insurance 255-6w
Leicester Prison, Ministers domestic visits 253w
Licensing laws 16-7w
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 124-5w
Ministers domestic visits, Liverpool 127w
Ministers domestic visits, Merseyside 261w
Neighbourhood watch schemes 515
News International, Public order policing 516-7, 517-8
Parking offences, Home Office 449w
Plastic bullets, Police 254w
Plastic bullets, Public order policing 15-6w
Police, Manpower 515, 516
Police Complaints Authority, Public appointments 337w
Police relations with public, Brixton Disturbances Inquiry 256w
Refugees, Home Affairs Select Committee 263w
Refugees, Hong Kong 337w
Victim support schemes 515

Hybrid Bills (03.06.86) 835-71

Hyde Park 7w

Hydraulics Research 247w

Hydrofoils 391w
Navy 391w

Hyndburn
Urban housing renewal unit 367-8w

Hypermarkets
Derelict land grants 295-6w
Planning permission 195w

Hypothermia
Death 55-6w
Elderly 55-6w

Illegal immigrants
Bangladesh 524-5
India 524-5
Ports of entry 525

Immersion suits 203w
Merchant ships 203w

Immigrant doctors 380w

Immigrants
Maternal mortality 375w
Social security benefits rules 617w
Unemployment benefits 617w

Immigrants overstaying 514-5w

Immigration Act 1971 1082

Immigration controls 334w
Codes of practice 14w
Complaints 13w, 14w
Foreign tourists 524, 525, 564w
Heathrow 13-4w, 525
Indian subcontinent 17w, 1085-6
Libyan Arab Republic 333w, 515w
Metropolitan Police 632w
New Commonwealth & Pakistan 524
Ports of entry 525
Racial discrimination 1082
Security guards 13-4w
Syrian Arab Republic 327-8w
Temporary immigrants 515w
Visas 524
Zahoor, Karman 564w

Immigration officers 14-5w, 126-7w, 564w
Airports 126-7w
Civil servants secondment 14-5w
Interviews 14w
Manpower 126-7w

Import controls
Beekeeping 69-70w
Brewing industry 222w
Crossbows 522
Firearms 407w
Krugerrands 327w, 364w
West Germany 134w, 222w

Import duties
Cars 310w

Import quotas
Car industry 45w, 405w

Import substitution 250-1w

Imports
Bangladesh 405w
Beekeeping 70w
Eastern Europe 306-7w, 581w, 609w
Industrial wastes 370w
New Zealand 365w
South Africa 558w
Synthetic fibres 186w
Television 249w
Uranium 164w

In-service training
House of Commons staff 325-8w

Income
Bank of England 472w
Privatisation 469w
Student grants 181-3w
Taxation 469w

Income support scheme (20.05.86) 206-92, 382-3w
Social security reform 382-3w

Income tax
Tax rates & bands 528
Tax yields 174-5w

Independent Broadcasting Authority
Broadcasting bias 126w
Pop stars 126w
Radio 335-6w

Independent national radio 335-6w

India
Illegal immigrants 524-5
Overseas aid 15

Indian subcontinent
Immigration controls 17w, 1085-6

Industrial disputes
Coal mining 174, 529-30, 737
News International 126w, 336w, 516-7, 517-8
Prison staff 257w

Industrial energy prices
Elecricity tariffs 463-4w

Industrial health & safety
Manufactured imports 584w
Small businesses 165-6

Industrial injuries
Building industry 152w
Manufacturing industries 152w

Industrial production
Nissan 45w
Printing industry 406-7w
Wales 132w

Industrial training 167-8, 172
Departmental leaflets 168
Manpower Services Commission 153w
Unemployment 162-3

Industrial Training Bill 1985/86
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Industrial tribunals
Coal mining 529-30

Industrial wastes
Imports 370w

Industry
Anglo-Irish Agreement 633w
EC international trade 162w
Enterprise Express 129-30w
Northern Ireland 633w
Schools 272w

Inflation 525-6
Pay settlements 244w
Retail price index 265w
Trade competitiveness 880-1

Information
Civil defence 259w
Consumer goods 47-8w
Data Protection Registrar 260w
Kidnapping 521
Radioactivity 227w

Information technology
Boundary Commissions 332w

Information technology centres 43-4w
Scotland 43-4w

Initial teacher training 271w, 329w
Humberside 329w

Injuries
Road accidents 29w

Inner city areas
Building land 351-2
Geriatrics 544w
Land acquisition 351-2
Police training 257w
Teacher training 271-2w

Institute of Criminology 178w
Cambridge University 178w

Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 75w, 76w
Disclosure of information 76w
Pollution monitoring 75w, 76w

Insurance
Kidnapping 255-6w, 1073-4

Insurance companies
United Kingdom Provident 183-5w

Intensive care units
Hospitals 548-50w

Interest charges
Public sector borrowing requirement 469w

International assistance
Africa (23.05.86) 671-82

International Atomic Energy Agency
Expenditure 464w
Nuclear safeguards 466-7w
Nuclear safety 464w
Radiation hazards 372w
Scientists 142w
UK contributions 464-5w

International Commission on Radiological Protection 53w, 547w
Radiation hazards 53w

International conferences
Conservation 79-80w
Costs 1w, 397w
North Sea 281w, 282w
Prime Minister domestic visits 33w
Public order policing 397w

International cooperation
Eastern Europe 143w
Nuclear accidents 33w, 354, 565-6w
Nuclear power 142w, 143w
Nuclear power stations 565-6w
Nuclear safety 31w
Terrorism 411-2w
USSR 142w

International Development Association
World Bank 3w

International Fund for Agricultural Development 16
Africa 2-3w

Contracts 15-6

International Labour Conference 592w

International Labour Organisation
Merchant seamen 247w
Occupational health services 592w
Treaties 247w

International Monetary Fund
Developing countries 174w

International Rayon & Synthetic Fibres Committee 185-6w
Dumping 185-6w

Intervention stocks
Costs 221w
Expenditure 551w

Interviews
Immigration officers 14w

Inter-Parliamentary Union
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 530

Intimidation 340w, 455w

Investment
North Sea oil 468w

Ionising Radiation Regulations 1985 53-4w
Radiation hazards 53-4w

Ionizing radiation
Potassium iodate 541w
Radioactive waste disposal 493w

IRA
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1072-3, 1073-4
Foreign aid 1069-70
Terrorism 1070-1

Iran
Arms exports 304w
Bahai sect 305w
Political refugees 263w
Temporary immigrants 514-5w

Iraq
Arms exports 304w

Irish National Liberation Army 456-7w

Iron & steel industry
Compensation 409w
Wolverhampton 409w

Irvine
New towns 884

Irvine Development Corporation 884
Co-Star Ltd 884

Irving, Mr Charles
Questions
Rate support grants, Gloucestershire County Council 138w

Isle of Wight Bill 1985/86
Lords amendts (19.05.86) 1
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Israel
Palestine Liberation Organisation 305w
Prime Minister visits abroad 174-5, 246w, 447w
Syrian Arab Republic 305w

Jackson, Mr Robert
Questions
Defence research, Defence contracts 426w
Drugs, EC countries 169w

Jaguar Cars 43w
Privatisation 43w
Shares 43w

James Sinclair Point 141w

Janner, Mr Greville
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 909-10
Road Traffic Accidents Compensation for Victims Bill, 1R (04.06.86) 912-4
Questions
Advisory Conciliation & Arbitration Service, Codes of practice 144w
Business statement 539, 1093-4
Defective housing, PRC Homes 136w
Defective housing, Smith houses 136w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Advisory services 311w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Disability allowance 66-7w
Empty housing, Leicester 566-7w
Fine defaulters, Custodial treatment 562-3w
Foreign tourists, Immigration controls 525
General Certificate of Secondary Education 475w
Geriatrics, Leicestershire 534w
Hospital patients, Road accidents 59w
Hospitals, Road accidents 60w
Industrial health & safety, Manufactured imports 584w
Legal aid, Average earnings 13
NHS finance, Leicestershire 715
Overseas aid, India 15
Prisoners release, Terminal care 563-4w, 628w, 629w
Road accidents, Civil liability 3w, 44w
Road accidents, Civil proceedings 4w
Road accidents, Damages 4-5w
Road accidents, Evidence 5w
Road accidents, Injuries 29w
Road accidents, Negligence 4w, 5w
Road accidents, Scotland 395w
Road accidents, Wales 410-1w
Shoplifting, Suicide 521w
Smith houses, Leicester 83-4w
Waldheim, Kurt, Documents 34w, 427w
Waldheim, Kurt, War crimes 427w
Wilcox, Mary, Suicide 521-2w

Japan
Prisoners of war 386w
Protectionism 529
Shipbuilding 163w

Jenkins, Rt Hon Roy
Debates etc
Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 155

Jessel, Mr Toby
Questions
Hampton Court, Fires 356

Job centres
Northern region 415w

Job creation schemes
Northern region 416w

Job release scheme allowance 625w

Jobclubs 634w
Northern Ireland 634w

John, Mr Brynmor
Questions
Anthony Nolan Bone Marrow Trust, Government grants 315w
Food inspection, Trichinella spiralis 72w

John Mowlem 413w, 414w
Diego Garcia 413w, 414w

Johnson Smith, Sir Geoffrey
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 862

Johnston, Sir Russell
Questions
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper", Scotland 577w

Joint Manpower Watch 567-8w
Local government staff 567-8w

Jones, Mr Barry
Questions
Breast cancer, Wales 39w
Burglary, Wales 261-2w
Social security abuse, Wales 262w
Ynys Mon, Oil terminals 411w

Jones, Mr Gwilym
Questions
General Certificates of Secondary Education, Wales 599w

Jones, Mr Robert B
Questions
Paige, Victor, Resignations 900

Jopling, Rt Hon Michael, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Cost effectiveness 551-2w
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 222w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 70w
Data Protection Registrar, Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food 366w
EC Agricultural Council 487-8w
Fishing vessels, France 626w
Food from Britain 365w
Intervention stocks, Costs 221w
Wool, Guaranteed prices 364-5w

Joseph, Rt Hon Sir Keith, Secretary of State for Education and Science (Until 21 May)
Debates etc
University finance, Ministerial statements (20.05.86) 179-87
Questions
Further Education Unit, Costs 95w
Student grants, Income 181-3w

Judgments
Air fares 452w, 597-8w
European Court of Justice 18w, 303w, 597-8w

"Just Say No" 183w, 262w, 316-7w
Drug abuse 183w, 262w, 316-7w
Video recordings 183w, 262w, 316-7w

Keeni Meeni Services 266w, 303-4w
Security industry 264w
Work permits 266w

Kellett-Bowman, Mrs Elaine
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1226, 1230
Economic policy (03.06.86) 781
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 42, 75, 141
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 267
University finance (20.05.86) 184

Kennedy, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 56-7, 123, 146
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 225, 228, 243-4
Questions
Alcoholism, Medical treatments 66w
Breast cancer, Screening 725-6
Cancer, Hospital closures 545w
Coastal areas, Highlands of Scotland 1-2w
Computers in National Health Service, Family practitioner services 544w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service recruitment 723
Diabetes, Artificial sweeteners 545w
Diabetes, Children 543w
Diabetes, Convalescence 544w
Diabetes, Diagnosis 543-4w
Hip replacements, Surgery 65w
North Sea oil, Investment 468w
Oil prices, Scotland 578w
Oil rigs, Scotland 880
Paige, Victor, Resignation 902
Pipelines, Construction 33w
Pipelines, Tain 1w
Primary health care, NHS finance 544w
Technicians, NHS 543w

Kent
Roads (05.06.86) 1101-94

Kershaw, Sir Anthony
Questions
Overseas aid, India 15

Key, Mr Robert
Questions
Hippies, Wiltshire 737
Teachers, Resignations 96w

Kidnapping
Children 233w, 520, 521
Criminal investigation 233w
Information 521
Insurance 255-6w, 1073-4
Republic of Ireland 255-6w
Scotland 520

Kilmarnock
General improvement areas 888-9
Procurators fiscal 896

Kilroy-Silk, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 239-42, 246-8
Questions
Business statement 536
Featherstone Prison, Prison discipline 179-80w
Firearms, Crimes of violence 521
Kirkby Town Football Club, Government grants 80w
Lionise, Government grants 80w
Magistrates, Disclosure of information 246w

King, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1141, 1152-6, 1170
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1232
Questions
Import quotas, Car industry 405w
Nissan, Industrial production 45w
Nuclear free zones, Nuclear accidents 354
Television programmes, Pop stars 126w

King, Rt Hon Tom, *Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 177w, 633-4w, 1072-3, 1074, 1077
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Cross border cooperation in Ireland 1077
Anglo-Irish Agreement, IRA 1072-3, 1073-4
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland government 1073, 1078
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1077-8, 1078-9
Anglo-Irish Agreement, USA 1079
Border security in Ireland 634w
Central Intelligence Agency, Northern Ireland 1076
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 1071
Northern Ireland Assembly 40w, 462w
Paramilitary forces, Northern Ireland 1076-7
Political parties, Northern Ireland 635w
Political parties, Northern Ireland Assembly 633w
Security, Northern Ireland 1075-6
Ulster Unionists, Members attendance 1078
USA, Extradition 1069-70, 1070-1, 1072

Kinnock, Rt Hon Neil
Questions
Business statement 1087-8
Economic policy, Families 1083-4
South Africa, Armed conflict 175-6

Kirkby Town Football Club 80w
Government grants 80w

Kirkwood, Mr Archy
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 906
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 210-1, 270-2
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 30, 48-50, 86-8, 104, 140-1
Tobacco Products (Health Warnings) Bill, 1R (04.06.86) 911
Questions
Africa, Disease control 264-5w
AIDS, Health education 527w
Beekeeping, Government assistance to industry 69-70w, 223w
Beekeeping, Import controls 69-70w
Beekeeping, Scotland 1w
Beekeeping, Sugar 70w, 223w
Child benefit, Students 379w
Community health councils, Recruitment 528w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Social security reform 726
Departmental circulars, Dept of Health & Social Security 527-8w
Harvey, Peter, Home Office 126w, 520w
Local authorities, Reprography 367-8w
Marginal land, Scotland 574w
Medical research, MRC Mammalian Genome Unit 478w
NHS, Disciplinary proceedings 528w
NHS, Housing 718
Paige, Victor, Resignations 899
Primary health care, Departmental leaflets 167w
"Primary Health Care Consultation Paper" 167w
War widows pensions 165w

Knight, Derry Mainwaring 12
Prosecutions 12

Knight, Mr Greg
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 197
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1261, 1314, 1316
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money res (05.06.86) 1329

Knight, Dame Jill
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 144
Questions
Cancer, Medical research 224w, 321w
Regional health authorities, NHS finance 62w

Knowles, Mr Michael
Questions
Urban housing renewal unit, Government grants 614w

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council 80w

Knox, Mr David
Questions
Council house sales, Scotland 576w
NHS finance, National income 726-7
Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Elections 348
Road accidents, Public transport 610w
Road traffic offences, European Road Safety Year 632w
Unemployment, European Communities 423-4w

Kruggerands
Economic sanctions 364w
Import controls 327w, 364w
South Africa 327w

Labour market
Scotland 231-2w

Labour mobility 49w, 138w

Labour Party
Ealing 139w
Police 520

Lake district
National parks 348-9
Planning 348-9

Lambie, Mr David
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 447-8
Questions
New towns, Irvine 884

Lamond, Mr James
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 548

Lamont, Mr Norman, *Minister of State for Defence Procurement (from 21 May Financial Secretary to the Treasury)*
Questions
Army, Defence equipment 176w
Army, Exhibitions 238w
Child benefit 310w, 472-4w
Covenants 308w
Income, Taxation 469w
Members allowances, Car allowances 471w
Ministers visits abroad, Turkey 176w, 238w
Mortgage relief 470w
Personal taxation 309-10w, 560w
Tax thresholds, Single people 473-6w
Tax yields, National insurance contributions 609w
Taxation 309-10w
Taxation, Termination of employment 559w
Trebor Corporation, Defence procurement 236w

Lancashire
Manpower Services Commission 361w
Restart programme 361-2w
Youth unemployment 421w

Lancashire County Council 336w, 368-9w

Land acquisition
District health authorities 384w
European assembly 214w
Inner city areas 351-2
Local government land 353
Scottish health boards 603w
Snowdonia National Park 213-4w

Land drainage 220-1w

Land pollution
Okehampton bypass 371w

Land Registration Bill (HL) 1985/86
2R* (22.05.86) 627

Land Rover 249-50w

Land use
Agricultural land 485-6w
Cereals 485-6w
Greenbelt 567-8w
Housing 569w
National parks 567-8w
Property development 569w

Lang, Mr Ian, *Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 616-24
Questions
Community industry scheme 49w
Community industry scheme, Costs 49-50w
Community programme, East London 215-6w, 216-7w
Community programme, Northern region 415-6w
Dual jobholding 215-6w
Employment, Northern region 420w
Employment level 146w
Employment level, Rotherham 169-70
Employment opportunities, Suffolk 151w
Employment policy 170
Employment policy, Rotherham 170-1
Employment schemes, Costs 363w
Handicapped workers, Employment policy 172
Handicapped workers, Sheltered employment 172
Handicapped workers, Unemployment 171-2
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 165-6
Job creation schemes, Northern region 416w
Job release scheme allowance 625w
Keeni Meeni Services, Work permits 266w
Labour mobility 49w
Manpower Services Commission, Training 362w
Manufacturing industries, Manpower 419w
New businesses 166
Occupational health services, International Labour Organisation 592w
Parental leave, EC action 623w
Pay 151w

Printing industry, Manpower 417w
Prisoners release, Employment opportunities 265w
Redundancy, Northern region 418-9w
Restart programme 360w, 361w
Restart programme, Ealing 49w
Restart programme, Ethnic minorities 360w, 361-2w
Restart programme, Further education 583w
Restart programme, Lancashire 361w, 362w
Restart programme, Take-up of employment 152-4w
Retail price index, Inflation 265w
Self-employed, Unemployment benefits 152w
Take-up of employment, Northern region 415w
Unemployed 146-7w
Unemployed, Employment schemes 145w, 148w, 150w
Unemployment 146w, 152w
Unemployment, Building industry 417w
Unemployment, Burnley 583w
Unemployment, Central Scotland 149-50w
Unemployment, East Midlands 146w
Unemployment, Langbaurgh 48-9w
Unemployment, Men 624w
Unemployment, Merseyside 147-8w, 149w, 150w
Unemployment, Newham 53-5w
Unemployment, Northern region 418w
Unemployment, Parliamentary constituencies 55w, 362w
Unemployment, Rotherham 170
Unemployment, Slough 584w
Unemployment, Social security abuse 51-2w
Unemployment, Statistics 152w
Unemployment, Sunderland 420-1w
Unemployment benefits, Availability for work 54w
Unemployment benefits, Coal mining 48w, 363w
Unemployment benefits, Social security abuse 51w
Unemployment benefits, Underpayments 52w
Unemployment benefits, Wales 153-4w
Vacancies, Burnley 583w
Vacancies, Merseyside 149w
Vacancies, Northern region 419w
Vacancies, Vocational guidance 585-92w
Vocational guidance, Northern region 419w
Workfare, Employment schemes 150w, 415w
Young workers scheme, Take-up of employment 144w
Youth employment, Greater London 144w
Youth training scheme, Research 356-7w
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 358w
Youth training scheme, Wages councils 358w
Youth unemployment 146w, 147w, 421w
Youth unemployment, Newham 55w

Langbaurgh
Unemployment 48-9w

Latham, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 964
Questions
Black, John, Homicide 143w
Gibraltar, Dockyards 204w
Iran, Bahai sect 305w
Israel, Palestine Liberation Organisation 305w
Israel, Syrian Arab Republic 305w
Libyan Arab Republic, Armed conflict 304-5w
Middle East, Peace negotiations 302-3w
Museums & galleries, Compensation 332w
NHS finance, Leicestershire 715-6
Prime Minister visits abroad, Israel 246w
Turnbull, Lancelot George, Open prisons 8w

Law centres
Legal aid 13

Law officers
Complaints against police 895-6

Law reform
Legitimacy 596w

Lawler, Mr Geoff
Questions
Bradford Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 535-6w
Community radio, Competition 260w
Football, Hooliganism 564-5w
Young people 447-9w
Youth training scheme, Civil service 151w

Lawrence, Mr Ivan
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1201-2, 1214, 1231, 1242, 1250, 1273, 1324-5
Questions
Delos Santos, Cenos, Life imprisonment 413w
Dept of Education & Science, Departmental progress 475-8w

Lawson, Rt Hon Nigel, Chancellor of the Exchequer
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 756-60, 775
Questions
Balance of payments 87-8w
National Savings Certificates, Northern Ireland 330w
Tax allowances, Charities 559-60w

Laybys 453w
Catering 27-8w
Litter 28w
Mobile shops 453w

Lead
Water pollution 279w, 280w

Leadbitter, Mr Ted
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 24-5
Questions
Railway freight transport, Railways Act 1974 7

Leasehold housing (20.05.86) 204-5

Lee, Mr John, Under-Secretary of State for Defence Procurement
Questions
Challenger tanks, Defence procurement 636w
Data Protection Registrar, Ministry of Defence 264w
Defence contracts, Shipbuilding 426-7w
Defence land, Wales 236w
Defence procurement, Guided weapons 636w
Firearms, Defence contracts 636w
Housing, Coopers Lane 425-6w
Hydrofoils, Navy 391w
Keeni Meeni services, Security industry 264w
Local liaison committees, Ministry of Defence 236w
NH90 helicopters, Defence procurement 264w
Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Defence procurement 92w
SA 80 gun, Defence contracts 635-6w
Shipbreaking, Defence contracts 391-2w
Shipbreaking, Defence expenditure 392w
Warships, Costs 427w

Leeds
Domestic rates 369w
Housing estates 351

Leeds Eastern Health Authority 375-6w, 530-2w
Expenditure 375-6w
Hospital patients 530-2w
Hospital waiting lists 530-2w

Legal aid 12-3, 13-4
Average earnings 13
Law centres 13
Scotland (21.05.86) 365-411

Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL) 1985/86
2R (21.05.86) 365-411
Money res (21.05.86) 411

Legal costs
Road accidents 4w

Legionnaires disease (04.06.86) 903-11
Stafford Hospital 555w

Legionnaires Disease Inquiry 555w, (04.06.86) 903-11
Ministerial statements (04.06.86) 903-11

Legislation
Fishing vessels 610-1w
Welsh Office 211w

Legitimacy
Law reform 596w

Leicester
Council house sales 347-8
Empty housing 566-7w
Housing investment programmes 566-7w
Ministers domestic visits 478w
Smith houses 83-4w

Leicester City Council 66-7w
Defective housing 134-6w

Leicester Prison
Ministers domestic visits 253w

Leicester Rights Centre 66-7w

Leicestershire
Geriatrics 534w, 715
Hospital waiting lists 716
NHS finance 715-6
Road construction 160-1w
School leaving certificates 276-7w
Structure plans 160-1w

Leicestershire Health Authority 67-8w
Expenditure 67-8w

Leigh, Mr Edward
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 469, 496
Questions
Civil defence, Nuclear accidents 523
Pay review bodies 239-44w
Radioactive waste disposal, West Lindsey District Council 195w

Leighton, Mr Ron
Debates etc
"Building Businesses not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 545
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 532
Questions
Arrests, News International 12w
Detection rates, Tower Hamlets 13w
Picketing, News International 12w
Police national reporting centre, News International 12w
Restart programme, Ealing 49w
Road blocks, News International 12w
Unemployed, Employment schemes 145w

Leisure facilities
Armagh 42w
Recruitment 42w
Tourist industry 164

Lerwick
Pollution monitoring 235-6w
Radioactivity 235-6w

Lester, Mr Jim
Debates etc
Africa, International aid (23.05.86) 676-7
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1124, 1157, 1182-3
Plessey, Public petitions (20.05.86) 333
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 102-3

Letchworth Garden City Corporation 294-5w
Local Government Act 1972 294-5w

Letchworth Garden City Corporation Act 1962 294-5w

Leukaemia
West Yorkshire 540w

Level crossings
Cherry Hinton 29w

Lewis, Sir Kenneth
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (05.06.86) 1097
Prime Minister, Private Members motions (03.06.86) 746
Top Salaries Review Body (22.05.86) 557
Questions
Business statement 541, 1089

Lewis, Mr Terry
Questions
Bus services, Competition 21w

Libyan Arab Republic
Aliens 333w
Arab states 304-5w
Armed conflict 304-5w
F111 aircraft 730, 731
Immigration controls 333w, 515w
Terrorism 731
USA 731

Licensed premises
Dorset 518w

Licensing
Debt collection 408w

Licensing laws 16-7w
Young people 7w

Licensing of Venison Dealers (Application Procedures etc) (Scotland) Order 1984 228-9w

Licensing of Venison Dealers (Prescribed Forms etc) (Scotland) Order 1984 228-9w

Life imprisonment
Costs 413w
Crimes of violence 8w
Delos Santos, Cenos 413w

"Lifting the Burden White Paper"
Small businesses 166

Lighting
Crime prevention 255w
M25 10-1
Palace of Westminster 86w

Lilley, Mr Peter
Questions
Palace of Westminster, Heating 161-2w

Limited list prescribing 313-4w, 541w
Costs 313-4w
Surgical dressings 541w

Lindholme Prison 10w
Prison staff 10w

Lines of Communication Agreement 426w
Emergency planning 426w
USA 426w

Lionise
Government grants 80w

Listed buildings
Religious buildings 612w

Litherland, Mr Robert
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 819
Questions
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 166
Overseas aid, Africa 732

Litter 732
Employment opportunities 892-3
Employment schemes 613w
Laybys 28w
Voluntary organisations 613w

Liverpool
Ministers domestic visits 127w, 495-6w
Unemployment 147-8w, 149w
Vacancies 149w
Womens Hospital 224w, 321-2w
Youth unemployment 148-9w

Liverpool City Council 191w, 495-6w
Direct labour departments 495-6w
Housing investment programmes 191w

Liverpool Health Authority 322w
Hospital waiting lists 224w, 322w

Liverpool Prison 520w

Livestock
Radioactivity 488w, 552w

Livsey, Mr Richard
Questions
Hill livestock allowances 72w
Hill livestock allowances, Administrative delays 488w
Milk, Production quotas 71w
National parks, Wales 39-40w

Llandough Hospital 278w
Medical research 278w

Lloyd, Mr Tony
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 814, 821, 822, 826
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1156-8
Private Bills (03.06.86) 814
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 603-6
Questions
EC grants & loans, Greater Manchester 368w
Enterprise zones 193w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 260w
Foreign tourists, Immigration controls 524
Local government services, Privatisation 356-7
Part-time education, Members correspondence 183w
Radioactivity, Milk 200w

Loan guarantee scheme
Publicity 54w

Loans (04.06.86) 915-1052

Local authorities
Bus services 21w
Community industry scheme 210w
Contracts for services (23.05.86) 703-8
Council house sales 211-2w
Empty housing 81-2w
Housing improvement 614w
Nuclear free zones 139w, 562w
Reprography 367-8w
Safety (21.05.86) 361-4
Tenders (23.05.86) 703-8

Local authorities in Scotland
Domestic violence 346w
Nature conservation 282w
Waste disposal 280w
Youth training scheme 155w

Local education authorities
Capital investment 98-108w, 109-10w, 110-122w
Curriculum 601-2w
Educational finance 98-108w
Local government staff 370w
Technical & vocational education initiative 266-70w

Local enterprise agencies 150w

Local enterprise agency grant scheme 173-4

Local Government Act 1972 294-5w
Letchworth Garden City Corporation 294-5w

Local Government Boundary Commission for England 334w

Local government expenditure 198w
Council housing 494-6w
Darlington 341-2
Education 278w, 611w
Macclesfield 196w
Personal social services 531-2w
Scotland 576w
Voluntary organisations 191-2w, 343
Wales 38w

Local government finance 494w
Economic models 74-5w
Housing investment programmes 192w
Rate support grants 354-5
Rates & rating 195w
Scotland 279w, 892
Street cleaning 612w
Waste disposal 612w

Local government functions
Dwyfor District Council 211w
Roads 22w

Local government land
Building land 352-3
Land acquisition 353

Local government maladministration
Dwyfor District Council 350w

Local government reform
Greater London Council 202w, (23.05.86) 638-48
Local government staff 295w
Voluntary organisations 342-3

Local government revenue 494-6w
Council house sales 347-8w
Housing construction 353
Rates & rating 291w, 432w

Local government services
Privatisation 356-7
Sefton 193-4w

Local government social services
Residential care 603w

Local government staff
Joint manpower watch 567-8w
Local education authorities 370w
Local government reform 295w
Manpower 567-8w
Pay 370w
Wales 37w

Local liaison committees 236w
Ministry of Defence 236w

Lock-up garages 128w
Prisons 9-10w, 127w, 128w

Locomotives
Procurement 24w

Lofthouse, Mr Geoffrey
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 57-8

London Docklands Development Corporation
Disclosure of information 514w, 569w
Planning permission 514w
Professional consultants 296-8w

London Fire & Civil Defence Authority 16w, 516w
Manpower 16w, 516w

London International Group 407-8w
Wedgewood 407-8w

London marathon 196w
Government grants 196w

London Regional Transport 27w, 597w
Aldenham 597w
Buses 597w

London Residuary Body 84w, 202w, 497w, (23.05.86) 638-48
Conditions of employment 84w
Greater London Council 202w
Pay 497w

London Underground 27w
Railway fares 27w

Longannet power station 579w
Smoke & chimney gases 579w

Lord Advocate
Official Secrets Act 1911 581w

Lorries
Driving tests 10

Road traffic control 24w, 26w
Urban areas 26w

Lorry drivers
Working hours 27w

Loscoe
Tipping of waste 497w

Lost working days
Assaults on police 259w

Lothian Regional Council
Road construction 881

Low pay
Tourist industry 164

Luce, Rt Hon Richard, *Minister of State Privy Council Office (Minister for the Arts)*
Questions
Architects, Government departments 480w
Data Protection Registrar, Cabinet Office 331w
Museums & galleries, Compensation 332w
Public libraries, News International 480w
Sadlers Wells Theatre, Arts finance 628w
Town & country planning, Civil service manpower 224-6w
Town & country planning, Government departments 480w

Lyell, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 469, 480-4
University finance (20.05.86) 185
Questions
Neighbourhood watch schemes 515
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 79w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 77-8w

Macaulay Institute for Soil Research 282w
Costs 282w

Macclesfield
Local government expenditure 196w

McCrindle, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 937, 1003-5, 1007-8
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 211-2
Questions
Airlines, Competition 24w
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 597w
Farm buildings, Change of use 195w
Paige, Victor, Resignations 899
Personal pensions 725
Radiation hazards, Children 315w
Students, Housing benefits 719

McCurley, Mrs Anna
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 399-401
Questions
Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, Government grants to voluntary organisations 397-406w
Teachers, Scotland 581w

McDonald, Dr Oonagh
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 936-8, 944-5, 949-50, 994-5, 1020-1, 1052
Questions
Child benefit 310w, 472-4w
Child relief 318w
Government Communications Headquarters, Trade union membership 18w
Hospital waiting lists, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 536w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 617w
Personal taxation 309-10w
Restart programme, Take-up of employment 152-4w
Tax thresholds, Single people 473-6w
Tax yields, National insurance contributions 609w
Taxation 309-10w

MacGregor, Rt Hon John, *Chief Secretary to the Treasury*
Questions
Average earnings, Employment opportunities 90w
Civil service manpower, Government departments 609w
National income 470w
Private investment 89-90w
Private investment, Private sector housing 90w
Public expenditure 91w, 608-9w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Interest charges 469w
Treasury, Ministerial correspondence 307w
Unemployment, Costs 471-2w

McGuire, Mr Michael
Questions
Criminal statistics, Social problems 253w

McKay, Mr Allen
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 775
Questions
Business statement 538

MacKay, Mr Andrew
Questions
Building land, Inner city areas 351-2
Hippies, Trespass 730
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 258w

MacKay, Mr John, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 365-71, 376, 380, 384, 393, 398
Questions
Aberdeen, Government grants 574w
Agricultural research, Scotland 282w
Beekeeping, Scotland 1w
Burglary, Scotland 603-4w
Crime, Scotland 233w
Crimes of violence, Scotland 234w
Detection rates, Scotland 234w
Driving offences, Edinburgh 228w
Dunfermline & West Fife Hospital, Construction 889-90
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 281w
Firearms, Scotland 233-4w
Fishing vessels, Scotland 605w
Forestry Commission, Scotland 890-1
Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committees, Public participation in planning 890
Geriatrics, Scotland 230w
Haemophilia, Scottish health boards 604w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 346-7w
Hospital beds, Scotland 396w
Hospital beds, Strathclyde 342w
Hospitals, Scotland 229w
International conferences, Costs 1w
International conferences, Public order policing 397w
Kidnapping, Children 233w
Land acquisition, Scottish health boards 603w
Marginal land, Scotland 574w
Nurses, Scotland 343-5w, 345-6w
Personal social services, Scotland 604-5w
Police, Scotland 231-3w
Ports, Scotland 581w
Prison staff, Scotland 2w
Prisoners, Scotland 2w
Radiation hazards, Scotland 225-6w
Radioactivity, Scotland 227w
Rape, Scotland 235w
Residential care, Scotland 603w
Road accidents, Scotland 395w
Royal Scottish National Hospital, Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland 282-3w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 397w
Social security abuse, Scotland 604w
Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968, Government grants to voluntary organisations 397-406w

McKelvey, Mr William
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 401-2
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Factory closures 21w
General improvement areas, Kilmarnock 888-9
Procurators fiscal, Kilmarnock 896

MacKenzie, Rt Hon Gregor
Questions
Local government finance, Scotland 892

Maclean, Mr David
Questions
Land use, Property development 569w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 594-5w

Maclennan, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1102
Questions
EC Agricultural Council 487-8w
Hill livestock allowances, Scotland 346-7w
"Nuclear Power in Western Europe" 469w
Oaths 6-7w
Police, Schools 520
Prison population 256w, 261w
Sheep premiums, Scotland 397w
Sheep premiums, Wales 411w

McNair-Wilson, Mr Michael
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Northern Ireland Government 1078
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Emergency planning 391w
Top Salaries Review Body, Pay 177

McNair-Wilson, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 828
Questions
Hippies, Trespass 733-4

McNamara, Mr Kevin
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 559-61, 567-8
University finance (20.05.86) 185-6
Questions
Army in Northern Ireland, Crimes against the person 43-4w, 301-2w
Crimes against the person, Northern Ireland 340w, 455w
Housing completions 128w
Initial teacher training 329w
Initial teacher training, Humberside 329w
Rehousing, Army in Northern Ireland 42-3w
Rio Tinto Zinc, Government assistance to industry 742
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 463w

McQuarrie, Mr Albert
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money Res (05.06.86) 1331
Economic policy (03.06.86) 771
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 795, 796-7, 804, 806, 808
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 376, 378, 393, 396
Questions
Civil defence, Nuclear accidents 257w
Employment opportunities, Scotland 892-3
NHS, Housing 718

McWilliam, Mr John
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 296, 311

Madden, Mr Max

Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1196
University finance (20.05.86) 186-7
Questions
Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 263w
Immigration controls, Complaints 13w
Immigration controls, Heathrow 13-4w
Immigration officers, Civil servants secondment 14-5w
Immigration officers, Interviews 14w
Iran, Arms export 304w
Keeni Meeni Services, Security industry 264w
Keeni Meeni Services, Work permits 266w
Police, Ethnic minorities 519
Sri Lanka, Armed forces training 303-4w
Wages Inspectorate, Advisory services 50w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 50w, 218-20w
Wages Inspectorate, Prosecutions 50-2w

Madel, Mr David
Questions
Education, Local government expenditure 278w

Magazine press
House of Commons Library 74w

Magistrates 6w, 55w
Crown Prosecution Service 6w
Disclosure of information 246w
St Helens 424-6w
Swindon 431w
Wigan 424-6w

Magistrates Courts
Acquittals 17w, 337w
Convictions 17w, 337w
Crown Prosecution Service 6w

Magnox reactors 157w
Emergency planning 467w
Nuclear safety 157w
Power station closures 157w
Radiation hazards 467w

***Major, Mr John**, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health & Social Security*
Debates etc
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, North West region (22.05.86) 632-5
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 31-133 (passim)
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 237-9, 244-6, 249, 251-2
Questions
Age Concern, Upper Waiting Hall 167w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Health & Social Security 316w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Social security reform 726
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 63w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Advisory services 311w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 623w, 721-2, 722-3
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Erdington 722
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service recruitment 723
Employers contributions, Northern region 553-4w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Costs 532w
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Disability Alliance 66-7w
Exceptional needs payments, Doncaster 376-8w
Exceptional needs payments, Pensioners 314w
Housing benefit, Social security recipients 556w
Housing benefits, Government grants to local authorities 168w
Housing benefits, Social security benefits rules 169-70w, 317-8w
National insurance contributions, Self-employed 170-1w
National insurance contributions, Tax yields 617w
Personal injury compensation, War casualties 60w
Prisoners of war, Japan 386w
Rent rebates 513-4w
Resettlement units, Glasgow 56w
Re-establishment centres 317-9w
Severe weather payments, Social security recipients 523w
Social security abuse, Black economy 618w
Social Security Act 1985, Orders & regulations 723, 724
Social security appeals, European Court of Justice 63-4w
Social security benefits, Doncaster 377-8w
Social security benefits disqualification, Camden 68-9w
Social security benefits rules, Immigrants 617w
Social security claims, Costs 172w
Social security recipients, Coventry 525w
Social security recipients, Greater Manchester 57-8w
Social security recipients, Newham 56w, 554w
Social security recipients, Northern region 526w
Social security recipients, Slough 553-4w
Social security recipients, South Yorkshire 311w
Students, Supplementary benefits 525w
Supplementary benefits, Burnley 542w
Supplementary benefits, Social security benefits rules 525-6w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 56w, 314-5w
Unemployment, Burnley 542-4w
Unemployment, Housing benefits 373-4w
Unemployment benefits 65w
War widows, Social security recipients 69w
War widows pensions 165w

Malins, Mr Humfrey
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1311
Questions
Imports, Television 249w

Mallon, Mr Seamus
Debates etc
Accomplice Evidence (Northern Ireland) Bill, 1R (03.06.86) 748-50
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 42, 51-2
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 278-9
Questions
Action for Community Employment, Northern Ireland 1081
Allen, William, Prerogative of mercy 1075
Quarrying, Navan Fort 177w

***Malone, Mr Gerald**, an Assistant Whip*
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 608

Managers
NHS 319-20w

"Managing the Crisis in Council Housing" 81w

Mandatory student grants
Expenditure 478-9w
Social security benefits rules 525w

Manoil process 593w
Refuse 593w

Manpower Services Commission
Further education 266w
Industrial training 153w
Lancashire 361w
Prisoners release 265w
Shipbuilding 218w
Training 153w, 362w
Youth training scheme 151w

Mansfield District Council
Housing improvement 139-40w
Urban housing renewal unit 139-40w

Manufactured goods
Overseas trade 162w
UK trade with EC 45-6w

Manufactured imports
Industrial health & safety 584w

Manufacturing industries
Industrial injuries 152w
Manpower 419w
Northern region 419w

Maples, Mr John
Questions
Local government reform, Local government staff 295w

Marble Arch 7w

Marek, Dr John
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 815-8, 825
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 796
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 910
University finance (20.05.86) 182
Questions
A483, Speed limits 11w
British Rail, Railway travel 23w
Cars, Free ports 90w
Cars, Import duties 310w
Clwyd County Council, Pulford bypass 213w
Crime prevention, Security equipment 258w
Diplomatic service education allowances, Costs 17-8w
Diplomatic service education allowances, School fees 414w
Drug seizures 308-9w
Drug seizures, Heathrow 89w
Hospital waiting lists, Orthopaedics 66w
Railway freight transport, Railways Act 1974 7
Railway sidings, Private sector 30w
Road traffic, Postal services 30w
Welsh Advisory Body for Further & Higher Education, Public appointments 411w

Marginal land
Scotland 574w

Marine pilots 341-2w
Compensation 341-2w

Market research
Privacy 178w

Markets
Horses 626w, 632w

Marland, Mr Paul
Questions
Badgers, Bovine tuberculosis 222w
Rate support grants, Gloucestershire 342

Marlow, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1199, 1309, 1311
Economic policy, (03.06.86) 751
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 418
South Africa (19.05.86) 26-7
Questions
British shipbuilders, Privatisation 408-9w
Family credit, EC law 381-2w
Foreign tourists, Immigration controls 525
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 742
Libyan Arab Republic, USA 731
News International, Public order policing 517-8
Personal pensions, Hippies 725
Social security abuse, Black economy 618w
Social security benefits rules, Immigrants 617w

South Bank, Planning 196w
Workfare programme, Employment schemes 415w
Youth employment, Greater London 144w

Marriage Bill (HL) 1985/86 (Title changed to Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship (HL))
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Marriage (Prohibited Degrees of Relationship) Bill (HL) 1985/86 (Title changed from Marriage Bill (HL))
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Married couple
Tax thresholds 473-4w

Married people
Tax thresholds 473-6w

Marshall, Mr David
Questions
Lorry drivers, Working hours 27w
Scottish Trades Union Congress, Economic situation 577w
Unemployment, Glasgow 395w

Marshall, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 565-6

Martin, Mr Michael J
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 191, 192
British Rail Engineering, Springburn (04.06.86) 1061-3
British Rail Engineering, Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 201
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 5, 881
Business statement 1091

Mason, Rt Hon Roy
Questions
Barnsley College of Technology, Educational finance 121-2w, 123w
Beer, West Germany 70-1w, 222w
House of Commons Select Committees 434-46w
House of Commons Select Committees, Costs 447w, 481-4w
House of Commons Select Committees, Select committee reports 481w
Privileges Select Committee, Disclosure of information 483w
USA, Extradition 1070

Maternal mortality
Ethnic minorities 375w
Immigrants 375w

Maternity benefits
Costs 166-7w

Matrimonial proceedings
Prisoners 9w

Mattei, General 19-20w

Mature students
Teacher training 271w

Maudsley Hospital 168-9w

Mawhinney, Dr Brian, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Further education, Staff-student ratios 454w
Further education colleges, Northern Ireland 41-2w
Further education teachers, Northern Ireland 453-4w
Pupils, Rathlin Island 301w
Spina bifida, Strangford 456w
Student grants, Northern Ireland 582w
Victoria School, Ballyhalbert, Construction 456w
Youth training scheme, Further education 339-40w

Maxton, Mr John
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 185
Questions
Evidence, Scotland 894-5
Hospital beds, Scotland 396w
Local government expenditure, Scotland 576w
Nurses, Scotland 343-5w, 345-6w
School buildings, Scotland 888

Maxwell-Hyslop, Mr Robin
Debates etc
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 547-8
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1137-8, 1239, 1243, 1195, 1196, 1199, 1203-4, 1207
Questions
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 741

Mayhew, Rt Hon Sir Patrick, *Solicitor-General*
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 978-82
Questions
County Courts, Merthyr Tydfil 3w
Terrorism, Treason 14
Legal aid 12-3, 13-4
Legal aid, Average earnings 13
Legal aid, Law centres 13

Meacher, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 74, 137-9, 150
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 206-10, 266-9
Social security reform, Public petitions (19.05.86) 151
Questions
Community nurses, Psychiatric nurses 389w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 722-3
National insurance contributions, Self-employed 170-1w
Nursing homes, Registered homes 721
Unemployment benefits, Coal mining 48w
Written questions, Administrative delays 316w

Meadowcroft, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 327
Questions
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/6 9
Cruise missiles, RAF Greenham Common 429-30w
Housing estates, Leeds 351
Legal aid, Law centres 13
Morocco, Human rights 302w
Students, Social security benefits rules 719-20
Trials, Crown courts 246w
Western Sahara, Refugees 204w
Youth training scheme, Voluntary organisations 167

Meat & Livestock Commission
Sheep premiums 486w

Medical education
Mental health 61-2w

Medical equipment
Cardiff 284-5w

Medical research
Cancer 224w, 321w
Llandough Hospital 278w
MRC Mammalian Genome Unit 478w
Photosensitivity 224w, 321w
Pneumoconiosis 278w

Medical Research Council
Epilepsy 479w
Government grants 523w
Photosensitivity 184w
Research finance 184w

Medical treatments
Alcoholism 66w
Cancer 224w, 383-4w
Cervical cancer 349w, 460-1w
Photosensitivity 223w
Skin disorders 223w

Mediterranean
Radiation hazards 236w

Mellor, Mr David, *Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department*
Questions
A483, Speed limits 11w
Boundary Commissions, Information technology 332w
Burglary, Wales 261-2w
Crime, Greater Manchester 256w
Crime, Habitual offenders 253-4w
Crime victims, Households 255w
Crimes of violence, Domestic violence 255w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 629w, 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 629w, 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Compensation 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Costs 630-1w
Criminal records, Child care 516-7w
Criminal statistics, Social problems 253w
Detection rates, Tower Hamlets 13w
Detention centres 631w
Drug crimes, Council of Europe 335w
Featherstone Prison, Prison discipline 179-80w
Fine defaulters, Custodial treatment 562-3w
Forensic science, Evidence 178
Foster care, Coroners 10w
Fraud, Prosecutions 515-6w
Fugitive Offenders Act 1967 263w
Horses, Markets 632w
Hull Prison, Prison accommodation 9w, 10w
Hull Prison, Prison staff 10w
"Just Say No", Video recordings 262w
Licensed premises, Dorset 518w
Licensing laws, Young people 7w
Local Government Boundary Commission for England 334w
Magistrates courts, Acquittals 17w
Magistrates courts, Convictions 17w, 337w
Market research, Privacy 178w
Northeye Prison, Prison visitors 519-20w
Northeye Prison, Prisoners transfers 631w
Offences against children 257w
Paedophilia, Research 127w
Parole, Prison rules 519w
Prison hospitals, Hospital bed occupancy rates 520w
Prison hospitals, Surgery 520w
Prison Officers Association 258w
Prison population 256w, 261w
Prison population, Remand in custody 629w
Prison sentences, Crime 7w
Prison sentences, Offences against children 258w
Prison staff, House prices 262-3w
Prison staff, Industrial disputes 257w
Prison staff, Manpower 518w
Prison staff, Prisoners 16w
Prison staff, Training 518w
Prisoners, Fine defaulters 9w
Prisoners release, Terminal care 563-4w, 628w, 629w
Prisons, Lock-up garages 9-10w, 127w, 128w
Prosecutions, Crimes outside national territories 7w
Remand in custody 258-9w
Research finance, Criminology 178w
Shoplifting, Suicide 521w
Social security abuse, Wales 262w
Turnbull, Lancelot George, Open prisons 8w
Wilcox, Mary, Suicide 522w

Members
Access to Parliament (23.05.86) 649

Speakers rulings & statements (22.05.86) 557

Members allowances
Car allowances 471w

Members attendance
Ulster Unionists 1078

Members conduct
Speakers rulings & statements (20.05.86) 307, (21.05.86) 518

Members correspondence
Administrative delays 320w
Dept of Health & Social Security 169w, 320w
Part-time education 183w
Plasnett, Mr 201w
Saville, J W 197w

Members interventions
Speakers debates (19.05.86) 155
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 507, (23.05.86) 686, (03.06.86) 799, (05.06.86) 1114, 1204-6, 1210, 1213, 1226, 1224, 1321

Members speeches
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 75, (21.05.86) 412, 427, 441, (23.05.86) 709, (03.06.86) 795, 814, (05.06.86) 1197, 1217, 1250

Men
Unemployment 624w

Mental health
Medical education 61-2w

Mental Health Act 1983 13w

Mental health community care
Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985/86 727, 728
Public petitions (21.05.86) 503-4
Wales 289w
West Lambeth Health Authority 384-5w

Mental health services
Young people 168w

Mental hospitals
Prisoners transfers 61w
Schizophrenia 60-1w

Mental patients
Prisoners 61w

Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland 282-3w
Royal Scottish National Hospital 282-3w

Mentally handicapped
Community care (21.05.86) 503-4

Merchant, Mr Piers
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 427-31

Merchant seamen
International Labour Organisation 247w

Merchant Shipping Act 1984 246-7w

Merchant Shipping (Cargo Ship Construction & Survey) Regulations 1984 (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Chemical Tankers) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Dangerous Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Fire Protection & Fire Appliances) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Gas Carriers) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances Regulations 1980) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Life-Saving Appliances) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Musters & Training) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant Shipping (Radio Installations) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Merchant ships (21.05.86) 412-56
British shipbuilders 164w
Immersion suits 203w
Shipbuilding 162w, 163w, 248-50w

Merchant Ships (Passenger Ship Construction (New & Existing Ships) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (05.06.86) 1100

Mersey barrage 355w

Mersey Regional Health Authority 322w
Hospital waiting lists 224w, 322w

Merseyside
Ministers domestic visits 261w
Unemployment 147-8w, 149w, 150w
Vacancies 149w

Merseyside Port Authority 411w

Merthyr Tydfil 246w
County Courts 3w, 246w

Methane
Tipping of waste 497w

Metropolitan Districts
Secondary education 93-4w

Metropolitan Police
Duty solicitors 363w
Immigration controls 632w
Manpower 124-5w

Mexborough
Social security recipients 377-8w

Meyer, Sir Anthony
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1111, 1139, 1160, 1164-5
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 563

Michie, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 145-6

Middle East
Armed conflict 305w
Peace negotiations 302-3w, 447w

Middle schools 479w
Verwood 479w

Midwives
Pay 546w

Mikardo, Mr Ian
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 302, 317-9

Milford Haven Port Authority Bill 1985/86
Order for resuming adjourned 2R read (22.05.86) 513, (05.06.86) 1069

Military aid
Angola 304w
Nicaragua 305w

Military aircraft
Air force bases 428w
USA 428w

Military attaches 626w
Deportation 626w
South Africa 626w

Military ceremonies
Holy Loch 237w

Military exercises
Cruise missiles 12w
National parks 39-40w
USA 243w

Military Police 12w

Milk
Food subsidies 488-91w
Production quotas 71w
Radioactivity 133w, 200w, 219-20w, 225w, 284w, 296w, 372w

Milk & milk products
New Zealand 365w

Millan, Rt Hon Bruce
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 435-7

Miller, Mr Hal
Debates etc
A38, Bromsgrove (23.05.86) 697-9, 702

Mills, Mr Iain
Questions
Radioactivity, Advisory services 137w

Mills, Sir Peter
Questions
Commons Registration Act 1965, Administrative delays 596w

Ministerial correspondence 197w
Administrative delays 307w
Treasury 307w

Ministerial responsibility
Calder Hall 179w
Chapelcross Power Station 179w
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 458, 459

Ministerial speeches
National Association of Port Employers 29w
Speakers rulings & statements (20.05.86) 206, (21.05.86) 370, (05.06.86) 1202, 1205

Ministerial statements
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 188-99
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 542-56
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 558-68
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 903-11
South Africa (19.05.86) 19-28
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 28, (21.05.86) 359-60, (22.05.86) 521-2, 562, (03.06.86) 793-4, (04.06.86) 908, 909, 911
University finance (20.05.86) 179-87

Ministers correspondence 78w, 85w, 307w, 547w, 556w
Westminster Hospital 556w

Ministers domestic visits
Basildon 171
Leicester 478w
Leicester Prison 253w
Liverpool 127w, 495-6w
Merseyside 261w

Ministers visits abroad
South Korea 353w
Turkey 176w, 238w, 430w

Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries & Food
Data Protection Registrar 366w

Ministry of Defence
Data Protection Registrar 264w
Housing 425-6w
Local liaison committees 236w

Miscampbell, Mr Norman
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 476-7

Mitchell, Mr Austin
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 930, 942-3, 945, 962-3, 970-2, 973, 974-6, 977, 981, 982
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 458-9, 466, 470-6, 498
Radioactive waste disposal, Public petitions (21.05.86) 504
Questions
Aliens, Libyan Arab Republic 333w
British Tourist Authority, Expenditure 625w
Central Electricity Generating Board, South Killingholme 468w
Cereals, Agricultural production 366w

Cereals, Common farm prices 69w
Common agricultural policy, EC budget 365-6w
Common agricultural policy, Expenditure 70w
Common farm prices 71-2w
Common farm prices, European Monetary System 219w
Common farm prices, West Germany 72w
EC budget 173w, 308w
EC budget, Agriculture 88-9w
EC budget, Expenditure 172-3w
EC budget, UK contributions 188-9w
Exchange rates, Foreign tourists 624w
Farm incomes 133-4w
Fishing vessels, France 626w
Fishing vessels, Legislation 610-1w
Fishing vessels, Scotland 605w
Fishing vessels, Spain 610w
Health hazards, Natural radioactivity 373w
Immigration controls, Temporary immigrants 515w
Income, Bank of England 472w
Ionizing radiation, Radioactive waste disposal 493w
Natural radioactivity, Health hazards 322-4w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Gas-cooled reactors 206w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, West Germany 511w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 138w
Nuclear power stations, South Killingholme 513w
Pre-school education 184w
Public sector borrowing requirement, Interest charges 469w
Radioactive waste disposal 76w, 142w, 493-4w
Radioactive waste disposal, Anglian Water Authority 512w, 513w,
Radioactive waste disposal, Concrete 291-2w
Radioactive waste disposal, Consultants 77w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 76w
Radioactive waste disposal, Departmental correspondence 80w
Radioactive waste disposal, Dept of the Environment 77w
Radioactive waste disposal, Disclosure of information 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 76w, 512-3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Geology 511-2w
Radioactive waste disposal, Heath, Michael 493w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 513w
Radioactive waste disposal, Radiation hazards 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Security 494w
Radioactive waste disposal, South Killingholme 77w, 78w, 85w, 142w, 197w, 201w, 513w
Radioactive waste disposal, Special development orders 77w, 190-1w, 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Transport of radioactive materials 78-9w
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 83w
Radioactive wastes 294w, 513w
Radioactive wastes, Health hazards 196-7w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 142w, 511w
Radioactive wastes, Radiation hazards 76w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 492w
Radioactivity, Television programmes 492-3w
Radiochemical Inspectorate, Disclosure of information 299-301w
South Killingholme, Population 224w
Temporary immigrants, Syrian Arab Republic 514-5w
Tourism, Disclosure of information 584w
Tourist industry, Government assistance to industry 422w
Tourist industry, Terrorism 421-2w
UK contributions to EC budget 88w

Mitchell, Mr David, *Minister of State for Transport*
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering, Springburn (04.06.86) 1063-8
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 815, 820-5
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1200-1327 (passim)
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 866-8
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1183-8
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money Res (05.06.86) 1330-2
Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1195-1327
Questions
British Rail, Railway travel 23w
British Rail Engineering 6
British Rail Engineering, Contracts 450w
British Rail Engineering, Export promotion 20w
British Rail Engineering, Factory closures 21w
British Rail Engineering, Horwich 6
British Rail Engineering, Redundancy 5, 6-7
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 5-6
British Rail Engineering, Swindon 20w
Bus services, Competition 21w
Bus services, Local authorities 21w
Bus services, Passenger transport executives 21w
Bus services, Taxis 22w
Bus services, Transport Act 1985 21-2w
Channel tunnel, France 450w
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 25w
Level crossings, Cherry Hinton 29w
Locomotives, Procurement 24w
London Regional transport, Aldenham 597w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 24w
Railway fares, London Underground 27w
Railway freight transport, Railways Act 1974 7
Railway industry, Employment opportunities 5
Railway industry, Procurement 6
Railway sidings, Government grants 160w
Railway sidings, Private sector 30w
Road traffic, Postal services 30w
Road transport workers, Crimes of violence 30w
Underground railways, Greater London 22w
Underground railways, Railway fares 450w

Moate, Mr Roger
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 860-2
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1171-4

Mobile shops
Laybys 453w
Roads 453w

Mobility allowance
Administrative delays 165w
Blind 716-7
Northern Ireland 461-2w
Social security allowance 171-2w
Social security appeals 461w
Social security benefits rules 716-7
Social security recipients 461-2w

Modbury
Historic buildings 372w

Modernisation
RAF Fylingdales 263-4w

Monetary compensatory amounts
EC Agricultural Council 487-8w

Money resolution (21.05.86) 411, (22.05.86) 626, (04.06.86) 914, (05.06.86) 1328-32

"Monopolies & Mergers Commission Reports" 557w

Monro, Sir Hector
Debates etc
Sports, Scotland (19.05.86) 155-6
Questions
Annan bypass, Government contracts 577w
Deer, Scotland 228-9w

Montgomery, Sir Fergus
Questions
Air fares, Europe 27w
Manoil process, Refuse 593w
Passenger transport executives, Redundancy pay 598-9w

Moore, Mr John, *Financial Secretary to the Treasury (from 21 May Secretary of State for Transport)*
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1100-9, 1113, 1131
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money Res (05.06.86) 1329
Questions
Capital gains tax, Tax yields 91w
Fishing vessels, Legislation 610-1w
Fishing vessels, Spain 610w
Income tax, Tax yields 174-5w
Marine pilots, Compensation 341-2w
Passenger transport executives, Redundancy pay 598-9w
Profit sharing, Finance Act 1978 190w
Share option scheme, Profit sharing 187-8w

Morocco
Human rights 302w
Overseas trade 47w

Morris, Rt Hon Alfred
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 818-20, 823-4
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 71-2, 112-4
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 235-6
Questions
Channel tunnel, Railway network 203w
Disaster relief, VAT 179-80w
Housing associations, House purchase 504w
Mobility allowance, Blind 716-7
Sport Aid, VAT 1082
Waldheim, Kurt, War crimes 34w, 245w, 447w
Wheelchair housing, Construction costs 505w
Wheelchair housing, House purchase 503-4w, 504-5w

Morris, Rt Hon John
Questions
Bows & arrows 336w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Welsh language 286w
Terrorism, Treason 14-5

Morris, Mr Michael
Questions
Paige, Victor, Resignations 902
Pharmacies 592w, 530w
Pharmacies, Costs 529w
Pharmacies, Family practitioner committees 530w
Pharmacies, France 530w
Pharmacists, Contracts 529w
Prescriptions, Rural areas 529w

Morrison, Mr Peter, *Minister of State for Trade & Industry*
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 450-2
Tin, Cornwall (23.05.86) 652, 656-8
Questions
British Leyland, Privatisation 249-50w
British Shipbuilders, Day, Graham 47w

British Shipbuilders, Government assistance to nationalised industries 46w
British Shipbuilders, Government contracts 45w
British Shipbuilders, Hares, Phillip 46w
British Shipbuilders, Manpower 557-8w
British Shipbuilders, Merchant ships 164w
British Shipbuilders, Privatisation 408-9w
British Shipbuilders, Redundancy 186-7w
British Steel, Government assistance to nationalised industries 406w
British Steel Corporation, Government assistance to nationalised industries 616w
British Steel Corporation, Manpower 409w
BSC (Industry) Ltd, Employment opportunities 613-4w
City action teams, Newcastle-Gateshead 558w
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 740-1, 742, 743-4
Import quotas, Car industry 405w
Jaguar Cars, Privatisation 43w
Nissan, Industrial production 45w
Printing industry, Employment 406w
Printing industry, Industrial production 406-7w
Regional aid, Glanford 364w
Regional aid, Northern region 406w, 409w
Regional development grants, Northern region 409w, 558w
Rio Tinto Zinc, Government assistance to industry 742
Shipbuilding, Assisted areas 409w
Shipbuilding, EC countries 163-4w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 162w, 163w, 248-50w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund, Companies 615w
Tin, Cornwall 741-2

Mortgage relief 470w
Departmental leaflets 169
Social security recipients 381-2w
Supplementary benefits 315w
Unemployment 169

Mortgages (04.06.86) 915-1052
Debts 628w

Motor vehicle registration 23w, 160w
Rural areas 247w

Motor vehicles
Axle weights 23w

Motor Vehicles (Variation of Speed Limits) Regulations 1986
(05.06.86) 1100

Motorcycles
Driving tests 24-5w, 340-2w

Motorway service areas
M20 341w

Motorways
Construction costs 26-7w
Death 24w

Mount Pleasant 175w

Mount Pleasant Airport 175w
Air force bases 175w

Moynihan, Mr Colin
Debates etc
Africa, International aid (23.05.86) 671-6
Questions
Carreras Rothmans, Factory closures 634w

MRC Mammal Genome Unit 478w

MRC Mamalian Genome Unit
Medical research 478w

Mudd, Mr David
Questions
Container terminals, Falmouth Harbour 247w
Tin, Cornwall 741-2

Mulcahy, Keith (03.06.86) 872-8

Multifibre arrangement
Bangladesh 405w

Multiple occupation
Fires 283w
Scotland 283w

Murphy, Mr Christopher
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement 177w
Drug crimes, Council of Europe 335w
Heritage, Government achievements 509-10w
Northern Ireland Assembly 40w

Museums & galleries
Cathays Park 130w
Compensation 332w
Property Services Agency 137-8w
Repairs & maintenance 137-8w

M20
Motorway service areas 341w

M3 2-3, 30w
Road works 30w

M3-M27 link 2-3
Road construction 2-3

M25 10-1, 26w, 161w, 596-7w
Death 26w
Lighting 10-1
Road accidents 26w
Road construction 2
Road traffic 596-7w
Traffic noise 10-1

M40 161w, 596-7w
Road traffic 161w, 596-7w

M80 235w

National Advisory Board for Public Sector Higher Education 121-2w, 123w

National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 269w, 478w
Polytechnics 269w

National Association of Local Councils 198w

National Association of Port Employers 29w
Ministerial speeches 29w

National Bike Week 25w

National Bus Company
Buy outs 3
Privatisation 3-4, 24w, 203-4w

National Coal Board
Coal prices 606w
Government assistance to nationalised industries 465w
Manpower 465w
North East region 465w
Northern region 465w
Nottinghamshire 594w
Recruitment 594w
Subsidiary companies 157w
Youth employment 31w

National Farmers Union of Scotland 574w

National Fuel Distributors 157w

National Gallery 332w

National House Building Council 136w
Defective housing 136w

National income 470w
NHS finance 726-7

National insurance contributions 174-5w
Earnings limits 170-1w
Self-employed 170-1w
Tax yields 609w, 617w

National parks
Conservation 614w
Lake district 348-9
Land use 567-8w
Military exercises 39-40w
Wales 39-40w

National Radiological Protection Board
Emergency planning 375w
Pollution monitoring 200w
Radioactivity 75w

National Rubella Council 312w
Government grants 312w

National savings certificates
Banks 330w
Northern Ireland 330w

National Society for Mentally Handicapped People in Residential Care (21.05.86) 503-4

National territory
Republic of Ireland 561-2w

NATO
Binary chemical weapons 33w
Chemical weapons 175w, 429w
Nuclear artillery shells 237w

Nato Nuclear Planning Group
Nuclear artillery shell 237w

Natural radioactivity 343-4, 492w
Health hazards 322-4w, 373w

Naturalisation
English language 334-5w
South East Asia 334-5w
Vietnamese refugees 334w

Nature Conservancy Council
Sites of special scientific interest 199w

Nature conservation
Agriculture 221w
Agriculture Bill 1985/86 221w
Local authorities in Scotland 282w

Naval bases
Holy Loch 237w

Navan Fort 177w, 462w
Planning permission 177w
Quarrying 177w, 462w

Navy
Hydrofoils 391w
Radiation hazards 236w

NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 593w
Employment opportunities 593w
Northern region 593w

Neale, Mr Gerrard
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1227, 1228, 1248-9, 1281
Questions
NHS, Managers 319-20w

Neasden Hospital 547w

Needham, Mr Richard, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
Questions
Attendance allowance, Northern Ireland 461w, 462w
Birth rate, Northern Ireland 298-300w
Cervical cancer, Northern Ireland 459-60w, 460-1w
Government grants, Rathlin Island 299-301w
Housing construction, Ballyhalbert 299w
Leisure facilities, Armagh 42w
Mobility allowance, Northern Ireland 461-2w
Quarrying, Navan Fort 177w, 462w

Negligence
Road accidents 4w, 5w

Neighbourhood watch schemes 515

Nellist, Mr Dave
Questions
International conferences, Costs 1w
International conferences, Public order policing 397w
National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 478w
News International, Arrests 126w
Prime Minister domestic visits, International conferences 33w
Racial attacks 254w
Slums, Coventry 347
Social security recipients, Coventry 525w
Vacancies, Northern Ireland 582-3w, 633w
Vacancies, Scotland 579-81w
Vacancies, Vocational guidance 585-92w

Nelson, Mr Anthony
Questions
SALT agreements, USA 732

Netherlands
Air routes 452w

Nevada
Nuclear weapons tests 429w

New businesses 166

New clauses
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 74, 75

New Commonwealth & Pakistan
Immigration controls 524

New Delhi 17w

New Forest 733-4

New towns 293-4w
Employment opportunities 882-3
Irvine 884

New towns development corporations
Scotland 882-3

New York 249-50w

New Zealand
Imports 365w
Milk & milk products 365w

Newcastle Upon Tyne 57-8w
Fleming Memorial Hospital 57-8w

Newcastle-Gateshead
City action teams 558w

Newham
Handicapped 555w
Housing improvement 141w
Social security recipients 56w, 554w
Supplementary benefits 554w
Unemployment 53-5w
Urban housing renewal unit 141w
Youth unemployment 55w

News International 8-9w, 12w, 126w, 336w, 480w, 517w
Arrests 12w, 126w
Electronic surveillance 8-9w
Industrial disputes 126w, 336w, 516-7, 517-8
Picketing 12w
Police 336w
Police National Reporting Centre 12w
Public libraries 480w
Public order policing 12w, 126w, 516-7, 517-8
Road blocks 12w

Newspaper press
House of Commons Library 74w

Newton, Mr Tony, Minister of State for Social Security
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 39-129 (Passim)
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 216-87 (Passim)
Questions
Attendance allowance, Administrative delays 165w
Blind, Social security reform 555w
Board & lodging charges, Residential care 164w, 165w
British Home for Incurables Hospital, Supplementary benefits 526w
Child benefit, Education of children at home 541-2w
Child benefit, Social security reform 616w
Child benefit, Students 379w
Child relief 318w
Exceptional circumstances additions, Handicapped 531w
Family credit, EC law 381-2w
Family credit, Social security reform 522-3w
Handicapped, Newham 555w
Handicapped, Slough 555w
Heating allowances, Expenditure 376w
Heating allowances, Supplementary benefits 376w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 386-90w
Income support scheme, Social security reform 382-3w
Maternity benefits, Costs 166-7w
Mental health community care, Disabled Persons (Services Consultation & Representation) Bill 1985-86 727, 728
Mobility allowance, Blind 716-7
Mobility allowance, Social security allowance 171-2w
Pensions, Tax allowances 532w
Registered homes, Board & lodging charges 223w
Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children, Upper Waiting Hall 526w
Residential care, Ernst & Whinney 552w
Severe weather payments, Scotland 65w, 168w
Social security benefits rules, Students 311w
Social security recipients, Mortgage relief 381-2w
Statutory maternity pay, Tax yields 57w
Student grants, Departmental coordination 720
Students, Housing benefits 719
Students, Social security benefits 525w
Students, Social security benefits rules 617w, 718-9, 719-20
Supplementary benefits, Mortgage relief 315w
Supplementary benefits, Social security benefits rates 540w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 56w
Written questions, Administrative delays 316w

NHS
Disciplinary proceedings 528w
Gwynedd 286-7w
Hospital waiting lists 528w
Housing 556w, (23.05.86) 690-6, 717-8
Managers 319-20w
Property transfer 289w, 603w, 717-8
Re-employment 720
Technicians 543w
Test tube babies 288-9w
Wales 289w

NHS administration
Cost effectiveness 900
Health service staff 720-1
Hospitals 899-900
Management 899, 900-1, 902
Manpower 720
North Western Regional Health Authority 721
Public appointments 899
Scotland 156w
Training 901

NHS finance
District health authorities 62w
Greater London 385-6w
Leicestershire 715-6
Management 901
National income 726-7
North Western Regional Health Authority 721
Primary health care 544w
Regional health authorities 62w
Resource Allocation Working Party 537-8w
Scunthorpe Hospital 537w
South Glamorgan Health Authority 285w
St Davids Hospital 40w
Teaching hospitals 374w
Training 545w
Wandsworth Health Authority 724-5
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 537-8w

NHS Management Board 898-9, 902
Public appointments 898-9

NHS Training Authority 545w

NH90 Helicopters 264w
Defence procurement 264w

Nicaragua
Military aid 305w
USA 305w

Nicholls, Mr Patrick
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 564-5
Questions
Motor vehicles, Axle weights 23w
Rates & rating, Local government finance 195w

9 Signals Regiment 428w, 431w, (22.05.86) 558-68
Cyprus 431w
Trials 124w

Nissan
Industrial production 45w

Non-domestic rates
Northern region 192w
Rates & rating 192w
South east region 192w

Norman Shaw Building
Water supply 86w, 198w

Norris, Mr Steve
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 577-8
Questions
Cash limits, Dept of Employment 422-3w

North East coast drift fishery 491-2w
Manpower 491-2w

North East region
National Coal Board 465w

North East Thames Regional Health Authority 536w
Cancer 383-4w
Hospital waiting lists 536w

North Korea
South Korea 353w

North Sea
Environment protection 281w, 282w
International conferences 281w, 282w

North Sea oil
Export controls 594w
Investment 468w

North Wales 333-4w
Police 333-4w

North West Kilmarnock Joint Initiative 888-9
Slum clearance 888-9

North West region
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices (22.05.86) 628-35
European Regional Development Fund 368w

North West Thames Regional Health Authority 382w
Hospital closures 382w

North Western Regional Health Authority
NHS administration 721
NHS finance 721

Northern Ireland
Action for Community Employment 1081
Attendance allowance 461w, 462w
Birth rate 298-300w
Central Intelligence Agency 1076
Cervical cancer 459-60w, 460-1w
Convictions (03.06.86) 748-50
Crimes against property 456w
Crimes against the person 340w, 455w
Demonstrations 337-8w, 1074-5
Drinking & driving 338-9w
Drunkenness 338w
Education finance 453-4w
Employment discrimination 1071
Financial services 634w
Further education colleges 41-2w
Further education teachers 42w, 453-4w
Industry 633w
Jobclubs 634w
Mobility allowance 461-2w

National savings certificates 330w
Paramilitary forces 1076-7
Perinatal mortality 298-300w
Plastic bullets 1072-3
Police informers (03.06.86) 748-50
Political parties 635w, 1077-8
Political refugees 1072
Prison staff 635w, 1079
Prosecutions 337-8w
Road accidents 338w, 339w
School leaving 582-3w
Security 1075-6
Skillcentres 458-60w
Small businesses 633w
Staff-student ratios 454w
Student grants 582w
Terrorism 455-6w, 463-4w, 522w
Tourism 632w
Training 458-60w
Unemployment 454w, 455w
Vacancies 454w, 582-3w, 633w
Youth training scheme 339-40w
Youth unemployment 454w, 455w

Northern Ireland Assembly 40w, 462w
Political parties 633w

Northern Ireland district councils
EC grants & loans 40-1w

Northern Ireland Government
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1073, 1078
USA 1075

Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board
Trade missions 634w

Northern Ireland Office
Computer privacy 301w
Data Protection Registrar 301w

Northern Ireland Railways 456-7w

Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978 463w

Northern region
British shipbuilders 557-8w
British Steel Corporation 409w
BSC (Industry) Ltd 613-4w
Building industry 417w
Community programme 415-6w
Employers contributions 553-4w
Employment 420w
Enterprise allowance scheme 415-6w
Housing improvement 510w
Housing investment programmes 505-9w
Job centres 415w
Job creation schemes 416w
Manufacturing industries 419w
National Coal Board 465w
NCB (Enterprise) Ltd 593w
Non-domestic rates 192w
Rate limitation 612-3w
Rate support grant penalties 495w
Rate support grants 342
Redundancy 418-9w, 558w, 728
Regional aid 406w, 409w
Regional development grants 409w, 558w
Road construction 451w
Skillcentres 420w
Small businesses 415-6w
Social security recipients 526w
Take-up of employment 415w
Unemployment 418w
Urban development grants 496w
Urban programme 496w
Vacancies 419w
VAT 471w
Vocational guidance 419w

Northern Regional Health Authority 528-9w, 538w
Hospital patients 528-9w
Hospitals 538w
Out-patients 528-9w

Northeye Prison 519-20w, 631w
Prison visitors 519-20w
Prisoners transfers 631w

Norton, S J 85w

Norwich
Voluntary schools (23.05.86) 709-14

Nottinghamshire
National Coal Board 594w

Nuclear accidents (23.05.86) 659-70
Cancer 493w
Cap de la Hague 345
Civil defence 254w, 256-7w, 523
Compensation 32w
Disclosure of information 32w, 193w, 251-2w, 299-301w
Emergency planning 31-2w, 39w, 252-3w, 254w, 256-7w, 375w, 468w
France 31-2w, 252-3w
Hinkley point B 32w
International cooperation 33w, 354, 565-6w
Nuclear free zones 354
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 252w
Pollution 192-3w, 200w
Pollution monitoring 254-5w
Potassium iodate 385w
Radiation hazards 290-1w
Radioactive fallout 354
Radioactivity 193w
Scientists 137w
Sellafield 252w
Torness Power Station 891-2
USSR 20w, 33w, 39w, 137w, 192-3w, 219-20w, 315w, 346w, 353, 354, 370w, 468w, 492w, 523, 547w, 576w, 577w

Nuclear artillery shell
Nato Nuclear Planning Group 237w

Nuclear artillery shells
NATO 237w

Nuclear free zones
Local authorities 139w, 562w
Nuclear accidents 354

Nuclear fuel reprocessing
Fast reactors 467w
Gas-cooled reactors 206w
Nuclear accidents 252w
Nuclear power stations 577w
Nuclear reactors 465-6w
Radioactive waste disposal 79w, 467w, 513w
Radioactive wastes 77-8w, 142w, 511w
Sellafield 466w, 594-5w
Transport of radioactive materials 610w
West Germany 511w
Windscale 465-6w

Nuclear fuels
Advanced gas-cooled reactors 466w
Fast reactors 466w
Nuclear reactors 467w
Nuclear safeguards 466w

Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 138w, (21.05.86) 457-503
Radioactive waste disposal 197w
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee 83w
Special development orders 512w

Nuclear Installations Inspectorate
Civil service manpower 55w

Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983 3w
Prosecutions 3w

Nuclear power 177
Coal mining 885-6
Electricity generation 206w, 607w
Electricity tariffs 886
Euratom 606w
France 607w
International cooperation 142w, 143w

"Nuclear Power in Western Europe" 469w

Nuclear power stations
Calder Hall 466w
Cap de la Hague 496-7w
Chapelcross 466w
Coal mining 886-7
Electricity generation 158w, 355-6w, 884-5, 887
Emergency planning 290w
Gwynedd 39w, 290w
International cooperation 565-6w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 577w
Nuclear safety 354-5w, 885
Pollution 344
Population 354w
Power station closures 157-8w
Radioactive fallout 492w
Radioactive wastes 205-6w
Research 157-8w
Safety (23.05.86) 659-70
South Killingholme 513w
Transport of radioactive materials 205-6w

Nuclear reactors
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 465-6w
Nuclear fuels 467w
Nuclear safety 31w, 353-4w, 468w

Nuclear safeguards
Central Electricity Generating Board 467w
International Atomic Energy Agency 466-7w
Nuclear fuels 466w
Plutonium 466-7w
Sellafield 466w, 467w

Nuclear safety
Berkeley Power Station 354-5w
Euratom 606w
International Atomic Energy Agency 464w
International cooperation 31w
Magnox reactors 157w
Nuclear power stations 354-5w, 885
Nuclear reactors 31w, 353-4w, 468w
Pressurised water reactors 253w
Radioactive waste disposal 76w
Radioactivity 343-4
USSR 353w

Nuclear test ban 412w

Nuclear weapons
Plutonium 31w

Nuclear weapons policy 527

Nuclear weapons tests
Arms control 561w
Nevada 429w
Seismic monitoring 412-3w

Nuisance
Airships 29w

Nurses
Manpower 343-5w, 345-6w
Pay 310-2w, 546w
Scotland 343-5w, 345-6w

Nurses homes (23.05.86) 690-6, 717

Nursing homes
Board & lodging charges 223w, 526w
Fees & charges 617w
Registered homes 524w, 547-8w, 721

Nylon monofilament gill nets
Fishing vessels 605w

Oakes, Rt Hon Gordon
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 920, 929, 940-1, 948, 989-90

Oaths 6-7w

O'Brien, Mr William
Questions
Leukaemia, West Yorkshire 540w
Prison staff, Manpower 518w
Prison staff, Training 518w

Occupational health services 592w
International Labour Conference 592w

Offences against children 257w
Prison sentences 258w

Offenders
Psychotherapy 524w

Office of Fair Trading
Debt collection 408w
Estate agents 410w

Office of Fair Trading Annual Report, 1985 558w

Offices
European Assembly 214w
Procurators fiscal 896

Official cars
Parking offences 514w

Official Report
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86)
Not in bound volume

Official secrets
Armed forces discharges 429w
Cyprus 124w, 428w, 429w, 431w
Scotland 581w

Official Secrets Act 1911 581w
Lord Advocate 581w

Oil fired power stations
Electricity generation 891

Oil prices
Defence expenditure 389-90w
OPEC 251-2w
Scotland 578w

Oil Rigs
Construction 879-80
Scotland 879-80

Oil terminals 411w
Ynys Mon 411w

Okehampton bypass 371-2w
Land pollution 371w
River pollution 371-2w
South West Water Authority 371-2w

O'Neill, Mr Martin J
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 181-2

Onslow, Mr Cranley
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 321-3
Questions
Airships, Nuisance 29w
Import substitution 250-1w
North East coast drift fishery, Manpower 491-2w

OPEC
Oil prices 251-2w

Open prisons
Turnball, Lancelot George 8w

Operation Raleigh 235w
Scotland 235w

Opthalmic services
Spectacles 548w

Oppenheim, Mr Phillip
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 250-1, 252
Questions
Employment policy 170
Tipping of waste, Loscoe 497w
Tipping of waste, Methane 497w

Oppenheim, Rt Hon Sally
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 316, 326-7

Opposition days
Economic policy (03.06.86) 751-92

Oral questions
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.86) 897

Orchard replanting grants 70w

Orders & regulations
Social Security Act 1985 723, 724
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 460

Ordnance Survey
Accounting 612w
Finance 612w

Oriel Lodge
Registered homes 617w
Sudbury 617w, 721

Orion Electric
Manpower 131w

Orthopaedics
Hospital waiting lists 66w
South West Thames Regional Health Authority 66w

Osborn, Sir John
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1108

Ottaway, Mr Richard
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 441-4
Questions
Acid rain, Research finance 199w
Agriculture, Advisory services 199-200w
Agriculture Bill 1985-86, Nature conservation 221w
Cabinet Office, Pollution control 179w
Capital allowances, Ships 331w
Shipping 246-7w
Sites of special scientific interest, Nature conservancy council 199w
Sites of special scientific interest, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 199w

Outgoers scheme 71w

Out-patient clinics
Hospital waiting lists 59w

Out-patients
Northern Regional Health Authority 528-9w

Overseas aid 3w
Africa 2w, (23.05.86) 671-82, 728, 732
Commonwealth 15
Expenditure 18
India 15
Public expenditure 728
Rain forests 18
Tanzania 2w
Western Sahara 204w

Overseas Development Administration
Crown Agents 410w

Overseas Development Administration Development Divisions 79-80w
Conservation 79-80w

Overseas forces
USA 175-6w

Overseas investment 309w

Overseas trade
Algeria 47w
European Economic Community 162w
Manufactured goods 162w
Morocco 47w

Overtime
Royal Ulster Constabulary 301w

Owen, Rt Hon David
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 21
Tin, Cornwall (23.05.86) 657
Questions
Chemical weapons deployment 527
SALT agreements, USA 729-30

Own resources 89w, 483-4w
EC budget 89w
UK contributions to EC budget 89w

Oxford street 259w
Demonstrations 259w

PA Management Consultants 457-8w
Harland & Wolff 457-8
Shipbuilding 457-8w

Paedophilia
Research 127w

Page, Mr Richard
Questions
Cincinnati slaughter pens 133w
M25, Road traffic 596-7w
Ordnance Survey, Accounting 612w
Slaughterhouses 133w
Steel framed houses, Building Research Establishment 201-2w

Paige, Victor 898-9
Resignations 898-9, 899-900, 900-1, 902

Palace of Westminster
Air conditioning 301-2w
Cleaning services 161w
Heating 161-2w
Lighting 86w
Repairs & maintenance 198w
Sanitation 198w
Ventilation 86w

Palestine Liberation Organisation
Israel 305w
Peace negotiations 302-3w

Parallel imports
Drugs 727

Paramilitary forces
Combat Shotgun Society 517w
Northern Ireland 1076-7
Training 517w

Parcels
Road freight transport 30w

Parental leave 623w
EC action 623w

Parish councils
Rates & rating 198w

Park, Mr George
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 182-3
Questions
Bus fares, Bus services 21w
Local government expenditure, Voluntary organisations 191-2w
Nicaragua, Military aid 305w

Parkeston Quay (03.06.86) 795-813

Parkhurst Prison 520w

Parking
Handicapped drivers 202w

Parking offences
Dept of Energy 369w, 469w
Dept of the Environment 570w
Fines 369w
Government departments 514w, 570-1w
Government dept 571w
Greek street 405w, 571w
Home Office 449w
Official cars 514w
Scottish Office 369w

Parliamentary constituencies
Unemployment 55w, 362w

Parliamentary lobby correspondents (20.05.86) 293-332

Parliamentary petitions (03.06.86) 835-71

Parliamentary procedure (22.05.86) 521-2

Parliamentary constituencies
Electorate 527w

Parliamentary Privilege
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 359, (03.06.86) 747, (05.06.86) 1098

Parole
Prison rules 519w
Prisoners 519w

Parry, Mr Robert
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1077
Business statement 538
Channel tunnel, Against Channel Tunnel Schemes 353w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board 629w, 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Administrative delays 629w, 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Compensation 630w
Criminal Injuries Compensation Board, Costs 630-1w
Dept of Health & Social Security, Members correspondence 169w

Housing investment programmes, Liverpool City Council 191w
Listed buildings, Religious buildings 612w
Liverpool City Council, Direct labour departments 495-6w
Liverpool Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 224w
Medical Research Council, Epilepsy 479w
Members correspondence, Dept of Health & Social Security 320w
Mersey Regional Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 224w, 322w
Ministerial speeches, National Association of Port Employers 29w
Ministers domestic visits, Liverpool 127w, 495-6w
Ministers domestic visits, Merseyside 261w
Prescription charges exemptions, Diseases 540w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Israel 447w
Prisoners of war, Japan 386w
Rape, Crime victims 259w
Sharpeville Six, South Africa 571w
South Korea, North Korea 353w
Unemployed, Employment schemes 148w
Unemployment 146w
Unemployment, Merseyside 147-8w, 149w
Unemployment, Northern Ireland 454w, 455w
Unemployment, Scotland 155-6w
Vacancies, Merseyside 149w
Vacancies, Northern Ireland 454w
Vacancies, Scotland 155w
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 224w, 321-2w
Youth unemployment 147w, 148w
Youth unemployment, Liverpool 148-9w
Youth Unemployment, Northern Ireland 454w, 455w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 155w, 156w

Part-time education
Members correspondence 183w
Student grants 600-1w
Youth training scheme 599w

Part-time employment 146w
Students 719

Passenger transport executives
Bus services 21w
Redundancy pay 598-9w

Passengers
Damages 5w

Passports
Administrative delays 178-9w

Patents Designs & Marks Bill (HL) 1985/86
Ref to 2R com (22.05.86) 568

Patten, Mr Chris, *Minister of State for Education & Science*
Questions
Dacca University, Educational qualifications 328w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Education & Science 278w
Dept of Education & Science, Departmental progress 475-8w
Education, Local government expenditure 278w
Education, Voluntary organisations 274w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 475w
Initial teacher training 329w
Initial teacher training, Humberside 329w
Schools, Industry 272w
Sex education, Primary education 480w
State education, Dorset 277-8w
Teacher training, Educational finance 271w
Teacher training, Inner city areas 271-2w
Teacher training, Mature students 271w
Teachers, Pay settlements 269-70w
Vocational training, Professional qualifications 271w

Patten, Mr John, *Minister of State for the Environment (Housing, Urban Affairs & Construction)*
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 350
Building repairs, Public expenditure 350
Council house sales, Leicester 347-8
Council house sales, Private investment 350
Council house waiting lists 193w
Defective housing, Repairs & maintenance 136-7w
Empty housing, Council housing 81-2w
Empty housing, Homelessness 349
Enterprise zones 193w
Housing construction, Empty housing 350-1
Housing estates, Council house sales 345, 346-7
Housing estates, Leeds 351
Housing estates, Private investment 345-6
Housing investment programmes, Local government finance 192w
Housing management, Training 81w
Housing problems, Council housing 82w
Housing starts, Public sector housing 349-50
"Privatisation of the Water Authorities White Paper" 141-2w
Steel framed houses, Building Research Establishment 201-2w
Water authorities, Privatisation 191w
Water authorities, Public appointments 358, 498-504w
Water charges, Price increases 566w
Water charges, Water meters 357-8
Water meters 503w
Water meters, Costs 503w

Pattie, Mr Geoffrey, *Minister of State for Information Technology*
Questions
Copyright, Plastic arts 409-10w
Information technology centres, Scotland 43-4w

Pavitt, Mr Laurie
Debates etc
Oral question time intervention (22.05.86) 530
Questions
Cancer, Medical treatments 383-4w
Handicapped workers, Sheltered employment 172
Health service staff, Board & lodging charges 546w
Homelessness, Families 194w
Hospital closures, Brent Health Authority 547w
Hospital closures, North West Thames Regional Health Authority 382w
Hospital staff, Board & lodging charges 556w
Nurses, Pay 546w
Teaching hospitals, Greater London 66w
Westminster Hospital, Hospital closures 383w
Westminster Hospital, Ministers correspondence 556w
Westminster Hospital, Riverside Health Authority 66w

Pawsey, Mr J F
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 180-1
Questions
Nuclear accidents, France 252-3w
Pressurised water reactors, France 253w
Treasury, Ministerial correspondence 307w
University finance, University Grants Committee 180-2w

Pay 151w
Barristers 6w
Day, Graham 47w
Family doctors 379w
Further education teachers 41-2w
Health service staff 319-20w, 374w
Local government staff 370w
London Residuary Body 497w
Midwives 546w
Nurses 310-2w, 546w
Solicitors 6w
Teachers 576-7w, 581w
Top Salaries Review Body 177

Pay beds
Costs 545-6w
Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 545-6w

Pay review bodies 239-44w

Pay settlements
Civil service 244w
Confederation of British Industry 470w
Inflation 244w
Private sector 470w
Retail price index 329-30w
Teachers 269-70w
University teachers 329-30w

"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper" 192w, 577w
Scotland 577w

Peace convoy 733-4

Peace negotiations
Middle East 302-3w, 447w
Palestine Liberation Organisation 302-3w

Peacock, Mrs Elizabeth
Questions
Supplementary benefits, Mortgage relief 315w

Peak Park Joint Planning Board 348
Elections 348

Pedestrian crossings 11

Peers
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 797

Pendry, Mr Tom
Debates etc
Social security reform, Public petitions (19.05.86) 151
Questions
Central Council of Physical Recreation 196w
Social security recipients, Greater Mancheste 57-8w

Penhaligon, Mr David
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 593
Tin, Cornwall (23.05.86) 652-4
Questions
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 740-1

Pensioners
Exceptional needs payments 314w
Supplementary benefits 314-5w

Pensions
British Gas Corporation 31w
Social security reform 532w
Tax allowances 532w

Per capita costs
Personal social services 289w
Prisoners 562-3w
Rate support grants 341
Youth training scheme 50w

Peres, Shimon 305w

Performance indicators 62w, 332w
Fire services 332w
Hospital doctors 62w

Perinatal mortality
Coroners 11w
Death registration 530w
Northern Ireland 298-300w

Personal Injuries (Civilians) Amendment Scheme 1986 60w

Personal injury compensation
War casualties 60w

Personal pensions (19.05.86) 30-150, 723, 725
Consumers 723
Hippies 725

Personal social services
Expenditure 604-5w

Local government expenditure 531-2w
Per capita costs 289w
Scotland 604-5w
Wales 289w

Personal tax allowances 310w, 472-4w

Personal taxation 309-10w, 560w

Pest control
Badgers 222w

Pest Infestation Research Laboratory
Slough 73w

Pesticides
Horticulture 221w

Petrol bombs 455w

Pharmacies 529w, 530w
Costs 529w
Family practitioner committees 530w
France 530w
West Germany 530w

Pharmacists
Contracts 529w

Photosensitivity
Committee on Safety of Medicines 223-4w
Drug side effects 223-4w, 320-1w
Medical research 224w, 321w
Medical Research Council 184w
Medical treatments 223w

Picketing
News International 12w

Pike, Mr Peter
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 814
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 552
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 796, 810-1
Police Complaints Procedure (Amendment) (No 2) Bill 1985/86, 1R (22.05.86) 568
Questions
Conservative Party Conference, Police 336w
Defence procurement, Guided weapons 636w
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices, Civil service manpower 721-2
Domestic rates 565-6w
Hospital closures, Burnley 542w
Manpower Services Commission, Training 362w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 3
Prime Minister official engagements 128w, 245w, 449w, 627w
Rate limitation, Public order policing 368-9w
Restart programme 360w, 361w
Restart programme, Ethnic minorities 360w, 361-2w
Restart programme, Lancashire 361w, 362w
Supplementary benefits, Burnley 542w
Unemployment, Burnley 542-4w, 583w
Vacancies, Burnley 583w
Water authorities, Privatisation 191w
Youth unemployment 146w, 421w
Youth unemployment, Lancashire 421w

Pilkington Insulation (20.05.86) 202
Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 202

Pipelines
Construction 33w
Sites of special scientific interest 1w
Tain 1w

Planning
Lake District 348-9
South Bank 196w

Planning appeals
Dwyfor District Council 128-9w
Retirement Homes Association 497-8w

Planning permission
Disclosure of information 569w
Greenbelt 195w
Hypermarkets 195w
London Docklands Development Corporation 514w
Navan Fort 177w
Radioactive waste disposal (21.05.86) 457-503
Second homes 34w

Plasnett, Mr 201w
Members correspondence 201w

Plastic arts
Copyright 409-10w

Plastic bullets
Northern Ireland 1072-3
Police 254w
Public order policing 15-6w

Pleasley estate 139-40w

Plessey
Public petitions (20.05.86) 333

Plutonium
Central Electricity Generating Board 467w
Exports 467-8w
Nuclear safeguards 466-7w
Nuclear weapons 31w
Transport of radioactive materials 610w

Pneumoconiosis
Medical research 278w

Poaching
Deer 228-9w
Salmon 213w

Points of order
Speakers rulings & statements (21.05.86) 457-8, 460, (03.06.86) 796, 797, (05.06.86) 1277, 1311

Police
Bureaucracy 231-3w
Chelmsley Wood 518-9w
Conservative Party Conference 336w
Ethnic minorities 519
Labour Party 520
Manpower 124-5w, 333-4w, 336w, 396-7w, 515, 516, 578w
News International 336w
North Wales 333-4w
Plastic bullets 254w
Road traffic offences 336w
Schools 520
Scotland 231-3w, 396-7w, 578w
Solihull 518-9w

Police cautions 338w
Drunkenness 338w

Police Complaints Authority
Public appointments 337w

Police Complaints Procedure (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 1985/86
1R (22.05.86) 568

Police equipment 516
Costs 7w
Helicopters 7w

Police informers
Northern Ireland (03.06.86) 748-50

Police misconduct (22.05.86) 568

Police National Reporting Centre 12w
News International 12w

Police powers
Hippies 733-4, 734-5, 736-7, 737-8, 739
Transient people 735

Police records
Compulsorily detained mental patients 13w

Police relations with public 518-9, 519-20
Brixton Disturbances Inquiry 256w
Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 516w

Police training 257w
Inner city areas 257w

Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984
Police relations with public 516w

Political parties
European Assembly 18w, 303w, 308w, 561w
Northern Ireland 635w, 1077-8
Northern Ireland Assembly 633w

Political prisoners
Ratushinskaya, Irina 304w
Wallenberg, Raoul 625-6w

Political refugees
Iran 263w
Northern Ireland 1072

Pollock, Mr Alexander
Questions
Forestry Commission, Scotland 890-1
Oil rigs, Scotland 879-80

Pollution
Nuclear accidents 192-3w, 200w
Nuclear power stations 344
Strontium 75w

Pollution control
Cabinet Office 179w
Civil service manpower 179w

Pollution monitoring
Caesium 75w
Civil defence 254-5w
Cumbria 75w
Disclosure of information 192w, 201w
Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 75w, 76w
Lerwick 235-6w
National Radiological Protection Board 200w
Nuclear accidents 254-5w
Radioactivity 75w, 133w, 192w, 227-8w, 284w, 290w, 345, 350-1w, 492w
Radioisotopes 38-9w
River pollution 280-1w
Scotland 346w, 398w
Wales 38-9w

Polychlorinated biphenyl
Waste disposal 370w

Polytechnics
National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 269w

Pompidou Group 335w

Pop stars
Independent Broadcasting Authority 126w
Television programmes 126w

Population
Nuclear power stations 354w
Radioactive waste disposal 224w
South Killingholme 224w, 322-4w

Port Glasgow
Complaints against police 896
Unemployment 395-6w

Porter, Mr Barry
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 761
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 369, 372, 391, 393-5

Portillo, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1245, 1247, 1253-4
Questions
Building societies, Bank services 187w
EC budget, Own resources 89w
National Coal Board, Subsidiary companies 157w
Northern Ireland, Security 1075-6
Refugees, Home Affairs Select Committee 263w
Taxation, Termination of employment 559w

Portman Clinic 524w
Finance 524w

Ports (03.06.86) 795-813
Scotland 306-7w, 581w, 609w

Ports of entry
Illegal immigrants 525

Immigration controls 525

Postal services
Road traffic 30w

Postal workers
Manpower 185w

Postgraduate certificate of education 329w

Postgraduate education
Business education 599-600w

Potassium iodate 541w
Ionizing radiation 541w
Nuclear accidents 385w
Radiation hazards 541w

Powell, Rt Hon J Enoch
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 323-4
Questions
Central Intelligence Agency, Northern Ireland 1076
National savings certificates, Northern Ireland 330w

Powell, Mr Ray
Questions
Foreign tourists, USA 356w
US bases, Armed forces deployment 306w

Powell, Mr William
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1228

Power station closures 157-8w, 883-4
Chapelcross Power Station 883-4
Magnox reactors 157w
Nuclear power stations 157-8w

Powley, Mr John
Debates etc
St Michaels School, Norwich (23.05.86) 709-11
Questions
Speed limits, Trailers 453w

PRC Homes 136w
Defective housing 136w

Prentice, Rt Hon Reg
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 229

Prerogative of mercy
Allen, William 1075
Prisoners 563-4w, 628w, 629w

Prescott, Mr John
Debates etc
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 543-4, 545
Economic policy (03.06.86) 763, 777-81
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 531
Questions
Industrial injuries, Manufacturing industries 152w
Self-employed 173
Tourist industry, Employment opportunities 165

Prescription charges exemptions
Diseases 540w

Prescription Pricing Authority 618-24w

Prescriptions
Rural areas 529w

Pressurised water reactors
France 253w
Nuclear safety 253w

Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1984 463w

Pre-school education 184w

Price, Sir David
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 192
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 433-5
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1337
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 94-6
Questions
Access to buildings, Buckingham Palace 84-5w
Hippies, Hampshire 739
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 532-4w
Japan, Protectionism 529
Natural radioactivity 343-4

Price increases
Water charges 566w

Prices
Gas tariffs 593w
Road construction 1-2

Primary education
School closures 475w
Sex education 480w

Primary health care 385w, 524w
Departmental leaflets 167w
NHS finance 544w
Wales 131-2w

"Primary Health Care Consultation Paper" 167w, 385w, 524w

Prime Minister domestic visits
Costs 33w
International conferences 33w
Rochester 627w

Prime Minister official engagements 128w, 245w, 449w, 627w

Prime Minister visits abroad
Israel 174-5, 246w, 447w

Prime Ministers Office 331w

Printing industry
Employment 406w
Employment level 417w
Industrial production 406-7w
Manpower 417w

Prison accommodation
Hull Prison 9w, 10w

Prison discipline
Featherstone Prison 179-80w
Wandsworth Prison 179-80w

Prison hospitals
Hospital bed occupancy rates 520w
Surgery 520w

Prison Officers Association 258w, 1079
Security 1079

Prison population 256w, 261w
Remand in custody 629w

Prison rules
Parole 519w

Prison sentences
Crime 7w
Offences against children 258w
Unpaid fines 562w

Prison staff
Crimes of violence 1079
Homicide 635w
House prices 262-3w
Hull Prison 10w
Industrial disputes 257w
Lindholme Prison 10w
Manpower 518w
Northern Ireland 635w, 1079
Prisoners 16w
Scotland 2w
Security 1079
Training 518w

Prison visitors
Northeye Prison 519-20w

Prisoners
Detention centres 256w
Fine defaulters 9w
Matrimonial proceedings 9w
Mental patients 61w
Parole 519w
Per capita costs 562-3w
Prerogative of mercy 563-4w, 628w, 629w
Prison staff 16w
Scotland 2w
South Africa 571w
Tranquilisers (03.06.86) 872-8

Prisoners of war
Compensation 386w
Japan 386w
World War II 34w

Prisoners recreation 9w

Prisoners release
Employment opportunities 265w
Manpower Services Commission 265w
Terminal care 563-4w, 628w, 629w

Prisoners transfers
Mental hospitals 61w
Northeye Prison 631w

Prisons
Garages 9-10w, 127w, 128w
Lock-up garages 9-10w, 127w, 128w

Privacy
Market research 178w

Private Bill Procedure Joint Select Committee 627-8w

Private bills
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 8
House of Commons procedure 627-8w
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 795, 796-7, 808, 813

Private education
Educational finance 95-6w
Pupils 95w

Private investment 89-90w
Council house sales 350
Housing estates 345-6, 346-7
Housing finance 370-1w
Private sector housing 90w

Private Members motions (21.05.86) 360
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86) 1097-8, 1336

Private Members time
Speakers rulings & statements (05.06.86) 1336

Private notice questions
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 737, 743

Private patients
Womens Hospital, Liverpool 322w

Private rented housing
Households 196w

Private sector
Pay settlements 470w
Railway sidings 30w

Private sector employment
Wales 37w

Private sector housing
Private investment 90w

Privatisation
British Airports Authority 597w
British Gas Corporation 31w
British Leyland 249-50w
British shipbuilders 408-9w
Dockyards 204w
Gas supply industry 35w
Income 469w
Jaguar Cars 43w
Local government services 356-7
National Bus Company 3-4, 24w, 203-4w
Water authorities 84w, 141-2w, 191w

"Privatisation of the Water Authorities White Paper" 141-2w, 191w

Privileges Select Committee (20.05.86) 293-332
Disclosure of information 483w

Proctor, Mr K Harvey
Questions
Birth rate, Northern Ireland 298-300w
Foreign tourists, Immigration controls 524
Security, Northern Ireland 1075-6

Procurators fiscal 894-5, 896
Kilmarnock 896
Offices 896

Procurement
Crown Suppliers 510w
Dept of the Environment 510w
Locomotives 24w
Railway industry 6

Product liability
EC law 44w

Production quotas
Dairy farming 72-3w
Milk 71w

Professional consultants
London Docklands Development Corporation 296-8w

Professional qualifications
Vocational training 271w

Profit sharing 172w
Finance Act 1978 190w
Share option scheme 187-8w

"Programmes Analysis Review on Tourism 584w
Disclosure of information 584w

Property development
Land use 569w

Property Services Agency
Museums & galleries 137-8w

Property transfer
Church Commissioners 627w
Church property 177w
NHS 289w, 603w, 717-8
Regional health authorities 384w
Scottish Assembly 894
South London Hospital for Women 384w
West Lambeth Health Authority 384-5w

Prosecutions
Crimes outside national territories 7w
Fraud 515-6w
Knight, Derry Mainwaring 12
Northern Ireland 337-8w
Nuclear Materials (Offences) Act 1983 3w
Terrorism 463w
Wages Inspectorate 50-2w

Prosper de Mulder 557w

Protectionism
Japan 529

Psychiatric nurses 389w
Community nurses 389w

Psychotherapy
Offenders 524w

Public Accounts Committee (03.06.86) 747

Public appointments
Area manpower boards 362w
Hares, Phillip 46w
NHS administration 899
NHS Management Board 898-9
Police Complaints Authority 337w
Regional health authorities 64w
Water authorities 358, 498-504w
Welsh Advisory Body for Further & Higher Education 411w
Women 64w

Public expenditure 91w, 528, 608-9w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 730-1
Building repairs 350
Education 611w
House renovation grants 730-1
Housing 370-1w
Overseas aid 728
Sick leave 608w
Wales 38w

Public footpaths
Subsidies 567w

Public inquiries
Stubbings bypass 452w

Public libraries
News International 480w

Public Order Bill 1985/86 631-2w
Trespass 631-2w

Public order policing
Chemical weapons 15-6w
Conservative party conference 368-9w
Hippies 1082-3
Demonstrations 259w
International conferences 397w
News International 12w, 126w, 516-7, 517-8
Plastic bullets 15-6w
Rate limitation 368-9w
Salisbury Plain 12w
Trespass 631-2w

Public participation in planning
Forestry Commission Regional Advisory Committees 890
Travel concessions 197w

Public petitions
General Electric Company (23.05.86) 637
Mental health community care (21.05.86) 503-4
Plessey (20.05.86) 333
Radioactive waste disposal (21.05.86) 504
Social security reform (19.05.86) 151, (21.05.86) 503

Public Records Office
Waldheim, Kurt 34w, 427w

Public Safety Information Bill 1985/86
1R (21.05.86) 361-4

Public sector borrowing requirement
Interest charges 469w

Public sector employment
Employers statutory sick pay scheme 608w
Wales 37w

Public sector housing
Housing starts 349-50

Public transport
Road accidents 610w

Publicity
Drinking & driving 450-1w
Loan guarantee scheme 54w

Publishing
HMSO 187w
Select Committee reports 481-4w

Pulford bypass 213w
Clwyd County Council 213w

Punishment
Trade union membership 18w

Pupils
Private education 95w
Rathlin Island 301w

Pwllheli
Unemployment 285-6w
Vacancies 285-6w

Quangos 351-2w

Quarrying
Navan Fort 177w, 462w

Quota of handicapped workers
West Germany 171-2

Rabies
Channel tunnel 366w

Racial attacks 254w

Racial discrimination
Immigration controls 1082

Radiation hazards
Children 315w
East Sussex 492w
Human organs 53-4w
International Atomic Energy Agency 372w
International Commission on Radiological Protection 53w
Ionising Radiation Regulations 53-4w
Magnox reactors 467w
Mediterranean 236w
Navy 236w
Nuclear accidents 290-1w
Potassium iodate 541w
Radioactive waste disposal 197w
Radioactive wastes 76w
Radioactivity 370w
Scotland 225-6w
Students 547w
X rays 314w

Radice, Mr Giles
Debates etc
Educational finance, Ministerial statements (21.05.86) 359
University finance (20.05.86) 180
Questions
Education, Local government expenditure 611w
Education, Public expenditure 611w
Manpower Services Commission, Further education 266w
Student grants, Income 181-3w
Students, Social security benefits rules 617w

Radio
Independent Broadcasting Authority 335-6w

Radioactive fallout
Nuclear accidents 354
Nuclear power stations 492w

Radioactive waste disposal 76w, 142w, 493-4w
Anglian Water Authority 78w, 512w, 513w
Civil service manpower 80w
Compensation 190-1w, 494w
Concrete 291-2w
Consultants 77w
Costs 76w, 493w
Departmental correspondence 80w
Dept of the Environment 77w
Disclosure of information 197w
Drigg 76w, 512-3w
Gas-cooled reactors 206w
Geology 511-2w
Greenpeace 493w
Heath, Michael 493w
Ionizing radiation 493w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 79w, 467w, 513w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 197w
Nuclear safety 76w
Planning permission (21.05.86) 457-503
Population 224w
Public petitions (21.05.86) 504
Radiation hazards 197w
Security 494w
South Killingholme 77w, 78w, 85w, 142w, 197w, 201w, 513w
Special development orders 77w, 78w, 85w, 190-1w, 197w
Transport of radioactive materials 78-9w
West Lindsey District Council 195w

Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee 83w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 83w

Radioactive wastes 294w, 513w
Health hazards 196-7w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 77-8w, 142w, 511w
Nuclear power stations 205-6w
Radiation hazards 76w

Radioactivity
Advisory services 137w
Caesium 75w
Cancer 493w
Cap de la Hague 496-7w
Disclosure of information 353
Emergency planning 353-4
Fife 346w
Food 221w
Food contamination 200w
Food imports 221w
Health hazards 373w, 492-3w
Information 227w
Lerwick 235-6w
Livestock 488w, 552w
Milk 133w, 200w, 219-20w, 225w, 284w, 296w, 372w

National Radiological Protection Board 75w
Nuclear accidents 193w
Nuclear safety 343-4
Pollution monitoring 75w, 133w, 192w, 227-8w, 284w, 290w, 345, 350-1w, 492w
Radiation hazards 370w
Radioisotopes 75w
Rain 39w, 200w, 284w
Scotland 225w, 226-7w, 227-8w, 346w, 398w, 576w
Smoke & chimney gases 579w
South West Wales 284w
Television programmes 492-3w
USA 493w
Wales 39w, 290w, 350-1w
Western Europe 200w

Radiochemical Inspectorate 299-301w, 569w
Disclosure of information 299-301w

"Radiochemical Inspectorate Annual Report" 569w

Radioisotopes
East Sussex 80w
Pollution monitoring 38-9w
Radioactivity 75w
West Sussex 80w

RAF Flyingdales 263-4w
Early warning systems 263-4w
Modernisation 263-4w

RAF Greenham Common 429-30w
Cruise missiles 429-30w

Railway engineering (04.06.86) 1061-8

Railway fares
Equipment 450w
London Underground 27w
Underground railways 450w

Railway freight transport
Railways Act 1974 7

Railway industry
Employment opportunities 5
Government assistance 7
Procurement 6

Railway network
Channel tunnel 203w
South East region (05.06.86) 1101-94

Railway property
Terrorism 456-7w

Railway sidings
Construction 30w
Government grants 160w
Private sector 30w

Railway transport
Stansted Airport (03.06.86) 814-34

Railway travel
British Rail 23w
Greater London 9

Railways Act 1974 7, 30w, 160w
Railway freight transport 7

Rain
Radioactivity 39w, 200w, 284w
Wales 39w

Rain forests 18
Environment protection 18
Overseas aid 18

Rainbow Warrior 245w
Terrorism 245w

Raison, Rt Hon Timothy, Minister of State for Overseas Development
Debates etc
Africa, International aid (23.05.86) 677-82
Questions
Africa, Bilateral aid 158-9w
Africa, Development aid 16, 17
Africa, Disease control 264-5w
Africa, Overseas aid 2w
Commonwealth Development Corporation, Company accounts 204w
Crown Agents, Overseas Development Administration 410w
Development aid, Government grants to voluntary organisations 17-8
Ethiopia, Disaster relief 159w
Gibraltar, Dockyards 204w
International Development Association, World Bank 3w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Africa 2-3w
International Fund for Agricultural Development, Contracts 15-6
International Fund for Agricultural Development 16
Overseas aid 3w
Overseas aid, Expenditure 18
Overseas aid, India 15
Overseas aid, Rain forests 18
Sport Aid, Government assistance 15
Tanzania, Overseas aid 2w
Western Sahara, Refugees 204w

Rape
Crime victims 259w
Scotland 235w

Rate limitation 74w
Northern region 612-3w
Public order policing 368-9w
Sunderland 612-3w

Rate rebates
Handicapped 577-8w
Scotland 577-8w

Rate support grant penalties
Northern region 495w
Sunderland 495w

Rate support grants 194w, 342, 368w, 494w
Ashfield 355
Birmingham City Council 355-6
Cheltenham Borough Council 138w
Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 194w
Further education 266w
Gloucestershire County Council 138w, 342
Housing construction 347
Local government finance 354-5
Northern region 342
Per capita costs 341
Suffolk 355

Rates Act 1984 198w

Rates & rating 341
Community councils 198w
Darlington 341-2
Local government finance 195w
Local government revenue 291w, 432w
Non-domestic rates 192w
Parish councils 198w
Rural areas 893
Scotland 893
Sefton 193-4w
Sports centres 139w, (19.05.86) 152-60
Sportsgrounds 139w

Rathbone, Mr Tim
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 22
Questions
Furniture, Hazardous materials 363w
Property Services Agency, Museums & galleries 137-8w

Rathbone estate 141w

Rathlin Island 299-301w
Electricity distribution 299w
Government grants 299-301w
Pupils 301w

Rating (Disabled Persons) Act 1978 577-8w

Ratushinskaya, Irina 304w
Political prisoners 304w

Ravenscraig Steelworks 528

Raynsford, Mr Nick
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 281-3
Questions
Charing Cross Hospital, Hammersmith & Fulham 718
Homelessness, Council housing 194w
Housing benefits, Social security recipients 556w
Housing benefits, Social security reform 386-90w
Housing starts, Public sector housing 349-50
Severe weather payments, Social security recipients 523w
Social security recipients, Mortgage relief 381-2w

Recruitment
Brent Health Authority 547w
Community health councils 528w
Ethnic minorities 519
Leisure facilities 42w
National Coal Board 594w

Recycling
Refuse 593w
Road construction 452w

Red alerts 243w
USA 243w

Redmond, Mr Martin
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 195
Questions
Defence expenditure, Oil prices 389-90w
Exceptional needs payments, Doncaster 376-8w
F111 Aircraft, Bombings 1086
Social security benefits, Doncaster 377-8w
Social security recipients, South Yorkshire 311w

Redundancy 163
British Caledonian Airways 161
British Rail (20.05.86) 188-99, 201
British Rail Engineering 5, 6-7, 161-2
British Shipbuilders 186-7w
Crown Agents 410w
Northern region 418-9w, 558w, 728
Shipbuilding 218w, (21.05.86) 412-56, (03.06.86) 745

Redundancy pay
Passenger transport executives 598-9w

Redundant churches
Urban development grants 198-9w

Redundant mineworkers payments scheme 363w

Rees, Rt Hon Merlyn
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 21
Questions
Hippies, Police powers 735
Terrorism, Treason 14

Rees, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1115-22, 1187

"Reform of Social Security White Paper" (19.05.86) 151, (21.05.86) 503

Refugees
Home Affairs Select Committee 263w
Hong Kong 337w
Western Sahara 204w

Refuse
Manoil process 593w
Recycling 593w

Regional aid
Employment opportunities 172-3
Glanford 364w
Northern region 406w, 409w
Scunthorpe 364w
South West region (21.05.86) 505-12

Regional development grants
Northern region 409w, 558w

Regional health authorities
Hospital waiting lists 58-60w
NHS finance 62w
Property transfer 384w
Public appointments 64w

Registered homes 223w, 524w, 547-8w, 617w
Board & lodging charges 223w
Nursing homes 524w, 547-8w, 721
Oriel Lodge 617w

Registrars
County courts 3w

Rehousing
Army in Northern Ireland 42-3w

Religious buildings
Listed buildings 612w

Remand in custody 258-9w
Prison population 629w

Remploy
Crown Suppliers 511w

Renfrew District Council 574-5w

Rent allowances 513-4w

Rent rebates 513-4w

Renton, Mr Tim, *Minister of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs*
Questions
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 414-5w
Government Communications Headquarters, Trade union membership 18w
Nuclear test ban 412w
Nuclear weapons tests, Seismic monitoring 412-3w
SALT agreements, Arms control treaties 20w
USA, Strategic defence initiative 92w
Wallenberg, Raoul, Political prisoners 625-6w

Repairs & maintenance
Defective housing 136-7w
Museums & galleries 137-8w
Palace of Westminster 198w
School buildings 887, 888

Report stage
Speakers rulings & statements (04.06.86) 947

Reprography
Local authorities 367-8w

Republic of Ireland
European Security Conference 561w
Financial services 634w
Kidnapping 255-6w
National territory 561-2w
Treaty of Rome 561-2w

Research
Community programme 356-7w
Fossil fuelled power stations 157-8w
Nuclear power stations 157-8w
Paedophilia 127w
Youth training scheme 356-7w

Research finance
Acid rain 199w
Criminology 178w
Epilepsy 479w
Medical Research Council 184w

Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children 526w
Upper Waiting Hall 526w

Resettlement units 56w, 317-9w
Glasgow 56w

"Resettlement Units Government Response" 317-9w

Residential care
Board & lodging charges 164w, 165w
Ernst & Whinney 552w
Fees & charges 617w
Local government social services 603w
Scotland 603w
Wales 289w

Resignations
Paige, Victor 898-9, 899-900, 900-1, 902
Teachers 96w
Technicians 543w

Resource Allocation Working Party 537-8w, 715-6
NHS finance 537-8w

Restart programme 49w, 152-4w, 360w, 361-2w, 583w
Ealing 49w
Ethnic minorities 360w, 361-2w
Further education 583w
Lancashire 361-2w
Take-up of employment 49w, 152-4w
Unemployment 361w, 362w

Retail price index
Inflation 265w
Pay settlements 329-30w

Retail trade
Bows & arrows 523
Firearms 523

Retirement Homes Associaton 497-8w
Planning appeals 497-8w

Review Board for Government Contracts 607-8w

Re-employment
NHS 720

Re-establishment centres 317-9w

Rhodes James, Mr Robert
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 312
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 577

Rhondda
Clinical trials 39w

Rys Williams, Sir Brandon
Debates etc
Co-ownership of Flats Bill, 1R (20.05.86) 204-5
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 279-81
Questions
Employers statutory sick pay scheme, Costs 532w
Employment schemes, Costs 363w
Free school meals, Costs 434w
Housing, Supplementary benefits 431-2w
Mandatory student grants, Expenditure 478-9w
Pensions, Tax allowances 532w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 531-2w
Public expenditure, Sick leave 608w
Rate support grants 494w
Rates & rating, Local government revenue 432w
Social security benefits, Administrative costs 431-3w
Student grants, Northern Ireland 582w
Tax credits, Tax yields 433w

Richardson, Ms Jo
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 582-9, 599
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 147
Questions
Breast cancer, Screening 726
Community programme, East London 215-6w, 216-7w
Parental leave, EC action 623w

Ridley, Rt Hon Nicholas, *Secretary of State for Transport (from 21 May Secretary of State for the Environment)*
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering, Ministerial statements (20.05.86) 188-99
Questions
Airships, Nuisance 29w
Bus fares, Bus services 21w
Bus services, Transport & Road Research Laboratory 202w
Channel tunnel 7-8
Channel tunnel, Railway network 203w
Channel tunnel, Road traffic 8
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86 8-9
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86, Employment 9
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86, Private Bills 8
Driving licences, Fees & charges 23w
Humber bridge, Road tolls 11-2
Immersion suits, Merchant ships 203w
Land use, Property development 569w
Litter, Employment schemes 613w
Local government finance, Street cleaning 612w
Lorries, Driving tests 10
Ministerial speeches, National Association of Port Employers 29w
Ministers domestic visits, Liverpool 495-6w
Motor vehicle registration 23w
National Bus Company, Privatisation 3-4, 203-4w
Rights of way, Highways Act 1980 28w
Road construction, Government grants 2
Road construction, Prices 1-2
Road tax, Tax evasion 23w
Road & rail transport comparisons, Air pollution 2
Shipping 25-6w
Telephone charges, Department of the Environment 568w
Toll bridges, Transport Select Committee 11

Ridsdale, Sir Julian
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1103, 1126, 1128-30
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 799, 806, 807

Rifkind, Mr Malcolm, *Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Agricultural research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 576w
Annan bypass, Government contracts 577w
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 881
Commonwealth Games, Edinburgh 605w
Data Protection Registrar, Scottish Office 283w
Deer, Scotland 228-9w
Economic growth, Scotland 880
Economy, Scotland 879, 880-1, 882
Electricity, Scotland 884-5
Electricity generation, Nuclear power stations 887
Electricity generation, Scotland 885-6, 886-7, 891
Electricity generation, Torness Power Station 892
Electricity tariffs, Nuclear power 886
Fines enforcement officers, Scotland 578w
Lothian Regional Council, Road construction 881
Multiple occupation, Scotland 283w
NHS administration, Scotland 156w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear power stations 577w
Oil rigs, Scotland 879-80
Police, Scotland 396-7w, 578w
Rate re-[illegible]tes, Scotland 577-8w
Rural transport innovation grant scheme, Scotland 605-6w
School buildings, Scotland 887, 888
Scottish Development Agency, Expenditure 574-5w
Torness Power Station, Emergency planning 891-2

Rifle ranges 264w, 430w
Holmfield School 264w, 430w

Rights of way
Highways Act 1980 28w
Subsidies 567w

Rio Tinto Zinc
Government assistance to industry 742

River pollution
Okehampton bypass 371-2w
Pollution monitoring 280-1w
Scotland 280-1w

Riverside District Health Authority 556w

Riverside Health Authority
Westminster Hospital 66w

Road accidents
Civil liability 3w, 5w, 44w
Civil proceedings 4w
Compensation (04.06.86) 912-4
Costs 60w
Damages 4-5w
Death 29w
Drinking & driving 339w
Evidence 5w
Hospital admissions 395w, 410-1w
Hospital patients 59w
Hospitals 60w
Injuries 29w
Legal costs 4w
M25 26w
Negligence 4w, 5w
Northern Ireland 338w, 339w
Public transport 610w
Scotland 395w
Wales 410-1w

Road blocks 12w
News International 12w

Road construction
Bypasses 213w
Construction materials 452w
Cost benefit analysis 22w
Costs 451w
Direct labour departments 28w
Government grants 2
Greater London 598w
Housing construction 28w
Leicestershire 160-1w
Lothian Regional Council 881
M3-M27 link 2-3
M25 2
Northern region 451w
Prices 1-2
Recycling 452w

Road freight transport
Parcels 30w

Road signs
Catering 27w

Road tax
Tax evasion 23w

Road tolls
Humber bridge 11-2
Severn bridge 11

Road traffic
Channel tunnel 8
M25 596-7w
M40 161w, 596-7w
Postal services 30w

Road Traffic Accidents Compensation for Victims Bill 1985/86
1R (04.06.86) 912-4

Road traffic control
Hippies 735
Greater London Council 24w
Lorries 24w, 26w

Road traffic offences
A483 11w
Death 228w
European Road Safety Year 632w
Police 336w

Road transport workers
Crimes of violence 30w

Road works
M3 30w

Road & rail transport comparisons
Air pollution 2

Roads
Bromsgrove (23.05.86) 697-702
Kent (05.06.86) 1101-94
Local government functions 22w
Mobile shops 453w
Tower Hill 452w

Roberts, Mr Allan
Questions
Dacca University, Educational qualifications 328w
Housing estates, Council house sales 346
Local government services, Sefton 193-4w

Roberts, Mr Wyn, Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
British Rail, Youth training scheme 131w
Cathays Park, Visual arts 130w
Clwyd County Council, Pulford bypass 213w
Enterprise Express, Wales 129w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Wales 599w
General Certificate of Secondary Education, Welsh language 286w
Road accidents, Wales 410-1w
Secondary education, Gwynedd 287-8w
Sheep premiums, Wales 411w
Snowdonia National Park, Land acquisition 213-4w
Welsh Advisory Body for Further & Higher Education, Public appointments 411w
Welsh Chess Union, Government grants 286w
Youth services, Wales 286w
Youth training scheme, Wales 131w, 599w

Robertson, Mr George
Questions
Binary chemical weapons, NATO 33w
Holy Loch, Military ceremonies 237w
Local liaison committees, Ministry of Defence 236w
Operation Raleigh, Scotland 235w
Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1973 396w

Robinson, Mr Mark, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Wales 349w
Battered wives, Wales 35w, 214w
Beaches, Wales 130-1w, 213w
Breast cancer, Wales 39w
Cardiff Childrens Ear Nose & Throat Hospital, Finance 128w
Cervical cancer, Wales 206-7w, 207-8w, 209-10w, 349w
Clinical trials, Rhondda 39w
Council house sales, Wales 211-2w, 347-8w
Council housing, Wales 36w, 129w
Diseases, Wales 350w
Dwyfor District Council, Council housing finance 129-30w
Dwyfor District Council, Planning appeals 128-9w
Haemophilia, Wales 288w
Hospital beds, Wales 131-2w
Hospital closures, Cardiff 285w
Hospital doctors, Wales 349w
Hospitals, Wales 132w
House renovation grants, Dwyfor District Council 40w
Medical equipment, Cardiff 284-5w
Mental health community care, Wales 289w
NHS, Gwynedd 286-7w
NHS, Wales 289w
NHS finance, South Glamorgan Health Authority 285w
Nuclear power stations, Gwynedd 39w, 290w
Personal social services, Wales 289w
Pollution monitoring, Wales 38-9w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 290w
Radioactivity, South West Wales 284w
Radioactivity, Wales 350-1w
Rain, Wales 39w
Residential care, Wales 289w
Second homes, Wales 34w
St Davids Hospital, Cardiff 40w
St Davids Hospital, Manpower 211w
Test tube babies, Wales 288-9w
Womens aid, Wales 34-5w

Rochester
Prime Minister domestic visits 627w

Rochester upon Medway District Council 565w
High rise flats 565w

Rogers, Mr Allan
Questions
Clinical trials, Rhondda 39w
Domestic rates, Disposable income 83w
Domestic rates, Wales 38w
Public expenditure, Wales 38w
Voluntary organisations, Greater London Council 342-3

Rooker, Mr Jeff
Questions
Defective housing, Repairs & maintenance 136-7w
Empty housing, Council housing 81-2w
Housing, Ealing 139w
Housing construction, Empty housing 350-1
Housing management, Training 81w
Housing problems, Council housing 82w

Ross, Mr Ernie
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 185
Questions
National Bus Company, Privatisation 24w
Quangos 351-2w

Ross, Mr Stephen
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 191
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 962
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1130-3
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 805
Questions
National Bus Company, Privatisation 3

Rossi, Sir Hugh
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 304-8, 316

Rotherham
Employment level 169-70
Employment policy 170-1
Unemployment 169-70

Rowe, Mr Andrew
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1254-8, 1265, 1313
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 863-4
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 64, 139
Questions
Community industry scheme 49w
Community industry scheme, Costs 49-50w
Derelict land grants, Government grants 295-6w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Rochester 627w
Small businesses, Training 144w
Youth training scheme 167
Youth training scheme, Per capita costs 50w

Rowlands, Mr Ted
Questions
County courts, Merthyr Tydfil 3w, 246w

Royal Commissions
Damages 5w

Royal Fleet Auxiliary 92w, 426-7w
Defence contracts 426-7w
Defence procurement 92w

Royal Greenwich Observatory 275-6w
Science & technology research 276w
Science Research Council 275-6w

Royal High School
Scottish Assembly 893-4

Royal High School, Edinburgh 893

Royal ordnance factories
Emergency planning 391w

Royal Scottish National Hospital 282-3w
Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland 282-3w

Royal Ulster Constabulary
Border security in Ireland 301w
Crimes against the person 43-4w, 301-2w, 455w
Overtime 301w

Rumbold, Mrs Angela, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc
Local authorities, Tenders (23.05.86) 705-8
Questions
Acid rain, Research finance 199w
Air pollution, Coal fired power stations 194w
Commons Registration Act 1965, Administrative delays 596w
Conservation, International conferences 79-80w
Dog licences, Fees & charges 84w
Domestic rates 565-6w
Domestic rates, Disposable income 83w
Domestic rates, Leeds 369w
Ionizing radiation, Radioactive waste disposal 493w
Joint manpower watch, Local government staff 567-8w
Local authorities, Reprography 367-8w
Local government expenditure 198w
Local government expenditure, Council housing 494-6w
Local government expenditure, Macclesfield 196w
Local government finance, Economic models 74-5w
Local government services, Sefton 193-4w
Local government staff, Pay 370w
National parks, Conservation 614w
National parks, Land use 567-8w
Natural radioactivity 492w
Non-domestic rates, Northern region 192w
Nuclear free zones, Local authorities 139w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, West Germany 511w
Nuclear power stations, International cooperation 565-6w
Okehampton bypass, Land pollution 371w
Okehampton bypass, River pollution 371-2w
Ordnance Survey, Accounting 612w
Ordnance Survey, Finance 612w
Peak Park Joint Planning Board, Elections 348
Pollution, Nuclear accidents 192-3w
Public footpaths, Subsidies 567w
Radiation hazards, East Sussex 492w
Radioactive fallout, Nuclear power stations 492w
Radioactive waste disposal 493-4w
Radioactive waste disposal, Anglian Water Authority 512w, 513w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 512-3w
Radioactive waste disposal, Geology 511-2w
Radioactive waste disposal, Heath, Michael 493w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 513w
Radioactive waste disposal, Security 494w
Radioactive waste disposal, South Killingholme 78w, 513w
Radioactive waste disposal, West Lindsey District Council 195w
Radioactive wastes 513w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 77-8w, 511w
Radioactivity, Advisory services 137w
Raidoactivity, Cap de la Hague 496-7w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 192w, 492w
Radioactivity, Radioisotopes 75w
Radioactivity, Television programmes 492-3w
Radioactivity, USA 493w
Radioisotopes, East Sussex 80w
Rate limitation 74w
Rate limitation, Northern region 612-3w
Rate limitation, Public order policing 368-9w
Rate support grant penalties, Sunderland 495w
Rate support grants 194w, 368w, 494w
Rate support grants, Ashfield 355
Rate support grants, Birmingham City Council 355-6
Rate support grants, Consultative Council on Local Government Finance 194w
Rate support grants, Gloucestershire County Council 138w
Rate support grants, Local government finance 354-5
Rate support grants, Suffolk 355
Rates & rating, Local government finance 195w
Rates & rating, Local government revenue 291w
Rates & rating, Parish councils 198w
Sewage, Waste disposal 80-1w
Sportsgrounds, Rates & rating 139w
Strontium, Pollution 75w
Tipping of waste, Loscoe 497w
Tipping of waste, Methane 497w
Water authorities, Privatisation 84w
World conservation strategy 568-9w

Rural areas
Africa 17
Motor vehicle registration 247w
Prescriptions 529w
Rates & rating 893
Sewage 84w

Rural transport innovation grant scheme 605-6w
Scotland 605-6w

Ryedale
Bus services 4

Ryman, Mr John
Questions
Legal aid 13-4

Science & technology research
Royal Greenwich Observatory 276w

SA 80 gun 635-6w
Defence contracts 635-6w

Sackville, Mr Tom
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 26
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Horwich 6
Crime, Greater Manchester 256w

Sadlers Wells Theatre 628w
Arts finance 628w

Safety
Disclosure of information (21.05.86) 361-4
Local authorities (21.05.86) 361-4
Nuclear power stations (23.05.86) 659-70

Safety belts
Children 26w

Salisbury plain 12w
Arrests 12w
Public order policing 12w

Salmon
Manpower 491-2w
Poaching 213w
Wales 213w

Salmon fishery districts 491-2w

SALT agreements
Arms control treaties 20w
USA 729-30, 732

Sanitation
Palace of Westminster 198w

Savile, J W 197w
Members correspondence 197w

Sayeed, Mr Jonathan
Questions
Prime Minister official engagements 627w

Scarman Inquiry see Brixton Disturbances Inquiry

Schizophrenia
Hospital admissions 60-1w
Mental hospitals 60-1w

School buildings
Repairs & maintenance 887, 888
Scotland 887, 888

School closures
Education 95-6w
Primary education 475w
Secondary education 475w

School fees
Diplomatic service education allowances 414w

School leaving 93-4w, 585-92w
Employment 230-2w
Northern Ireland 582-3w
Scotland 230-2w, 579-81w
Social security recipients 153-4w

School leaving certificates
Leicestershire 276-7w

School milk
Food subsidies 71w, 488-91w

School population
Dorset 182w
England 182w

Schools
Drug abuse 278w
Industry 272w
Police 520

Science education
Teacher training 93w

Science Research Council
Royal Greenwich Observatory 275-6w

Scientists
International Atomic Energy Agency 142w
Nuclear accidents 137w

Scope of debate
Speakers rulings & statements (19.05.86) 75, 145, (03.06.86) 772-3, 814, 854, (04.06.86) 1053, 1055, 1056-7, 1058, 1059, (05.06.86) 1169, 1200-72 passim

Scotland
Agricultural research 282w
Areas of outstanding natural beauty 579w
Armed forces deployment 176w
Battered wives 346w
Bed & breakfast accommodation 234-5w
Beekeeping 1w
Bows & arrows 233-4w
Burglary 603-4w
Cancer hazards 227w
Complaints against police 895-6
Conservation areas 579w
Council house sales 576w
Council housing 235w
Crime 233w, 234w
Crime victims 234w
Crimes of violence 234w
Deer 228-9w
Detection rates 234w
Domestic violence 346w
Economic growth 880
Economic situation 578w
Economy 879, 880-1, 882
Electricity 884-5
Electricity generation 885-6, 886-7, 891
Employment opportunities 892-3
Environment protection 281w
Environmentally sensitive areas 281w
Evidence 894-5
Exceptional needs payments 314w
Fines enforcement officers 578w
Firearms 233-4w
Fishing vessels 605w
Forestry Commission 890-1
Geriatrics 230w
Hill livestock allowances 346-7w
Hospital beds 342w, 396w

Hospitals 229w
Housing 234-5w
Housing starts 235w
Information technology centres 43-4w
Kidnapping 520
Labour market 291-2w
Legal aid (21.05.86) 365-411
Local government expenditure 576w
Local government finance 279w, 892
Marginal land 574w
Multiple occupation 283w
New towns development corporations 882-3
NHS administration 156w
Nurses 343-5w, 345-6w
Official secrets 581w
Oil prices 578w
Oil rigs 879-80
Operation Raleigh 235w
"Paying for Local Government Consultation Paper" 577w
Personal social services 604-5w
Police 231-3w, 396-7w, 578w
Pollution monitoring 346w, 398w
Ports 306-7w, 581w, 609w
Prison staff 2w
Prisoners 2w
Radiation hazards 225-6w
Radioactivity 225w, 226-7w, 227-8w, 346w, 398w, 576w
Rape 235w
Rate rebates 577-8w
Rates & rating 893
Residential care 603w
River pollution 280-1w
Road accidents 395w
Rural transport innovation grant scheme 605-6w
School buildings 887, 888
School leaving 230-2w, 579-81w
Severe weather payments 65w, 168w
Sheep premiums 397w
Social security abuse 604w
Sports (19.05.86) 152-60
Teachers 576-7w, 581w
Unemployment 155-6w, 528
University closures 881
Urban programme 235w
Vacancies 155w, 579-81w
Water pollution 279w, 280w, 281w
Youth services 283w
Youth unemployment 155w, 156w

Scott, Mr Nicholas, *Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland*
Questions
Ainsworth Avenue, Crimes against property 456w
Allen, William, Prerogative of mercy 1075
Army in Northern Ireland, Crimes against the person 43-4w, 301-2w
Crimes against the person, Northern Ireland 340w, 455w
Death, Terrorism 455-6w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 337-8w, 1074-5
Drinking & driving, Northern Ireland 338-9w
Drinking & driving, Road accidents 339w
Drunkenness, Habitual offenders 338w
Drunkenness, Police cautions 338w
Financial services, Republic of Ireland 634w
Prison Officers Association, Security 1079
Prison staff, Northern Ireland 635w, 1079
Railway property, Terrorism 456-7w
Rehousing, Army in Northern Ireland 42-3w
Royal Ulster Constabulary, Overtime 301w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 463-4w

Scottish Assembly
Property transfer 894
Royal High School 893-4
Scottish Grand Committee 893-4

Scottish Development Agency
Expenditure 574-5w

Scottish Development Department 280w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate 280w

Scottish Football Association 577w
World Cup 577w

Scottish Grand Committee
Scottish Assembly 893-4

Scottish health boards
Haemophilia 604w
Land acquisition 603w
Youth training scheme 155w

Scottish Legal Aid Board (21.05.86) 365-411

Scottish Legal Aid Fund (21.05.86) 365-411

Scottish Office
Data Protection Registrar 283w
Parking offences 369w

Scottish Trades Union Congress 879
Economic growth 879
Economic situation 577w

Screening
Breast cancer 39w, 725-6
Cervical cancer 206-7w, 209-10w, 380w
German measles 313w
Health service staff 207-8w

Scunthorpe
Regional aid 364w

Scunthorpe Health Authority 535-7w
Health services staff 535-7w

Scunthorpe Hospital 534-6w, 535-7w
Hospital beds 537w
Hospital patients 535-7w
Hospital waiting lists 534-6w
NHS finance 537w

Pilotage
Compensation 341-2w

Sea pollution
Beaches 130-1w

Second homes
Planning permission 34w
Wales 34w

Second jobs 215-6w

Secondary education
Cost per pupil 93-4w
Gwynedd 287-8w
Metropolitan districts 93-4w
School closures 475w
Sex education 480w

Security
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1075-6
Central Electricity Generating Board 468w
Cyprus 428w
Northern Ireland 1075-6
Prison Officers Association 1079
Prison staff 1079
Radioactive waste disposal 494w
Send Prison 631w

Security equipment
Crime prevention 258w
Houses 258w

Security guards
Immigration controls 13-4w

Security industry
Keeni Meeni Services 264w

Sedgemore, Mr Brian
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 771-3
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 319

Sefton
Local government services 193-4w
Rates & rating 193-4w

Seismic monitoring 412-3w
Nuclear weapons tests 412-3w

Select Committee evidence (03.06.86) 747

Select Committee reports 481w, 483w
House of Commons Select Committees 481w
Publishing 481-4w

Select Committees 434-46w
Costs 447w

Self-employed 151w, 173
Employment level 172
National insurance contributions 170-1w
Social security abuse 51w
Statistics 173
Unemployment benefits 152w

Sellafield 592-3w, 594-5w
Euratom 594-5w
Nuclear accidents 252w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 466w, 594-5w
Nuclear safeguards 466w, 467w

Send Prison 631w
Security 631w

Sentencing
Firearms certificates 522
Young offenders 521-2

Serjeant at Arms 325-8w

Severe weather payments 65w, 168w, 523w
Scotland 64w, 168w
Social security recipients 523w

Severn barrage 252w, 355w

Severn bridge 11
Road tolls 11

Severn Tidal Power Group 252w

Sewage
Coastal areas 80-1w
Rural areas 84w
Waste disposal 80-1w

Sex Discrimination Bill (HL) 1985/86
2R (22.05.86) 569-626
Money res* (22.05.86) 626

Sex education
Primary education 480w
Secondary education 480w

Sexual offences
Crime victims 235w

Share option scheme
Finance Act 1980 187-8w
Profit sharing 187-8w

Share ownership 306w, 597w
British Airports Authority 597w

Shares
Jaguar cars 43w

Sharpeville Six
South Africa 571w

Shaw, Mr Giles, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Debates etc
Mulcahy, Keith, Tranquillisers (03.06.86) 874-8
Questions
Agents provocateurs, Convictions 11-2w
Arrests, News International 12w
Arrests, Salisbury Plain 12w
Assaults on police, Lost working days 259w
BBC, Broadcasting bias 126w
Bows & arrows 336w
Bows & arrows, Import controls 522
Broadcast journalism, Wars 521w
Civil defence, Information 259w
Civil defence, Nuclear accidents 254w, 256-7w, 523
Civil defence, Pollution monitoring 254-5w
Civil defence, West Cumberland 523
Compulsorily detained mental patients, Police records 13w
Conservative Party Conference, Police 336w
Crime prevention, Lighting 255w
Crime prevention, Security equipment 258w
Electronic surveillance, Demonstrations 7w, 8-9w
Fire services, Greater London 16w, 516w
Fire services, Performance indicators 332w
Fire services, Statistics 333w
Fire services, West Yorkshire 332-3w

Firearms 517w
Firearms, Crimes of violence 521
Firearms, Custodial treatment 522
Firearms, Retail trade 523
Firearms certificates 522-3
Kidnapping, Children 520, 521
Community radio, BBC 335w
Community radio, Competition 260w
Metropolitan Police, Immigration controls 632w
News International, Arrests 126w
News International, Police 336w
News International, Public order policing 126w, 517w
Paramilitary forces, Combat Shotgun Society 517w
Paramilitary forces, Training 517w
Picketing, News International 12w
Police, Ethnic minorities 519
Police, Labour Party 520
Police, North Wales 333-4w
Police, Schools 520
Police, Solihull 518-9w
Police equipment, Helicopters 7w
Police National Reporting Centre, News International 12w
Police relations with public 518-9, 519-20
Police relations with public, Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 516w
Police training 257w
Police training, Inner city areas 257w
Public order policing, Demonstrations 259w
Public order policing, Salisbury Plain 12w
Racial attacks 254w
Radio, Independent Broadcasting Authority 335-6w
Rape, Crime victims 259w
Road blocks, News International 12w
Road traffic offences, European Road Safety Year 632w
Road traffic offences, Police 336w
Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 9w
Televison programmes, Pop stars 126w
Terrorism 522w
Thames Valley Police, Expenditure 517-8w
Thames Valley Police, Manpower 258w
Trespass, Public Order Bill 1985/86 631-2w
Wilcox, Mary, Suicide 521-2w
Young offenders, Sentencing 521-2

Shaw, Sir Michael
Questions
RAF Fylingdales, Early warning systems 263-4w

Sheehan, Timothy 428w
Armed forces discharges 428w

Sheep
Hill livestock allowances 411w

Sheep premiums 397w, 411w, 486w
Agricultural subsidies 486w
Meat & Livestock Commission 486w
Scotland 397w
Wales 411w

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Questions
House of Commons staff, Training 325-8w
Hull Prison, Prison acommodation 9w, 10w
Hull Prison, Prison staff 10w
Industrial training, Manpower Services Commission 153w

Sheffield
Domestic rates 369w

Sheldon, Rt Hon Robert
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 317, 325-6
Questions
NHS, Re-employment 720

Shell UK Oil 213w, 411w
Government grants 411w
Small businesses 213w, 633w

Sheltered employment
Blind 172
Handicapped workers 172

Shelton, Mr William
Questions
North Sea oil, Export controls 594w

Shepherd, Mr Colin
Questions
Wool, Guaranteed prices 364-5w

Shersby, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 943, 971, 987-9, 991

Shields, Mrs Elizabeth
Debates etc
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 589-91, 601-2

Shipbreaking 391-2w
Defence contracts 391-2w
Defence expenditure 392w
HMS Tiger 391-2w

Shipbuilding
Assisted areas 409w
Defence contracts 426-7w
EC countries 162w, 163-4w
Government assistance to industry 177-8, 728
Japan 163w
Manpower 163-4w
Manpower Services Commission 218w
Merchant ships 162w, 163w, 248-50w
PA Management Consultants 457-8w
Redundancy 218w, (21.05.86) 412-56, (03.06.86) 745
Southampton (05.06.86) 1333-40
Warships 427w

Shipbuilding Intervention Fund
Companies 615w

Shipping 25-6w, 246-7w
Falkland Islands 176w, 215w

Shipping Intervention Fund 615w

Ships
Capital allowances 331w

Shipyard closures (21.05.86) 412-56

Shoplifting
Suicide 521-2w

Shore, Rt Hon Peter
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1195-6
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 838-41
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 297-9
Geevor tin mine (03.06.86) 745
Questions
Business statement 1092

Shoreham Port Authority Bill 1985/86
2R order read (22.05.86) 513, (05.06.86) 1069

Short, Ms Clare
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 782
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, Ulster Unionists 1078-9
Employment discrimination, Northern Ireland 1071
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 166
Pay 151w
Wages councils, Disclosure of information 359w
Wages Inspectorate, Homeworking 359-60w
Wages Inspectorate, Underpayments 359-60w
Youth training scheme, Research 356-7w
Youth training scheme, Social security benefits rules 168
Youth training scheme, Take-up of employment 358w
Youth training scheme, Training allowances 357-8w
Youth training scheme, Wages councils 358w

Short, Mrs Renée
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 68, 141-2
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 277
Questions
AIDS, Health education 527w
"Death in the Community", Coroners 11w
Foster care, Coroners 10w
Health Education Council, Whooping cough 62w
Hospital doctors, Performance indicators 62w
NHS finance, Teaching hospitals 374w
Perinatal mortality, Coroners 11w
Regional health authorities, Public appointments 64w
Social security appeals, European Court of Justice 63-4w

Sick leave
Public expenditure 608w

Silkin, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1122-8, 1132, 1139, 1186

Silvester, Mr Fred
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 814, 821, 824
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 123-4

Sims, Mr Roger
Questions
Paige, Victor, Resignations 901

Single people
Tax thresholds 473-6w

Sites of special scientific interest
Nature Conservancy Council 199w
Pipelines 1w
Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 199w

6 Airborne Brigade 390w

Skeet, Sir Trevor
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 467, 489, 495-6

Skillcentres
Northern Ireland 458-60w
Northern region 420w
Sunderland 420w

Skin disorders
Medical treatments 223w

Skinner, Mr Dennis
Debates etc
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1335
Questions
Business statement 1094
Geever tin mine, Government assistance to industry 743
Unemployment, Departmental publications 169
Unemployment benefits, Coal mining 363w

Slaughterhouses 133w
Animal welfare 133w

Slough
Handicapped 555w
Pest Infestation Research Laboratory 73w
Social security recipients 553-4w
Supplementary benefits 553-4w
Unemployment 584w

Slum clearance 292w
North West Kilmarnock Joint Initiative 888-9

Slums 294w
Coventry 347

Small businesses 173
Accounting 247-8w
Audit 247-8w
Industrial health & safety 165-6
"Lifting the Burden White Paper" 166
Northern Ireland 633w
Northern region 415-6w
Shell UK Oil 213w, 633w
Training 144w
Wales 213w

Smith houses 136w
Defective housing 83-4w, 136w
Leicester 83-4w

Smith, Mr Chris
Questions
Criminal statistics, Social problems 253w
Electronic surveillance, Demonstrations 7w, 8-9w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Expenditure 464w
International Atomic Energy Agency, UK contributions 464-5w
Lines of communications agreement, USA 426w
Local government expenditure 198w
Local government expenditure, Council housing 494-6w
Local government finance, Economic models 74-5w
Local government finance, Scotland 279w
Ministers visits abroad, Turkey 176w, 238w
Police equipment, Helicopters 7w
Trebor corporation, Defence procurement 236w
United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Capital investment 592-3w
Urban housing renewal unit, Housing investment programmes 291w

Smith, Mr Cyril
Questions
North Western Regional Health Authority, NHS administration 721

Smith, Rt Hon John
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 417, 418-21

Smith, Mr Tim
Debates etc
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 549
Questions
M40, Road traffic 161w
Thames Valley Police, Expenditure 517-8w
VAT, Credit 471w

Smoke & chimney gases
Longannet Power Station 579w
Radioactivity 579w

Snape, Mr Peter
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 198-9
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1142, 1155, 1157, 1176-80
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1253
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Redundancy 6-7

Snowdonia National Park 213-4w
Land acquisition 213-4w

Soames, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1212-3
Questions
Business statement 534
Channel tunnel, Road traffic 8
NHS, Housing 717-8
Occupational health services, International Labour Organisation 592w
Review Board for Government Contracts 607-8w

Social Fund (19.05.86) 30-150, (20.05.86) 206-92

Social Fund officers (19.05.86) 30-150

Social policy
Families 352w

Social problems
Criminal statistics 253w

Social security abuse
Black economy 618w
Convictions 262w, 604w
Scotland 604w
Self-employed 51w
Unemployment 51-2w
Unemployment benefits 51w
Wales 262w

Social Security Act 1985 723
Orders & regulations 723, 724

Social security allowances
Mobility allowance 171-2w

Social security appeals
Attendance allowance 461w
European Court of Justice 63-4w
Mobility allowance 461w
Unemployment benefits 52w

Social security benefits (19.05.86) 30-150, (20.05.86) 206-92
Administrative costs 431-3w
Hippies 730
Doncaster 377-8w
Students 525w

Social security benefits disqualification
Camden 68-9w

Social security benefits rates
Supplementary benefits 540w

Social security benefits rules
Housing benefits 169-70w, 317-8w
Immigrants 617w
Mandatory student grants 525w
Mobility allowance 716-7
Student grants 96w
Students 311w, 617w, 718-9, 719-20
Supplementary benefits 525-6w
Youth training scheme 168

Social Security Bill 1985/86 (19.05.86) 151, (21.05.86) 503
Allocation of time motion (19.05.86) 29
Com (19.05.86) 30-150
Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 206-92, 316w, 532w, 555w, 725, 726

Social security claims
Costs 172w

"Social Security Commissioners" 63-4w

Social security recipients
Burnley 542-4w
Coventry 525w
Greater Manchester 57-8w
Housing benefits 556w
Mexborough 377-8w
Mobility allowance 461-2w
Mortgage relief 381-2w
Newham 56w, 554w
Northern region 526w
School leaving 153-4w
Severe weather payments 523w
Slough 553-4w
South Yorkshire 311w
Supplementary benefits 56w, 314-5w
War widows 69w

Social security reform (19.05.86) 151, 382-3w, 386-90w, (21.05.86) 503, 522-3w, 555w, 556w, 616w, 723, 725, 726
Blind 555w
Child benefit 616w
Civil service manpower 726
Dept of Health & Social Security 726
Dept of Health & Social Security local offices 722, 723
Family credit 522-3w
Housing benefits 386-90w, 556w
Income support scheme 382-3w
Pensions 532w
Public petitions (19.05.86) 151, (21.05.86) 503
Supplementary benefits 555w

Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 397-406w
Government grants to voluntary organisations 397-406w

Soley, Mr Clive
Questions
Hippies 738-9
Firearms certificates 522
News International, Public order policing 518

Solicitors
Pay 6w

Solihull
Police 518-9w

Solway Firth barrage 355w

South Africa
Armed conflict 175-6, 176-7
Coinage 434w
Commonwealth 175-6, 176-7, 245w
EC external relations 302w
Economic sanctions 302w
Firearms 558w
Imports 558w
Krugerrands 327w
Military attaches 626w
Ministerial statements (19.05.86) 19-28
Prisoners 571w
Sharpeville Six 571w

South Bank 196w
Planning 196w

South East Asia
Chemical weapons 92w
Naturalisation 334-5w

South East region
Non-domestic rates 192w
Railway network (05.06.86) 1101-94

South Glamorgan Health Authority
NHS finance 285w

South Killingholme 77w, 78w, 201w, 322-4w, 493-4w
Central Electricity Generating Board 468w
Nuclear power stations 513w
Population 224w, 322-4w
Radioactive waste disposal 77w, 78w, 85w, 142w, 197w, 201w, 513w

South Korea
Ministers visits abroad 353w
North Korea 353w

South London Hospital for Women
Property transfer 384w

South of Scotland Electricity Board 251w

South West region
Regional aid (21.05.86) 505-12

South West Thames Regional Health Authority 66w
Ambulance services 539w
Orthopaedics 66w

South West Wales 284w
Radioactivity 284w

South West Water Authority 371-2w
Okehampton bypass 371-2w

South Yorkshire
Social security recipients 311w

South Yorkshire Light Rail Transit Bill 1985/86
2R order read (22.05.86) 513, (05.06.86) 1069

Southampton
Shipbuilding (05.06.86) 1333-40

Southend Health Authority 59w
Hospital waiting lists 59w

Southend Hospital 316w
Hospital closures 316w

Southern Depots 157w

Southwark
Urban Programme 343

Sovereignty
Falkland Islands 245w

Spain
Fishing vessels 610w
Homicide 143w

Speaker and his deputies, *For rulings and statements see separate heading Speakers rulings & statements*
Debates etc
Amendments & new clauses (19.05.86) 31-134 (Passim) (20.05.86) 206, 233, 237-239, 293, (21.05.86) 365, 412, (22.05.86) 569, (03.06.86) 751, 835, (04.06.86) 916-7, 918, 923, 927-9, 935, 967, 987, 992, 1020, (05.06.86) 1100, 1276, 1308, 1309, 1323
Business questions intervention (22.05.86) 537
Disallowed questions (21.05.86) 349, (22.05.86) 534, 536
Orders & regulations motions (21.05.86) 360
Procedure (19.05.86) 24, 28, 75, (20.05.86) 183, 193, 267, 304, (23.05.86) 689, (04.06.86) 884, 1052, 1060, (05.06.86) 1185, 1186
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161
Standing Order No 10 application, Swan Hunter Shipbuilders (03.06.86) 748
Standing Order No 10 applications, British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 201
Standing Order No 10 applications, Chemical Weapons (20.05.86) 200
Standing Order No 10 applications, Pilkington Insulation (20.05.86) 202

Speakers debates
Members interventions (19.05.86) 185

Speakers rulings & statements
Access to Parliament (23.05.86) 649
Adjournment debates (19.05.86) 155, (21.05.86) 507, (23.05.86) 686
Amendments & new clauses (19.05.86) 30, (04.06.86) 1010, (05.06.86) 1198-9, 1201, 1203-4, 1205, 1206, 1318
Calling of Members (20.05.86) 187, (03.06.86) 815, (04.06.86) 897, (05.06.86) 1200, 1204-6
Closure of debate (03.06.86) 826, 828
Filibuster (05.06.86) 1195
Guillotine (19.05.86) 74
House of Commons division of time (03.06.86) 746, (05.06.86) 1196
House of Commons divisions (03.06.86) 810-1
House of Commons motions (05.06.86) 1198-9
House of Commons procedure (05.06.86) 1336
House of Lords reporting (21.05.86) 391
Inter-Parliamentary Union (21.05.86) 530
Members (22.05.86) 557
Members conduct (20.05.86) 307, (21.05.86) 518
Members interventions (21.05.86) 507, (23.05.86) 686, (03.06.86) 799, (05.06.86) 1114, 1204-6, 1210, 1213, 1224, 1226, 1321
Members speeches (19.05.86) 75, (21.05.86) 412, 427, 441, (23.05.86) 709, (03.06.86) 795, 814, (05.06.86) 1197, 1217, 1250
Ministerial responsibility (21.05.86) 458, 459
Ministerial speeches (20.05.86) 206, (21.05.86) 370, (05.06.86) 1202, 1205
Ministerial statements (19.05.86) 28, (21.05.86) 359-60, (22.05.86) 521-2, 562, (03.06.86) 793-4, (04.06.86) 908, 909, 911
New clauses (19.05.86) 74, 75
Official Report (05.06.86) Not in bound volume
Oral questions (04.06.86) 897
Orders & regulations (21.05.86) 460
Parliamentary Privilege (21.05.86) 359, (03.06.86) 747, (05.06.86) 1098
Peers (03.06.86) 797
Points of order (21.05.86) 457-8, 460, (03.06.86) 796, 797, (05.06.86) 1277, 1311
Private bills (03.06.86) 795, 796-7, 808, 813
Private Members motions (05.06.86) 1097-8, 1336
Private Members time (05.06.86) 1336
Private notice questions (03.06.86) 737, 743
Report stage (04.06.86) 947
Scope of debate (19.05.86) 75, 145, (03.06.86) 772-3, 814, 854, (04.06.86) 1053, 1055, 1056-7, 1058, 1059, (05.06.86) 1169, 1200-72 passim
Supplementary questions (03.06.86) 731, (04.06.86) 881, 888
Unparliamentary expressions (20.05.86) 199, (05.06.86) 1098
Written questions (20.05.86) 203

Spearing, Mr Nigel
Debates etc
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of Information (20.05.86) 302-3
Shipbuilding, Southampton (05.06.86) 1335
Questions
Ambulance services, Greater London 538-9w
British Sugar Corporation, Takeovers 251w
Nuclear accidents, Radioactivity 193w
Overseas aid, Rain forests 18
Thames Flood Barrier, Electrical control equipment 23w
Underground railways, Greater London 22w
Woolwich Ferry 451w

Special development orders 77w, 78w, 85w, 142w, 190-1w, 197w, 512w
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 512w
Radioactive waste disposal 77w, 78w, 85w, 190-1w, 197w

Special education
Departmental circulars 227w

Special educational needs 217w, 227w
Strangford 456w
Technical & vocational education initiative 217w

"Special Employment Measures Government Response" 144-5w

Specialist claims control units
Civil service manpower 623w

Spectacles
Ophthalmic services 548w

Speech therapists
Community care 541w

Speed, Mr Keith
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1304
Channel Tunnel, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 853, 858-60
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1105, 1119, 1124, 1155, 1174-6, 1184
Questions
Air fares, Europe 340w
Air force bases, Defence 391w
Driving tests, Administrative delays 340-2w
Hydrofoils, Navy 391w
Mount Pleasant Airport, Air force bases 175w
M20, Motorway service areas 341w

Speed limits
A483 11w
Trailers 453w

Speller, Mr Tony
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 417
Regional aid, South West region (21.05.86) 505-7, 510
Questions
Bus services, Taxis 22w
Business education, Postgraduate education 599-600w
Civil defence, Pollution monitoring 255w
Energy efficiency 157w
Shipbuilding, Assisted areas 409w

Spencer, Mr Derek
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1253
Questions
Business statement 1092
Detective housing, Leicester City Council 134-6w
Estate agents, Office of Fair Trading 410w
Family credit, Social security reform 522-3w
Ministers domestic visits, Leicester 478w
Prison staff, Industrial disputes 257w
Prisons, Lock-up garages 9-10w, 127w, 128w
Redundant churches, Urban development grants 198-9w
Water supply, Norman Shaw building 198w

Spicer, Mr Jim
Questions
Hippies, Trespass 729

Spicer, Mr Michael, *Under-Secretary of State for Transport*
Questions
Air fares, Europe 27w, 340w
Air fares, Judgments 452w, 597-8w
Aircraft, Hijacking 25w
Airlines, Competition 24w
British Airports Authority, Privatisation 597w
Business statement 1089
Motor vehicle registration 160w
Motor vehicle registration, Rural areas 247w
Transport of radioactive materials, Plutonium 610w

Spina bifida
Strangford 456w

Sport Aid 179-80w
Government assistance 15
VAT 1082

Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc) Act 1985 9w

Sports
Scotland (19.05.86) 152-60

Sports Aid 179-80w
Government assistance 15
Tax yields 179-80w
VAT 1082

Sports centres
Rates & rating 139w, (19.05.86) 152-60

Sports council 196w
Chess 368w

Sportsgrounds
Rates & rating 139w

Springburn
British Rail Engineering 5-6, 881, (04.06.86) 1061-8

Squire, Mr Robin
Debates etc
Public Safety Information Bill, 1R (21.05.86) 361-4
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 134-7, 150
Questions
Bed & breakfast accommodation, Homelessness 350
Public expenditure, Bed & breakfast accommodation 730-1

Sri Lanka
Armed forces training 303-4w
British residents abroad 303-4w

St Davids Hospital 40w, 211w
Cardiff 40w
Manpower 211w
NHS finance 40w

St Helens 424-6w
Magistrates 424-6w

St James Hospital
Balham 724-5

St Mary Abbots Hospital 315w

St Michaels School, Norwich (23.05.86) 709-14

Stafford Hospital (04.06.86) 903-11
Legionnaires disease 555w

Staff-student ratios
Further education 454w
Northern Ireland 454w

Stanbrook, Mr Ivor
Questions
Firearms, Custodial treatment 522
USA, Extradition 1071

Standing Order No 10 applications
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 201
Chemical weapons (20.05.86) 200
Pilkington Insulation (20.05.86) 202
Swan Hunter Shipbuilders (03.06.86) 745

Stanley, Rt Hon John, *Minister of State for the Armed Forces*
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry, Ministerial statement (22.05.86) 558-68
Questions
Air force bases, Defence 391w
Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Emergency planning 391w
Binary chemical weapons, Armed forces deployment 428-9w
Binary chemical weapons, West Germany 428w
Chemical weapons, NATO 175w
Chemical weapons, South East Asia 92w
Cruise missiles, RAF Greenham Common 429-30w
Cyprus, Security 428w
Defence expenditure, Oil prices 389-90w
Dual key control 236w
Falkland Islands, Total exclusion zone 176w
Holy Loch, Military ceremonies 237w
Lines of Communication Agreement, USA 426w
Military aircraft, Air force bases 428w
Mount Pleasant Airport, Air force bases 175w
NATO, Chemical weapons 429w
NATO Nuclear Planning Group, Nuclear artillery shell 237w
Navy, Radiation hazards 236w
Overseas forces, USA 175-6w
RAF Flyingdales, Early warning systems 263-4w
6 Airborne Brigade 390w
Wars, Broadcasting 392-4w

Stanstead Airport (03.06.86) 814-34
Railway transport (03.06.86) 814-34

State education
Dorset 277-8w

"Statement on the Defence Estimates, 1986" 426w, 429-30w

Statutory maternity pay 57w
Tax yields 57w

Steel, Rt Hon David
Questions
Agricultural research, Hill Farming Research Organisation 576w
Electricity generation 355w
Heating allowances, Supplementary benefits 376w
Rights of way, Highways Act 1980 28w
South Africa, Commonwealth 176
Unemployment 1082

Steel-framed houses 201-2w
Building Research Establishment 201-2w

Steen, Mr Anthony
Debates etc
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 555
Regional aid, South West region (21.05.86) 508, 511
Questions
Air fares, Judgments 452w
Architects, Government departments 480w
Brixton School, Plymouth, Government grants 109w
Historic buildings, Modbury 372w
Town & country planning, Civil service manpower 224-6w
Town & country planning, Government departments 480w

Stern, Mr Michael
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1286-8, 1304
Chess (23.05.86) 686-7
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1054, 1057-8
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 32, 36-8, 52-3
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 243, 249, 251
Questions
Industrial health & safety, Small businesses 165-6
Rate limitation 74w
Social Security Act 1985, Orders & regulations 723

Stevens, Mr Lewis
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 55-6

Stewart, Mr Allen, *Under-Secretary of State for Scotland*
Questions
Oil prices, Scotland 578w
School leaving, Scotland 230-2w
Scottish Football Association, World Cup 577w
Scottish Trades Union Congress, Economic situation 577w
Teachers, Scotland 581w
Unemployment, Glasgow 395w
Unemployment, Greenock 395-6w
Unemployment, Scotland 155-6w
Vacancies, Scotland 155w, 579-81w
Youth training scheme, Local authorities in Scotland 155w
Youth unemployment, Scotland 155w, 156w

Stewart, Mr Andy
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 225-6, 229
Questions
Agricultural Development & Advisory Service, Cost effectiveness 551-2w
National Coal Board, Recruitment 594w
Urban housing renewal unit, Mansfield District Council 139-40w

Stewart, Rt Hon Donald
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 194
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 381
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Springburn 5-6
Electricity generation, Scotland 886
Magnox reactors 157w
Magnox reactors, Power station closures 157w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Nuclear power stations 577w
Overseas forces, USA 176w
Unemployment, Statistics 162

Stewart, Mr Ian, *Economic Secretary to the Treasury*
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 915, 922, 923, 924, 935-6, 943-6, 947-50, 990-1, 992-3, 1020, 1022, 1049-52
Questions
Building societies, Bank services 187w
European monetary system, Central banks 174w
European monetary system, EC internal trade 86w
Income, Bank of England 472w
International Monetary Fund, Developing countries 174w
Overseas investment 309w
Pay settlements, Private sector 470w
Share ownership 306w

Stokes, Mr John
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 25
Questions
Terrorism, Capital punishment 14

Stott, Mr Roger
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 816, 825-6
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1206, 1260, 1261
Questions
International Labour Organisation, Merchant seamen 247w

Strang, Mr Gavin
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 197
Questions
Civil defence, Information 259w
Coal mining, Dismissal 174
Defence research, Defence contracts 430w
Electricity generation, Scotland 885-6
Environment protection, Scotland 281w
Environmentally sensitive areas, Scotland 281w
Hazardous Waste Inspectorate, Scottish Development Department 280w
Nature conservation, Local authorities in Scotland 282w
North Sea, International conferences 281w, 282w
River pollution, Scotland 280-1w
Unemployed 146-7w
University teachers, Pay settlements 329-30w
Waste disposal, Local authorities in Scotland 280w
Water pollution, Scotland 279w, 280w

Strangford
Special educational needs 456w
Spina bifida 456w

Strategic defence initiative
Technical assistance 92w
USA 92w

Strathclyde
Hospital beds 342w

Strathclyde Regional Council 283w
Youth services 283w

Straw, Mr Jack
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 822, 828
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 796
Mental health community care, Public petitions (21.05.86) 503-4
Questions
Job release scheme allowance 625w
Rate support grants 342
Rate support grants, Birmingham City Council 355-6
Unemployment, Taxation 1084-5

Street cleaning
Local government finance 612w

Strontium
Food contamination 75w
Pollution 75w

Structure plans
Leicestershire 160-1w

Stubbings bypass
Public inquiries 452w

Student grants 719-20
Departmental co-ordination 720
Earnings rules 181-3w
Income 181-3w
Northern Ireland 582w

Part-time education 600-1w
Social security benefits rules 96w
Vocational training 582w

Student numbers
Barnsley College of Technology 121-2w, 123w
Higher education 272-4w
Teacher training 123w

Students
Child benefit 379w
Housing benefits 719
Part-time employment 719
Radiation hazards 547w
Social security benefits 525w
Social security benefits rules 311w, 617w, 718-9, 719-20
Supplementary benefits 525w
Temporary employment 168-9

Subsidence Compensation Review Committee
see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Subsidiary companies
National Coal Board 157w

Subsidies
Public footpaths 567w
Rights of way 567w

Sudbury
Oriel Lodge 617w

Suffolk
Employment opportunities 151w
Rate support grants 355

Sugar
Beekeeping 70w, 223w

Sugar beet
Agricultural production 485w

Suicide
Criminal proceedings 521w
Shoplifting 521-2w
Wilcox, Mary 521-2w

Sulphur dioxide 158w
Coal fired power stations 158w

Sumberg, Mr David
Debates etc
Education (Assisted Places) (Amendment) Regulations 1986 (04.06.86) 1053, 1055, 1056, 1057

Sunderland
Employment 420w
Rate limitation 612-3w
Rate support grant penalties 495w
Skillcentres 420w
Supplementary benefits 526w
Unemployment 418w, 420-1w
Vacancies 419w
Vocational guidance 419w

Supplementary benefits
Board & lodging charges 164w, 165w
British Home for Incurables Hospital 526w
Burnley 542w
Fuel aid 376w
Heating allowances 376w
Housing 431-2w
Mortgage relief 315w
Newham 554w
Pensioners 314-5w
Slough 553-4w
Social security benefits rates 540w
Social security benefits rules 525-6w
Social security recipients 56w, 314-5w
Social security reform 555w
Students 525w
Sunderland 526w
Youth training scheme 584-5w

Supplementary questions
Speakers rulings & statements (03.06.86) 731, (04.06.86) 881, 888

Supreme Court Act 1981 595w
Fletcher, Simon 595w

Surgery
Hip replacements 65w
Hospital consultants 523w
Hospital waiting lists 542w
Prison hospitals 520w

Surgical dressings 541w
Limited list prescribing 541w

Surplus land 384w

Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985 172w

Swan Hunter Shipbuilders 728, (03.06.86) 745
Standing Order No 10 applications (03.06.86) 745

Swindon
British Rail Engineering 20w
Magistrates 431w

Synthetic fibres
Antidumping 185w
Dumping 186w
EC action 185-6w
Imports 186w

Syrian Arab Republic
Immigration controls 327-8w
Israel 305w
Temporary immigrants 514-5w
Visas 327-8w

Tain
Pipelines 1w

Takeovers 408w
British Sugar Corporation 251w
Wedgewood 407-8w

Tanzania
Overseas aid 2w

Tapsell, Sir Peter
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 773-6

Tate Gallery 332w

Tax allowances
Charities 559-60w
Free ports 470w
Pensions 532w

Tax credits
Costs 433w
Tax yields 433w

Tax evasion
Road tax 23w

Tax rates & bands
Income tax 528

Tax thresholds
Married couple 473-4w
Married people 473-6w
Single people 473-6w

Tax yields
Capital gains tax 91w
Income tax 174-5w
National insurance contributions 609w, 617w
Sports Aid 179-80w
Statutory maternity pay 57w
Tax credits 433w
VAT 471w

Taxation 309-10w
House of Commons staff 73-4w
Income 469w
Termination of employment 559w
Unemployment 1084-5

Taxis
Bus services 22w
Costs 73w
House of Commons staff 73-4w

Taylor, Rt Hon John David
Debates etc
Cyprus (20.05.86) 334-7, 340
Questions
Ainsworth Avenue, Crimes against property 456w
Death, Terrorism 455-6w
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 337-8w
EC grants & loans, Northern Ireland district councils 40-1w
European Assembly, Land acquisition 214w
Housing construction, Ballyhalbert 299w
Leisure facilities, Armagh 42w
Spina bifida, Strangford 456w
Victoria School, Ballyhalbert, Construction 456w

Taylor, Mr John Mark
Questions
Police, Solihull 518-9w
Road tax, Tax evasion 23w

Taylor, Mr Teddy
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 938
Questions
Balance of trade, UK trade with EC 407w
Beef & veal, Animal housing 487w
Beer, West Germany 134w, 222w
European Assembly, Political parties 18w, 303w, 308w
European Assembly budget 308w, 561w
Fire services, Greater London 16w, 516w
Food surpluses, European Economic Community 551w
Hospital waiting lists, Out-patient clinics 59w
House of Commons stationery 205w
Manufactured goods, Overseas trade 162w
Shipbuilding, Merchant ships 162w
Unemployment 174

Teacher training
Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education 123w
Educational finance 271w
Educational qualifications 329w
Educational standards 329w
Inner city areas 271-2w
Mature students 271w
Science education 93w
Student numbers 123w

Teachers
Educational qualifications 328w
Pay 576-7w, 581w
Pay settlements 269-70w
Resignations 96w
Scotland 576-7w, 581w

Teaching hospitals
Greater London 66w, 374w
Hospital admissions 66w
NHS finance 374w

Tebbit, Rt Hon Norman, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
Questions
Magistrates 55w
Magistrates, Wigan 424-6w

Technical assistance
Strategic defence initiative 92w

Technical & vocational education initiative 217-8w, 266-70w
Educational finance 266-70w
Local education authorities 266-70w
Special educational needs 217w
Women 217-8w

Technicians
NHS 543w
Resignations 543w

Teignmouth Quay Company Bill 1985/86
2R order read (22.05.86) 513, (05.06.86) 1069

Telecommunications Act 1984 363-4w
Consumer protection 363-4w

Telecommunications industry
Manpower 185w

Telephone calls 568w

Telephone charges
Dept of the Environment 568w

Television
Imports 249w

Television programmes
Pop stars 126w
Radioactivity 492-3w

Televisions
China 249w

Telex
Government departments 568w

Temple-Morris, Mr Peter
Questions
Community radio, BBC 335w
Radio, Independent Broadcasting Authority 335-6w

Temporary accommodation
Domestic violence 214w

Temporary employment
Farms 168-9
Students 168-9

Temporary immigrants
Immigration controls 515w
Iran 514-5w
Syrian Arab Republic 514-5w

Tenants
Housing estates 345

Tenders 92w, 456w, (23.05.86) 703-8
Local authorities (23.05.86) 703-8
Victoria School, Ballyhalbert 456w

Terlezki, Mr Stefan
Questions
Cardiff Childrens Ear Nose & Throat Hospital, Finance 128w
Chemical weapons, USSR 527
Civil defence, Pollution monitoring 254-5w
Hospital closures, Cardiff 285w
Medical equipment, Cardiff 284-5w
Navy, Radiation hazards 236w
NHS finance, South Glamorgan Health Authority 285w
St Davids Hospital, Cardiff 40w
St Davids Hospital, Manpower 211w
Youth training scheme, Cardiff 289-90w

Terminal care
Prisoners release 563-4w, 628w, 629w

Termination of employment
Ex gratia payments 559w
Taxation 559w

Terrorism 522w
Capital punishment 14
Compensation 456-7w
Death 455-6w
International cooperation 411-2w
IRA 1070-1
Libyan Arab Republic 731
Northern Ireland 455-6w, 463-4w, 522w
Prosecutions 463w
Railway property 456-7w
Rainbow Warrior 245w
Tourism 163-4, 306w
Tourist industry 421-2w
Treason 14-5

Test tube babies
NHS 288-9w
Wales 288-9w

Testing
Diabetes 543w

Thames Flood Barrier
Electrical control equipment 73w

Thames Valley Police 258w, 517-8w
Expenditure 517-8w
Manpower 258w

Thatcher, Rt Hon Margaret, *Prime Minister, First Lord of the Treasury and Minister for the Civil Service*
Questions
Armed forces deployment, USA 243w
Binary chemical weapons, NATO 33w
Cabinet Office, Pollution control 179w
Channel tunnel, Against Channel Tunnel Schemes 353w
Chemical weapons 527-8
Chemical weapons, USSR 527
Chemical weapons deployment 526, 527
Civil service, Pay settlements 244w
Coal mining, Dismissal 174
Coal mining, Industrial disputes 529-30
Coinage, South Africa 434w
Hippies, Public order policing 1082-3
Hippies, Trespass 729, 730
Disaster relief, VAT 179-80w
Economic policy, Families 1083-4
Economic policy, Unemployment 1083
Falkland Islands, De Cuellar, Perez 245w
Families, Social policy 352w
Free school meals, Costs 434w
F111 Aircraft, Bombings 1086
F111 Aircraft, Libyan Arab Republic 731
Government assistance to industry 732
Hippies, Trespass 1084
House of Commons Select Committees 434-46w
House of Commons Select Committees, Costs 447w
Housing, Supplementary benefits 431-2w
Housing completions 128w
Human embryo experiments 1081-2
Immigration controls, Indian subcontinent 1085-6
Immigration controls, Racial discrimination 1082
Inflation 525-6
Japan, Protectionism 529
Libyan Arab Republic, USA 731
Military exercises, USA 243w
Ministerial responsibility, Chapelcross Power Station 179w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 33w
Nuclear free zones, Local authorities 562w
Nuclear power 177
Nuclear weapons policy 527
Nuclear weapons tests, Arms control 561w
Overseas aid, Africa 732
Pay review bodies 239-44w
Prime Minister domestic visits, International conferences 33w
Prime Minister domestic visits, Rochester 627w
Prime Minister official engagements 128w, 245w, 449w, 627w
Prime Minister visits abroad, Israel 174-5, 246w, 447w
Public expenditure 528
Public expenditure, Bed & breakfast accommodation 730-1
Public expenditure, Overseas aid 728
Quangos 351-2w
Rainbow Warrior, Terrorism 245w
Rates & rating, Local government revenue 432w
Redundancy, Northern region 728
Republic of Ireland, National territory 561-2w
SALT agreements, USA 729-30, 732
Shipbuilding, Government assistance to industry 177-8
Social security benefits, Administrative costs 431-3w
South Africa, Armed conflict 175-6, 176-7
South Africa, Commonwealth 176, 245w
South Korea, North Korea 353w
Sport Aid, VAT 1082
Tax credits, Tax yields 433w
Top Salaries Review Body, Pay 177
Trident, Defence procurement 178
Unemployment 1082
Unemployment, Scotland 528
Unemployment, Taxation 1084-5
Waldheim, Kurt, Documents 34w
Waldheim, Kurt, War crimes 34w, 245w, 447w
Westland Helicopters, Company finance 244w
Workfare, Employment schemes 1083
Young people 447-9w

Times, The (20.05.86) 293-332

Thomas, Mr D E
Debates etc
University finance (20.05.86) 186
Questions
Battered wives, Wales 35w, 214w
Beaches, Wales 130-1w, 213w
Dairy farming, Production quotas 72-3w
Defence land, Wales 236w
Enterprise Express, Wales 129-30w
HMSO, Publishing 187w
Hospital beds, Wales 131-2w
Hospitals, Wales 132w
Industrial production, Wales 132w
Magnox reactors, Emergency planning 467w
Ministerial responsibility, Chapelcross Power Station 179w
NATO Nuclear Planning Group, Nuclear artillery shell 237w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 466w, 595w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Windscale 465-6w
Nuclear fuels, Advanced gas-cooled reactors 466w
Nuclear fuels, Nuclear safeguards 466w
Nuclear power stations, Calder Hall 466w
Nuclear power stations, Radioactive wastes 206w
Overseas forces, USA 175-6w
Plutonium, Central Electricity Generating Board 467w
Plutonium, Nuclear safeguards 466-7w
Pollution, Nuclear accidents 200w
Pollution monitoring, Disclosure of information 201w
Pollution monitoring, National Radiological Protection Board 200w
Radioactivity, Milk 200w, 296w
Salmon, Wales 213w
Shell UK Oil, Small businesses 213w
Unemployment, Wales 212w
Womens aid, Wales 34-5w
Youth services, Wales 286w

Thomas, Dr Roger
Questions
Cervical cancer, Screening 380w
Cervical cancer, Wales 206-7w, 207-8w, 209-10w
Haemophilia, Wales 288w
Mental health community care, Wales 289w
NHS, Wales 289w
Personal social services, Wales 289w
Pesticides, Horticulture 221w
Radioactivity, South West Wales 284w
Residential care, Wales 289w
Sewage, Waste disposal 80-1w

Thompson, Mr Patrick
Questions
Civil defence, Nuclear accidents 254w
Police relations with public 519-20

Thorne, Mr Neil
Debates etc
General Electric Company, Public petitions (23.05.86) 637
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 581
Questions
Radioactivity, Emergency planning 353-4
Urban housing renewal unit, Newham 141w

Thorne, Mr Stan
Questions
British Rail Engineering, Export promotion 20w

Thornton, Mr Malcolm
Questions
Marine pilots, Compensation 341-2w

Thurnham, Mr Peter
Debates etc
British Railways (Stansted) Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 822-3
Economic policy (03.06.86) 783
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 64, 66-7
Questions
Arms control 306w
Channel Tunnel Bill 1985/86, Employment 9
Copyright, Plastic arts 409-10w

Dept of Employment, Departmental leaflets 168
Housing improvement, Dept of the Environment 202w
Jaguar Cars, Privatisation 43w
Mobility allowance, Blind 716
Teacher training, Science education 93w
Terrorism, International cooperation 411-2w
Young offenders, Sentencing 521-2

Tidal power 355w
Cardiff 286w

Tin
Cornwall (23.05.86) 650-8, 740-1, 741-2, 743-4
Government assistance to industry 742

Tinn, Mr James
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 414-5, 431-3

Tipping of waste
Explosions 497w
Loscoe 497w
Methane 497w

Tobacco products
Health warnings (04.06.86) 911

Tobacco Products (Health Warnings) Bill 1985/86
1R (04.06.86) 911

Toll bridges
Transport Select Committee 11

Top Salaries Review Body
Pay 177

Torness Power Station 884-5, 891
Coal mining 880
Electricity generation 892
Emergency planning 891-2
Nuclear accidents 891-2

Total exclusion zone 176w
Falkland Islands 176w

Tourism
Airships 29w
Disclosure of information 584w
Northern Ireland 632w
Terrorism 163-4, 306w
Weather 164

Tourist industry
Employment opportunities 165
Government assistance to industry 422w
Leisure facilities 164
Low pay 164
Manpower 145w
Terrorism 421-2w
USA 356w
Women 145w

Tower Hamlets
Detection rates 13w

Tower Hill 452w
Roads 452w

Town & country planning
Civil service manpower 224-6w
Declarations of interest 81w
Government departments 480w

Town & Country Planning (NIREX) Special Development Order 1986 (21.05.86) 457-503

Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) (Scotland) Order 1973 396w

Townend, Mr John
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 1021, 1022
Questions
Immigration controls, Indian subcontinent 1085-6

Townsend, Mr Cyril D
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 564
Questions
Prime Minister visits abroad, Israel 174-5

Tracey, Mr Richard, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Environment—Sport*
Debates etc
London Residuary Body (23.05.86) 644-8
Questions
Building land, Dorset 83w
Central Council of Physical recreation 396w
Councillors, Declarations of interest 81w
Detective housing, Basildon 195w
I C grants & loans, Greater Manchester 368w
Farm buildings, Change of use 195w
Greenbelt, Greater London 491w
Hampton Court, Fires 356
Heritage, Government achievements 509-10w
Historic buildings, Modbury 372w
Hypermarkets, Planning permission 195w
Letchworth Garden City Corporation, Local Government Act 1972 294-5w
Listed buildings, Religious buildings 612w
Local government reform, Local government staff 295w
London Marathon, Government grants 196w
London Residuary Body, Pay 497w
New-towns 293-4w
Retirement Homes Association, Planning appeals 497-8w
Road construction, Leicestershire 160-1w
South Bank, Planning 196w
Sports Council, Chess 368w

Trade competitiveness 162
Inflation 880-1

Trade missions 634w
Northern Ireland Industrial Development Board 634w

Trade union membership
Disciplinary proceedings 18w
Government Communications Headquarters 18w
Punishment 18w

Traffic noise
M25 10-1

Trailers
Speed limits 453w

Training
Agriculture 483-4w
Expenditure 483w, 484w
Fisheries 483-4w
House of Commons staff 325-8w
Housing management 81w
Manpower Services Commission 153w, 362w
NHS administration 901
NHS finance 545w
Northern Ireland 458-60w
Paramilitary forces 517w
Prison staff 518w
Small businesses 144w
Youth services 283w

Training allowances 357-8w
Youth opportunities scheme 357-8w
Youth training scheme 357-8w

Training grants 143-4w
Youth training scheme 584-5w

Tranquillisers
Prisoners (03.06.86) 872-8

Transient people
Police powers 735

Transport Act 1985 21-2w
Bus services 21-2w

Transport of radioactive materials
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 610w
Nuclear power stations 205-6w
Plutonium 610w
Radioactive waste disposal 78-9w

Transport Select Committee 11
Toll bridges 11

Transport & Road Research Laboratory 202w
Bus services 202w

Travel
AIDS 527w

Travel concessions
Public participation in planning 197w

Treason
Terrorism 14-5

Treasury
Data Protection Registrar 307w, 609w
Higher civil servants 330-1w
Manpower 330-1w
Ministerial correspondence 307w

Treaties
International Labour Organisation 247w

Treaty of Rome 561-2w
Republic of Ireland 561-2w

Trebor Corporation
Defence procurement 236w

Tree planting
Apples 70w

Trent Regional Health Authority 67-8w
Expenditure 67-8w

Trespass
Hippies 729, 730, 733-4, 734-5, 736, 737-8, 1084
Public Order Bill 1985-86 631-2w
Public order policing 631-2w
Walking 736

Trials
Crown courts 246w
High Court 246w
9 Signal Regiment 124w

Trichinella spiralis 72w
Food inspection 72w

Trident
Defence procurement 178

Trippier, Mr David, *Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Employment*
Questions
Area manpower boards, Unemployed 145w
British Tourist Authority, Expenditure 625w
Dept of Employment, Departmental leaflets 168
Exchange rates, Foreign tourists 624w
Foreign tourists 169
Foreign tourists, USA 151w, 163-4, 165
Gas accidents, Glasgow 266w
Industrial health & safety, Manufactured imports 584w
Industrial injuries, Manufacturing industries 152w
Industrial training, Departmental leaflets 168
Industrial training, Manpower Services Commission 153w
Loan guarantee scheme, Publicity 54w
Local enterprise agencies 150w
Local enterprise agency grant scheme 173-4
Manpower Services Commission, Further education 266w
Nuclear Installations Inspectorate, Civil service manpower 55w
Radiation hazards, Human organs 53-4w
Self-employed 151w
Skillcentres, Northern region 420w
Small businesses, Northern region 415-6w
Small businesses, Training 144w
Technical & vocational education initiative 218w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Local education authorities 266-70w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Special educational needs 217w
Technical & vocational education initiative, Women 217-8w
Temporary employment, Farms 168-9
Tourism, Disclosure of information 584w

Tourist industry, Employment opportunities 165
Tourist industry, Government assistance to industry 422w
Tourist industry, Leisure facilities 164
Tourist industry, Manpower 145w
Tourist industry, Terrorism 421-2w
Training grants 143-4w
Unemployment, Departmental publications 169
Unemployment, Mortgage relief 169
Wages Inspectorate, Advisory services 50w
Wages Inspectorate, Manpower 50w, 218-20w
Wages Inspectorate, Prosecutions 50-2w
Youth training scheme, Civil service 151w
Youth training scheme, Manpower Services Commission 151w
Youth training scheme, Per capita costs 50w
Youth training scheme, Training grants 584-5w
Youth employment 148w
Youth unemployment, Lancashire 421w
Youth unemployment, Liverpool 148-9w

Trotter, Mr Neville
Debates etc
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 437-41
Questions
Defence contracts, Shipbuilding 426-7w
Harland & Wolff, Government assistance to nationalised industries 44w
Harland & Wolff, PA Management Consultants 457-8w
Shipbuilding Intervention Fund, Companies 615w
Warships, Costs 427w

Trusts 190w

Turkey
Arms trade 176w, 238w
Ministers visits abroad 176w, 238w, 430w

Turnbull, Lancelot George 8w
Open prisons 8w

Turtle products 484w
House of Commons catering 484W

24-D 221w

Twinn, Dr Ian
Questions
Gas accidents, Glasgow 266w

245-T 221w

Type 23 frigates 427w

T2400 submarines 427w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority
Capital investment 592-3w

Ullapool Harbour Order Confirmation Bill 1985/86
Royal Assent (20.05.86) 161

Ulster Unionists
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1077-8, 1078-9
Members attendance 1078

UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Hong Kong 337w

Underground railways
Greater London 22w
Railway fares 450w

Underpayments 359-60w
Homeworking 359-60w
Unemployment benefits 52w
Wages councils 359-60w
Wages Inspectorate 359-60w

Unemployed 146-7w
Advisory services 360w, 361w
Area manpower boards 145w
East London 215-6w, 216-7w
Employment schemes 144-5w, 148w, 150w
Take-up of employment 152-4w

Unemployment 146w, 152w, 161-2, 163, 174, (03.06.86) 751-92, 1082
Basildon 171
Building industry 417w
Burnley 542-4w, 583w
Carreras Rothmans 458w
Central Scotland 149-50w
Costs 471-2w
Departmental publication 169
East Midlands 146w
Economic policy 1083
European Communities 423-4w
Glasgow 395w
Greenock 395-6w
Handicapped workers 171-2
Housing benefits 373-4w
Industrial training 162-3
Langbaurgh 48-9w
Liverpool 147-8w, 149w
Men 624w
Merseyside 147-8w, 149w, 150w
Mortgage relief 169
Newham 53-5w
Northern Ireland 454w, 455w
Northern region 418w
Parliamentary constituencies 55w, 362w
Port Glasgow 395-6w
Pwllheli 285-6w
Restart programme 361w, 362w
Rotherham 169-70
Scotland 155-6w, 528
Slough 584w
Social security abuse 51-2w
Statistics 152w, 162
Sunderland 418w, 420-1w
Taxation 1084-5
Wales 212w
Women 624w

Unemployment benefit offices 48w
Departmental circulars 48w

Unemployment benefits 65w
Actors 152w
Availability for work 54w
Coal mining 48w, 363w
Departmental circulars 363w
Immigrants 617w
Self-employed 152w
Social security abuse 51w
Social security appeals 52w
Underpayments 52w
Wales 153-4w

United Kingdom Atomic Energy
Capital Investment Authority 592-3w

United Kingdom Provident 183-5w
Company investigations 183-5w
Insurance companies 183-5w

University closures
Scotland 881

University finance 479-80w
Ministerial statements (20.05.86) 179-87
University Grants Committee 180-2w

University Grants Committee
University finance 180-2w

University teachers
Pay settlements 329-30w

Unpaid fines
Prison sentences 562w

Unparliamentary expressions
Speakers rulings & statements (20.05.86) 199, (05.06.86) 1098

Upper Waiting Hall
Age concern 167w
Research Trust for Metabolic Diseases in Children 526w

Uranium
Imports 164w

Urban areas
Lorries 26w

Urban development grants 198-9w
Northern region 496w
Redundant churches 198-9w

Urban housing renewal unit 139-40w, 291w, 367-8w, 614w
Blackburn Borough Council 140-1w
Government grants 614w
Housing investment programmes 291w
Hyndburn 367-8w
Mansfield District Council 139-40w
Newham 141w

Urban programme
Northern region 496w
Scotland 235w
Southwark 343
Youth services 283w

US bases 304-5w, 306w, 429-30w
Armed forces deployment 306w

USA 169
Anglo-Irish Agreement 1079
Angola 304w
Argentina 243w
Armed forces 132w
Armed forces deployment 243w
Chemical weapons (20.05.86) 200, 428-9w
Diego Garcia 430w
Employment schemes 415w
Export controls 47w, 48w
Extradition 1069-70, 1070-1, 1072
Foreign aid 1080
Foreign policy 412w
Foreign tourists 151w, 163-4, 165, 356w, 421-2w, 624w, 625w
Libyan Arab Republic 731
Lines of Communication Agreement 426w
Military aircraft 428w
Military exercises 243w
Nicaragua 305w
Northern Ireland Government 1075
Overseas forces 175-6w
Radioactivity 493w
Red alerts 243w
SALT agreements 729-30, 732
Strategic defence initiative 92w
Tourist industry 356w

USSR
Art exhibitions 302w
Chemical weapons 527
Food aid from EC 20w
International cooperation 142w
Nuclear accidents 20w, 33w, 39w, 137w, 192-3w, 219-20w, 315w, 346w, 353, 354, 370w, 468w, 492w, 523, 547w, 576w, 577w
Nuclear safety 353w
Political prisoners 304w

Vacancies
Burnley 583w
Health service staff 381w
Hospital doctors 349w
Liverpool 149w
Merseyside 149w
Northern Ireland 454w, 582-3w, 633w
Northern region 419w
Pwllheli 285-6w
Scotland 155w, 579-81w
Sunderland 419w
Vocational guidance 585-92w

Vaccination
German measles 312w, 313w

Value Added Tax (Handicapped Persons & Charities) Order 1986 (21.05.86) 360

van Straubenzee, Sir William
Questions
Church Commissioners, Estate agents 177w
Church Commissioners, Property transfer 627w

VAT
Company registration 471w
Credit 471w
Disaster relief 179-80w
EC law 86-7w
Northern region 471w
Sport Aid 1082
Tax yields 471w

Vegetable oils
Agricultural production 487w
European Economic Community 487w

Venison
Convictions 228-9w

Ventilation
Palace of Westminster 86w

Verwood
Middle schools 479w
Voluntary schools 479w

Veterinary services
Food inspection 72w

Victim support schemes 515

Victoria School, Ballyhalbert 456w
Construction 456w
Tenders 456w

Video recordings
"Just Say No" 183w, 262w, 316-7w

Vietnamese refugees
Naturalisation 334w

Vigers, Mr Peter
Questions
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 192w
United Kingdom Provident, Insurance companies 183-5w

Visas
Immigration controls 524
Syrian Arab Republic 327-8w

Visual arts
Cathays Park 130w

Vocational education
Education 271w
Higher education admission 272w

Vocational guidance
Northern region 419w
Sunderland 419
Vacancies 585-92w

Vocational training
Professional qualifications 271w
Student grants 582w

Voluntary organisations
Action for Community Employment 1080-1
Education 274w
Greater London Council 342-3
Litter 613w
Local government expenditure 191-2w, 343
Local government reform 342-3
Youth training scheme 167

Voluntary schools
Norwich (23.05.86) 709-14
Verwood 479w

Voluntary unemployment 68-9w
Camden 68-9w

Vosper Shiprepairers (05.06.86) 1333-40

Vosper Thorneycroft (05.06.86) 1333-40

Vote Office 325-8w

Wacey, A 249w

Waddilove Committee see Coal Mining Subsidence Compensation Independent Review

Waddington, Mr David, *Minister of State for the Home Department*
Questions
Aliens, Libyan Arab Republic 333w
Data Protection Registrar, Home Office 260w
Data Protection Registrar, Information 260w
Entry clearances 334w
Ethnic minorities, Government grants to local authorities 260w
Foreign tourists, Immigration controls 524, 525
Illegal immigrants, India 524-5
Illegal immigrants, Ports of entry 525
Immigration controls, Complaints 13w
Immigration controls, Heathrow 13-4w
Immigration controls, Temporary immigrants 515w
Immigration officers, Airports 126-7w
Immigration officers, Interviews 14w
Naturalisation, South East Asia 334-5w
Passports, Administrative delays 178-9w
Temporary immigrants, Syrian Arab Republic 514-5w
Zahoor, Karman, Immigration controls 564w

Wages Bill 1985/86 50w
Civil service manpower 50w

Wages councils
Disclosure of information 359w
Underpayments 359-60w
Young workers scheme 358w
Youth training scheme 358w

Wages Inspectorate
Advisory services 50w
Homeworking 359-60w
Manpower 50w, 218-20w
Prosecutions 50-2w
Underpayments 359-60w

Wainwright, Mr Richard
Debates etc
"Building Businesses Not Barriers White Paper" (22.05.86) 547
Economic policy (03.06.86) 760-4
Questions
Area manpower boards, Public appointments 362w
Area manpower boards, Unemployed 145w
Debts, Developing countries 17w
Industrial training, Departmental leaflets 168
Tourist industry, Leisure facilities 164

Waldegrave, Mr William, *Minister of State for the Environment (Countryside & Local Government)*
Debates etc
Radioactive waste disposal, Planning permission (21.05.86) 462, 464-70, 497-500
Questions
Agriculture, Advisory services 199-200w
Caesium, Radioactivity 75w
Coal fired power stations, Air pollution 344
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of the Environment 372w
International Atomic Energy Agency, Scientists 142w
Local government services, Privatisation 356-7
Natural radioactivity 343-4
Non-domestic rates, Rates & rating 192w
Nuclear accidents, Cap de la Hague 345
Nuclear accidents, Disclosure of information 193w
Nuclear accidents, Radioactivity 193w
Nuclear accidents, USSR 137w, 354, 370w
Nuclear free zones, Nuclear accidents 354
Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 138w
Nuclear power, International cooperation 142w, 143w
Pollution, Nuclear accidents 192w, 200w
Pollution monitoring, Cumbria 75w
Pollution monitoring, Disclosure of information 201w
Pollution monitoring, Institute of Terrestrial Ecology 76w
Pollution monitoring, National Radiological Protection Board 200w
Pollution monitoring, Radioactivity 75w
Radiation hazards, Radioactivity 370w
Radioactive waste disposal 76w, 142w
Radioactive waste disposal, Concrete 291-2w
Radioactive waste disposal, Consultants 77w
Radioactive waste disposal, Costs 76w
Radioactive waste disposal, Departmental correspondence 80w
Radioactive waste disposal, Dept of the Environment 77w
Radioactive waste disposal, Disclosure of information 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Drigg 76w
Radioactive waste disposal, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 79w
Radioactive waste disposal, Radiation hazards 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, South Killingholme 77w, 78w, 85w, 142w, 197w, 201w
Radioactive waste disposal, Special development orders 77w, 190-1w, 197w
Radioactive waste disposal, Transport of radioactive materials 78-9w
Radioactive Waste Management Advisory Committee, Nuclear Industry Radioactive Waste Executive 83w
Radioactive wastes 294w
Radioactive wastes, Health hazards 196-7w
Radioactive wastes, Nuclear fuel reprocessing 142w
Radioactive wastes, Radiation hazards 76w
Radioactivity, Disclosure of information 353
Radioactivity, Emergency planning 353-4
Radioactivity, Milk 200w, 296w
Radioactivity, Nuclear safety 344
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 345
Radiochemical Inspectorate, Disclosure of information 299-301w
"Radiochemical Inspectorate Annual Report" 569w
Sites of special scientific interest, Nature Conservancy Council 199w
Sites of special scientific interest, Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 199w
Waste disposal, Polychlorinated biphenyl 370w
Windscale, Fires 290-1w

Walden, Mr George, *Under-Secretary of State for Education & Science*
Debates etc
Chess (23.05.86) 687-9
Questions
Astronomy 275w
Barnsley College of Technology, Educational finance 121-2w, 123w
Business education, Postgraduate education 599-600w
Further education, Capital investment 109-10w, 110-122w
Further education, Educational finance 328w
Higher education, Education & industry 275w
Higher education, Student numbers 272-4w
Mandatory student grants, Expenditure 478-9w
Medical research, MRC Mammalian Genome Unit 478w
Medical research, Pneumoconiosis 278w
Medical Research Council, Epilepsy 479w
Ministers domestic visits, Leicester 478w
National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education, Polytechnics 269w
National Advisory Body for Local Authority Higher Education 478w
Part-time education, Members correspondence 183w
Photosensitivity, Medical Research Council 184w
Royal Greenwich Observatory, Science & technology research 276w
Royal Greenwich Observatory, Science Research Council 275-6w
Student grants, Social security benefits rules 96w
Teacher training, Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education 123w
Teacher training, Science education 93w
University finance 479-80w
University finance, University Grants Committee 180-2w
University teachers, Pay settlements 329-30w
Vocational education, Higher education admission 272w

Waldheim, Kurt 34w, 245w, 427w, 447w
Documents 34w, 427w
Public Records Office 34w, 427w
War crimes 34w, 245w, 427w, 447w

Wales
Accident & emergency departments 349w

Armed forces deployment 175-6w
Battered wives 35w, 214w
Beaches 130-1w, 213w
Breast cancer 39w
British Gas Corporation 35-6w
Building industry 132w
Burglary 261-2w
Cervical cancer 206-7w, 207-8w, 209-10w, 349w
Civil service manpower 37w
Community industry scheme 210w
Convictions 11-2w
Council house sales 211-2w, 347-8w
Council housing 36w, 129w
Defence land 236w
Diseases 350w
Domestic rates 38w
Drug side effects 350w
Employment 37w, 212w
Enterprise Express 129-30w
Gas supply industry 35w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 599w
Haemophilia 288w
Hospital beds 131-2w
Hospital doctors 349w
Hospitals 132w
Industrial production 132w
Local government expenditure 38w
Local government staff 37w
Mental health community care 289w
National parks 39-40w
NHS 289w
Personal social services 289w
Pollution monitoring 38-9w
Primary health care 131-2w
Private sector employment 37w
Public expenditure 38w
Public sector employment 37w
Radioactivity 39w, 290w, 350-1w
Rain 39w
Residential care 289w
Road accidents 410-1w
Salmon 213w
Second homes 34w
Sheep premiums 411w
Small businesses 213w
Social security abuse 262w
Test tube babies 288-9w
Unemployment 212w
Unemployment benefits 153-4w
Womens aid 34-5w
Youth services 286w
Youth training scheme 131w, 599w
Youth unemployment 129w

Walker, Mr Bill
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1217-8, 1225, 1229, 1231, 1246, 1254, 1255, 1258-62, 1304, 1310
Channel Tunnel Bill, Money Res (05.06.86) 1330
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 807
Oral questions, Calling of Members (04.06.86) 897
Questions
Demonstrations, Northern Ireland 1075
Economy, Scotland 880-1
School buildings, Scotland 888
Scottish Assembly, Royal High School 893-4

Walker, Mr A Cecil
Questions
Railway property, Terrorism 456-7w
Republic of Ireland, National territory 561-2w
Terrorism, Northern Ireland 463-4w

Walker, Rt Hon Peter, Secretary of State for Energy
Questions
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 31w
Central Electricity Generating Board, South Killingholme 468w
Coal prices, Central Electricity Generating Board 606w
Data Protection Registrar, Dept of Energy 253w
Electricity generation 355w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing, Sellafield 594-5w
OPEC, Oil prices 251-2w
Parking offences, Dept of Energy 469w
Pipelines, Construction 33w

Walking
Trespass 736

Wallace, Mr James
Debates etc
Cyprus Servicemens Investigation Inquiry (22.05.86) 563-4
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 305
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 369, 382-5
Questions
Business statement 1089
Chemical weapons 527-8
Electricity generation, Scotland 891
Official secrets, Scotland 581w
Radioactivity, Lerwick 235-6w
Scottish Assembly, Royal High School 894

Wallenberg, Raoul 625-6w
Political prisoners 625-6w

Waller, Mr Gary
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 196
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1225
Questions
Motorways, Construction costs 26-7w
Road traffic offences, Police 336w

Walters, Mr Dennis
Questions
Dog licences, Fees & charges 84w
Motor vehicle registration, Rural areas 247w

Wandsworth
Homelessness 349-50

Wandsworth Health Authority 384w
NHS finance 724-5

Wandsworth Prison 179-80w
Prison discipline 479-80w

War casualties
Personal injury compensation 60w

War crimes
Waldheim, Kurt 34w, 245w, 427w, 447w

War widows
Social security recipients 69w
Widows benefits 69w

War widows pensions 165w

Ward, Mr John
Questions
Nuclear accidents, Cap de la Hague 345

Wardell, Mr Gareth
Debates etc
Legionnaires Disease Inquiry (04.06.86) 910
Social security reform, Public petitions (21.05.86) 503
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Wales 349w
Cervical cancer, Wales 349w
Diseases, Wales 350w
Health service staff, Vacancies 381w
Hospital doctors, Wales 349w
Hospitals, Casualty units 380w
Immigrant doctors 380w

Wardle, Mr Charles
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, 2R (05.06.86) 1143-6

Wareing, Robert N
Debates etc
Chemical Weapons, Standing Order No 10 applications (20.05.86) 200
Oral question time intervention (03.06.86) 731
Questions
Binary chemical weapons, Armed forces deployment 428-9w
Binary chemical weapons, West Germany 428w
Business statement 540
Chemical weapons, Arms control treaties 414-5w
Further education, Educational finance 328w
Military aircraft, Air force bases 428w
NATO, Chemical weapons 429w
NH90 Helicopters, Defence procurement 264w
Retail price index, Inflation 265w
South Africa, Commonwealth 245w
Unemployment, Merseyside 150w

Wars
Broadcast journalism 521w
Broadcasting 392-4w
Broadcasting controls 521w

Warships (05.06.86) 1333-40
British Shipbuilders 46w
Costs 427w
Shipbuilding 427w

Waste disposal
Local authorities in Scotland 280w
Local government finance 612w
Polychlorinated biphenyl 370w
Sewage 80-1w

Wastes
Animal products 557w

Water authorities
Privatisation 84w, 141-2w, 191w
Public appointments 358, 498-504w

Water charges 566w
Price increases 566w
Water meters 357-8

Water meters 503w
Costs 503w
Water charges 357-8w

Water pollution
EC law 279w
Lead 279w, 280w
Scotland 279w, 280w, 281w

Water supply
Norman Shaw Building 86w, 198w

Wath-on-Dearne 311w
Exceptional needs payments 376-8w

Watts, Mr John
Questions
Handicapped workers, Employment policy 172
Hypermarkets, Planning permission 195w
Pest Infestation Research Laboratory, Slough 73w
Road construction, Prices 1-2
Social Security Act 1985, Orders & regulations 724

Weather
Beekeeping 1w, 69-70w, 223w
Tourism 164

Wedgewood
London International Group 407-8w
Takeovers 407-8w

Weedkillers
Horticulture 221w

Weetch, Mr Ken
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 915-6, 917, 920-1, 922, 923-4, 930-1, 960-2, 964-5, 967-70, 984
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 576, 586, 594-7

Wells, Mr Bowen
Questions
Business statement 534
Letchworth Garden City Corporation, Local Government Act 1972 294-5w

Wells, Sir John
Questions

Orchard replanting grants 70w

Welsh, Mr Michael
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 193

Welsh Advisory Body for Further & Higher Education 411w
Public appointments 411w

Welsh Chess Union 286w
Government grants 286w

Welsh language
Data Protection Registrar 260w
General Certificate of Secondary Education 286w

Welsh Office
Data Protection Registrar 288w
Legislation 211w

West Cumberland
Civil defence 523
Emergency planning 523

West Germany
Beef 121w, 134w, 222w
Binary chemical weapons 428w
Bombings 414w
Central banks 472w
Common farm prices 72w
Farmers 72w
Import controls 134w, 222w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 511w
Pharmacies 530w
Quota of handicapped workers 171-2

West Lambeth Health Authority 384-5w
Mental health community care 384-5w
Property transfer 384-5w

West Lindsey District Council 195w
Radioactive waste disposal 195w

West Midlands Regional Health Authority 376w
Hospital waiting lists 376w

West Sussex
Radioisotopes 80w

West Yorkshire
Fire services 332-3w
Fires 332-3w
Leukaemia 540w

Western Europe
Radioactivity 200w

Western European Union 414w

Western Sahara
Overseas aid 204w
Refugees 204w

Westland Helicopters 244w
Company finance 244w

Westminster Hospital 383w, 556w
Cancer 383w
Hospital closures 383w, 556w
Ministers correspondence 556w
Riverside Health Authority 66w

Wheelchair housing 503-4w, 504-5w
Construction costs 505w
House purchase 503-4w, 504-5w
Housing completions 505w

Wheeler, Mr John
Questions
Metropolitan Police, Manpower 124-5w
Police relations with public, Police & Criminal Evidence Act 1984 516w

Whitfield, Mr John
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 982-4

Whiting
EC action 491w
Fishing gear 367w

Whitney, Mr Ray, Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Security
Questions
Accident & emergency departments, Hospitals 548-50w
Alcoholism, Government grants 618w
Alcoholism, Medical treatments 66w
Ambulance services, Greater London 538-9w
Bethlem Royal Hospital 168-9w
Bradford Health Authority, Hospital waiting lists 535-6w
Community health councils, Recruitment 528w
"Deaths in the Community", Coroners 11w
Departmental circulars, Dept of Health & Social Security 527-8w
Diabetes, Artificial sweeteners 545w
Diabetes, Children 543w
Diabetes, Convalescence 544w
Diabetes, Diagnosis 543-4w
Drugs, EC countries 169w
Geriatrics, Leicester 534w
"Guide to Healthy Eating", Health Education Council 530w
Gynaecology, Bassetlaw Health Authority 63w
Health Education Council, Whooping cough 62w
Hip replacements, Hospital waiting lists 532-4w
Hip replacements, Surgery 65w
Hospital patients, Hospital waiting lists 528w
Hospital patients, Leeds Eastern Health Authority 530-2w
Hospital patients, Northern Regional Health Authority 528-9w
Hospital patients, Road accidents 59w
Hospital waiting lists, Basildon & Thurrock Health Authority 536w
Hospital waiting lists, District health authorities 534-6w
Hospital waiting lists, NHS 528w
Hospital waiting lists, Orthopaedics 66w
Hospital waiting lists, Out-patient clinics 59w
Hospital waiting lists, Regional health authorities 58-60w
Hospital waiting lists, Surgery 542w
Hospitals, Construction 538w
Hospitals, District health authorities 539-40w
Hospitals, Road accidents 60w
Hypothermia, Elderly 55-6w
Leukaemia, West Yorkshire 540w
Medical Research Council, Government grants 523w
Mental health services, Young people 168w
Mental patients, Prisoners 61w
NHS, Re-employment 720
NHS administration, Health service staff 720-1
NHS administration, Manpower 720
NHS finance, Training 545w
North Western Regional Health Authority, NHS administration 721
Nursing homes, Fees & charges 617w
Nursing homes, Registered homes 547-8w, 721
Oriel Lodge, Registered homes 617w
Parliamentary constituencies, Electorate 527w
Perinatal mortality, Coroners 11w
Perinatal mortality, Death registration 530w
Personal social services, Local government expenditure 531-2w
Photosensitivity, Medical treatments 223w
Portman Clinic Finance 524w
Potassium iodate 541w
Potassium iodate, Ionizing radiation 541w
Radiation hazards, Students 547w
Regional health authorities, NHS finance 62w
Registered homes 524w
Schizophrenia, Mental hospitals 60-1w
Scunthorpe Hospital, Hospital beds 537w
Speech therapists, Community care 541w
St James Hospital, Balham 724-5
Teaching hospitals, Greater London 66w
Technicians, NHS 543w
X rays, Cancer hazards 529w

Whooping cough 62w
Health Education Council 62w

Wider opportunities training programme 361w

Widows benefits
War widows 69w

Wigan
Magistrates 424-6w

Wiggin, Mr Jerry
Debates etc
Access to Parliament, Members (23.05.86) 649
South Africa (19.05.86) 21

Wigley, Mr Dafydd
Debates etc
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 65-6, 118-20
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 283-4
Questions
Agents provocateurs, Convictions 11-2w
Armed forces deployment, USA 243w
British Gas Corporation, Privatisation 31w
British Gas Corporation, Wales 35-6w
British Rail, Youth training scheme 131w
Caesium, Radioactivity 75w
Capital gains tax, Tax yields 91w
Cathays Park, Visual arts 130w
Civil service manpower, Wales 37w
Community industry scheme, Wales 210w
Council house sales, Wales 211-2w, 347-8w
Council housing, Wales 36w, 129w
Data Protection Registrar, Information 260w
Dual key control 236w
Dwyfor District Council, Central-local government relations 286w
Dwyfor District Council, Civil servants 128w
Dwyfor District Council, Council housing finance 129-30w
Dwyfor District Council, EC grants & loans 129-30w
Dwyfor District Council, Local government functions 211w
Dwyfor District Council, Local government maladministration 350w
Dwyfor District Council, Planning appeals 128-9w
Employment, Wales 37w
Exceptional circumstances additions, Handicapped 531w
Forensic science, Evidence 11w, 178
Gas supply industry, Wales 35w
House renovation grants, Dwyfor District Council 40w
Housing, Public expenditure 370-1w
Local government staff, Wales 37w
Maternal mortality, Ethnic minorities 375w
Maternal mortality, Immigrants 375w
Medical research, Pneumoconiosis 278w
National Radiological Protection Board, Emergency planning 375w
Nuclear power stations, Gwynedd 39w, 290w
Orion Electric, Manpower 131w
Pollution monitoring, Wales 38-9w
Private sector employment, Wales 37w
Radioactivity, Pollution monitoring 290w
Radioactivity, Wales 39w, 350-1w
Rain, Wales 39w
Second homes, Wales 34w
Severn barrage 252w
Unemployment, Pwllheli 285-6w
Unemployment benefits, Wales 153-4w
Welsh Office, Legislation 211w
Youth training scheme, Wales 131w

Wilcox, Mary 521-2w
Suicide 521-2w

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 199w
Sites of special scientific interest 199w

Wilkinson, Mr John
Questions

6 Airborne Brigade 390w

Williams, Rt Hon Alan
Debates etc
Ministerial statements (22.05.86) 532
Tin, Cornwall (23.05.86) 654-6
Questions
Geevor tin mine, Government assistance to industry 743-4
Office of Fair Trading, Debt collection 408w

Wilson, Mr Gordon
Debates etc
Legal Aid (Scotland) Bill (HL), 2R (21.05.86) 395-9
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 69
Questions
Economy, Scotland 881
Students, Social security benefits rules 719
Teachers, Scotland 576-7w

Wilton Park 214-5w
Conferences 214-5w

Wiltshire
Hippies 737

Winchester
Bypasses 3

Windscale
Fires 290-1w
Nuclear fuel reprocessing 465-6w

Winnick, Mr David
Debates etc
Business questions point of order (05.06.86) 1096, 1098
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1195
Environment Select Committee, Disclosure of information (20.05.86) 326
Harwich Parkeston Quay Bill, 2R (03.06.86) 800
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 41, 53-5
Social Security Bill, Rep & 3R (20.05.86) 214, 215-6
South Africa (19.05.86) 23
Questions
Building land, Local government land 352
Paige, Victor, Resignations 901
Paramilitary forces, Northern Ireland 1076-7
Plastic bullets, Police 254w
Supplementary benefits, Social security recipients 56w

Winterton, Mrs Ann
Questions
Limited list prescribing 313w
Limited list prescribing, Costs 313-4w

Winterton, Mr Nicholas
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 990
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1206, 1212, 1216-7
Social Security Bill, Rep (19.05.86) 136, 142
Questions
Families, Social policy 352w
Family doctors, Manpower 379-80w
Family doctors, Pay 379w
Housing improvement, Costs 292-3w, 293-4w
Housing standards 294w
Housing starts 292w
Local government expenditure, Macclesfield 196w
Local government revenue, Housing construction 353
Printing industry, Employment 406w
Printing industry, Industrial production 406-7w
Printing industry, Manpower 417w
Slum clearance 292w
Students, Social security benefits rules 719
Synthetic fibres, EC action 185-6w
Synthetic fibres, Imports 186w
Takeovers 408w
Temporary employment, Farms 168-9w
War widows, Social security recipients 69w
Wedgewood, Takeovers 407-8w

Wolfson, Mr Mark
Debates etc
Channel Tunnel Bill, Committed to a Select Committee (05.06.86) 1184, 1204, 1215-9, 1291
Channel Tunnel Bill, House of Commons procedure (03.06.86) 862-3
Questions
Police training 257w

Wolverhampton
Iron & steel industry 409w

Women
Public appointments 64w
Technical & vocational education initiative, 217-8w
Tourist industry 145w
Unemployment 624w

Womens aid
Wales 34-5w

Womens Hospital, Liverpool 224w, 321-2w
Hospital patients 321-2w
Hospital waiting lists 321w, 322w
Private patients 322w

Wood, Mr Timothy
Debates etc
Economic policy (03.06.86) 753
Sex Discrimination Bill (HL), 2R (22.05.86) 596, 606-7
Questions
Business statement 536
M25, Road accidents 26w

Woodall, Mr Alec
Questions
Electricity tariffs, Industrial energy prices 463-4w

Wool
Guaranteed prices 364-5w

Woolwich Ferry 451w

Work permits
Keeni Meeni Services 266w

Workfare 415w
Restart programme 150w, 415w, 1083

Working hours
Ambulance services 539w
Lorry drivers 27w

World Bank
International Development Association 3w

World conservation strategy 568-9w

World Cup 577w
Scottish Football Association 577w

World Information Service Communique on Energy 483w

World War II
Prisoners of war 34w

Wormwood Scrubs 413w, 520w

Wrigglesworth, Mr Ian
Debates etc
British Rail Engineering (20.05.86) 198
Merchant ships (21.05.86) 441
Questions
Nuclear accidents, France 31-2w

Written questions
Administrative delays 316w
Speakers rulings & statements (20.05.86) 203

X rays
Cancer hazards 529w
Radiation hazards 314w

Yeo, Mr Tim
Questions
Anglo-Irish Agreement, IRA 1072-3
Business statement 1094-5
Employment opportunities, Suffolk 151w
"Primary Health Care Consultation Paper" 524w
Prison sentences, Crime 7w
Private rented housing, Households 196w
Public expenditure 528
Rate support grants, Suffolk 355
Self-employed 173
Speech therapists, Community-care 541w

Ynys Mon
Oil terminals 441w

Yorkshire Regional Health Authority 537-8w, 542w, 545-6w
Hospital waiting lists 542w
NHS finance 537-8w
Pay beds 545-6w

Young, Mr David
Debates etc
South Africa (19.05.86) 26

Young, Sir George, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment
Debates etc
Building Societies Bill, Rep & 3R (04.06.86) 916-1010 (passim)
Questions
Access to buildings, Buckingham Palace 84-5w
Crown Suppliers 510-11w
Crown Suppliers, Procurement 510w
Crown Suppliers, Remploy 511w
Defective housing, Leicester City Council 134-6w
Defective housing, PRC homes 136w
Defective housing, Smith houses 136w
Derelict land grants, Government grants 295-6w
Empty housing, Leicester 566-7w
Enterprise zones, Glanford 369w
High rise flats, Rochester upon Medway District Council 565w
Homelessness, Council housing 194w
Homelessness, Families 194w
Housing, Ealing 139w
Housing, Public expenditure 370-1w
Housing associations, House purchase 504w
Housing Defects Act 1984, Building repairs 292w
Housing improvement, Costs 292-3w, 293-4w
Housing improvement, Dept of the Environment 202w
Housing improvements, Northern region 510w
Housing investment programmes, Liverpool City Council 191w
Housing investment programmes, Northern region 503-4w
Housing standards 294w
Housing starts 292w
Kirkby Town Football Club, Government grants 80w
Labour mobility 138w
Lionise, Government grants 80w
Liverpool City Council, Direct labour departments 495-6w
Local government expenditure, Voluntary organisations 191-2w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Disclosure of information 569w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Planning permission 514w
London Docklands Development Corporation, Professional consultants 296-8w
Palace of Westminster, Sanitation 198w
Parking offences, Dept of Energy 369w
Parking offences, Dept of the Environment 570w
Parking offences, Government departments 514w, 570-1w
Parking offences, Greek Street 405w, 571w
Parking offences, Scottish Office 369w
Private rented housing, Households 196w
Property Services Agency, Museums & galleries 137-8w

Redundant churches, Urban development grants 198-9w
Slum clearance 292v
Slums, Coventry 347
Smith Houses, Leicester 83-4w
Urban housing renewal unit, Blackburn Borough Council 140-1w
Urban housing renewal unit, Government grants 614w
Urban housing renewal unit, Housing investment programmes 291w
Urban housing renewal unit, Hyndburn 367-8w
Urban housing renewal unit, Mansfield District Council 139-40w
Urban housing renewal unit, Newham 141w
Urban programme, Northern region 496w
Urban programme, Southwark 343
Voluntary organisations, Greater London Council 342-3
Voluntary organisations, Local government expenditure 343
Water supply, Norman Shaw Building 86w, 198w
Wheelchair housing, Construction costs 505w
Wheelchair housing, House purchase 503-4w, 504-5w

Young offenders
Sentencing 521-2

Young people 447-9w
Licensing laws 7w
Mental health services 168w

Young workers scheme
Take-up of employment 144w, 358w
Wages councils 358w

Youth employment 447-9w
Coal mining 31w
Greater London 144w
National Coal Board 31w

Youth opportunities scheme
Training allowances 357-8w

Youth services
Expenditure 286w
Scotland 283w
Strathclyde Regional Council 283w
Training 283w
Urban programme 283w
Wales 286w

Youth training scheme 167-8
British Rail 131w
Cardiff 289-90w
Civil service 151w
Costs 166-7
Further education 339-40w
Local authorities in Scotland 155w
Manpower Services Commission 151w
Northern Ireland 339-40w
Part-time education 599w
Per capita costs 50w
Research 356-7w
Scottish health boards 155w
Social security benefits rules 168
Supplementary benefits 584-5w
Take-up of employment 131w, 289-90w, 339w, 358w
Training allowances 357-8w
Training grants 584-5w
Voluntary organisations 167
Wages councils 358w
Wales 131w, 599w

Youth unemployment 146w, 147w, 148w, 421w
Burnley 421w
Lancashire 421w
Liverpool 148-9w
Newham 55w
Northern Ireland 454w, 455w
Scotland 155w, 156w
Wales 129w

Zahoor, Karman 564w
Immigration controls 564w